

## Mattis Reaffirms U.S. Albanian Defense Relationship

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WASHINGTON - Defense Secretary James N. Mattis welcomed Albanian Defense Minister Olta Xhacka to the Pentagon today to reaffirm the strong defense relationship between the United States and Albania, chief Pentagon spokesperson Dana W. White said.

### Significant Contributions

In a statement summarizing the meeting between the two defense leaders, White said Mattis praised the significant contributions Albania has made to global and coalition operations, including nearly 300 personnel serving in four major NATO operations.

“He thanked Minister Xhacka for Albania’s strong leadership in the Western Balkans,” White said, “and for its efforts to counter Russian malign influence in the region.”

Mattis praised Albania’s recent increase in defense spending and its plan to meet the pledge alliance nations made at NATO’s 2014 summit in Wales to spend at least 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense by 2024.

Source: defense