

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

OHR, Vedran Persic
OSCE, Mersiha Causevic
EUPM, Zinaida Ilaria
EUFOR, Rolf Kurth
NATO, Derek Chappell
ICTY, Matias Hellman

OHR

HR to visit Banja Luka

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will tomorrow visit Banja Luka where he will meet representatives of political parties.

He will address the media following the meeting with RS President Dragan Cavic.

He will note that the significant progress has been made so far in bringing ICTY indicted war criminals to the Tribunal. Practical cooperation between Belgrade and Banja Luka has helped lead to the transferal of six individuals to The Hague since beginning of the year. However, all indicted war criminals, including Karadzic and Mladic, must be brought to justice without delay. Region's progress towards EU and NATO depends on the will of the individual countries to fully cooperate with the ICTY.

The HR will note that police reform is now one of the last remaining reforms that must be undertaken before restarting negotiations with the EU. Towards the end of May the EC

Consultative task force will arrive in BiH to assess BiH's progress on the 16 requirements of the Feasibility Study.

At the end of this month, parties will be convened to start formal negotiations about police restructuring. They will need to convince the EU that they are serious about reform that supports the EU's three basic requirements.

First, to place exclusive competence for police legislation and budget at the State level. Second, to recast regional police areas on the basis of functional police criteria, and; Third, to help protect the police from improper political interference.

OSCE

Raising debate – Raising Standards Education Forums start today

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina is launching a series of Education Forums "Raising Debate – Raising Standards – An Education System that Works for All", beginning today. These events will allow citizens to take stock of education reform progress and to discuss the effectiveness of education structures in BiH.

The Mini Forums will focus on:

12 April, Mostar: *Improving education standards in school.*

This mini forum will focus on the primary and secondary education system, securing improved and equal standards for all students across BiH.

13 April, Banja Luka: *Are BiH's children educated in line with international standards?*

This mini forum will provide an opportunity for discussion among education stakeholders, NGOs and representatives from the International Community on where BiH currently stands in regard to the implementation of its

international obligations, as well as how the implementation of international standards directly affects children's education.

15 April, Tuzla: *Who is taking us and how far have we gone towards Bologna standards?* This mini forum will look at how BiH is progressing towards the European Higher Education area, as foreseen by its Bologna Process commitments. Key issues such as a BiH-wide quality assurance system, diploma supplements, recognition of degrees, student mobility and employability, university autonomy and governance, as well as modern higher education legislation will be addressed.

The conclusions and recommendations from all three mini forums will be presented at the 7th Education Forum in Sarajevo on 23 April, 2005 .

OSCE Mission Heads in South-Eastern Europe to meet in Sarajevo

The Heads of OSCE Missions throughout South-Eastern Europe are gathering in Sarajevo this week for an annual meeting to discuss regional issues such as war crimes, property issues and other matters of mutual concern.

The two-day meeting that starts on Thursday, 14 April, will bring together Ambassadors from the OSCE field operations in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania. Last year's meeting was held in Bulgaria.

Representatives from the OSCE Secretariat and Conflict Prevention Centre in Vienna as well as the Slovenian Chairmanship will also join the heads of missions to review the progress of OSCE programmes in the region.

EUPM

EUPM commends State Border Service's successful drug seizure

European Union Police Mission would like to commend the State Border Service for the largest drug seizure ever in the history of the state level law enforcement agency. The operation took place, with the support of EUFOR, when the SBS's officers stopped a car near Pavlovica Most, yesterday. The investigation now lies with the prosecutor.

SBS as a regionally organized law enforcement agency, vested at the state level, with a single budget, clear chain of command serves as an example how this kind of system can fight major organized crime more effectively.

Commissioner Carty talks to Sarajevo citizens about police restructuring

The Head of the European Union Police Mission, Commissioner Kevin Carty will open the public meeting on police restructuring, organized by EUPM and OHR, which will take place **today, 12 April 2005, at 1800 hrs, in Dom policije in Sarajevo.**

The Commissioner will use this opportunity to talk to Sarajevo citizens about this crucial reform process, hear about their concerns and answer their questions. Police restructuring is one of the EU requirements and its implementation will have a significant impact on the future of this country and its citizens. This process is about creating professional police service, accountable to the citizens and effective in fighting crime.

European Union Police Mission encourages citizens to attend this, and the future public meetings, to inform themselves of this process and to take active part in the discussion.

All media are kindly invited to cover this event. For more details, please call Zinaida Ilaria at +387/33-752-889 or +387/61-144-310.

EUFOR

One of Bosnia and Herzegovina 's Largest Ever Drug Seizures

BiH authorities, supported by EUFOR troops, stopped a car containing a large quantity of drugs at a vehicle check point near Pavlovica Most yesterday. This was part of their ongoing cooperation against organised crime. The car contained packages of heroin weighing altogether some 52 kgs.

The vehicle was seized and suspects arrested. They were taken to a secure location for a further detailed search and questioning by the BiH authorities. The State Prosecution Service was informed.

Given the significance of the seizure, EUFOR is assisting BiH authorities with the security of the drugs and evidence.

An early estimate puts the street value of the heroin at several millions of Euros.

In addition to the drug seizure, EUFOR also assisted BiH authorities today in arresting criminals involved in human smuggling.

EUFOR remains committed to supporting the BiH authorities and working in close cooperation with other EU institutions in BiH to bear down on organised crime and bring criminals to justice. This operation is a classic example of the kind of teamwork that is common between EUFOR and BiH authorities, where significant achievements support the rule of law and put pressure of those who undermine the rule of law.

NATO

No Statement

ICTY

Yesterday, Ranko Češić, sentenced to 18 years imprisonment for killings, rape and other crimes committed in Brčko in 1992, was transferred to a prison in Denmark

This event, the departure of a convicted war criminal to serve his sentence, is yet another indicator of the successful process of justice that is taking place in The Hague.

Ranko Češić was a member of the Intervention Platoon of the Bosnian Serb Police Reserve Corps at the Brcko police station. The crimes for which Ranko Češić was convicted took place from 30 April 1992 onwards while Serb forces in Bosnia were engaged in the take-over of the municipality of Brčko. Muslim and Croat residents of Brčko were forcibly expelled and transferred to collection centres, included the Luka detention facility and the Brčko Partizan Sports Hall.

Ranko Češić admitted to killing 10 persons in these camps, two of whom died as a result of beatings, and to having forced two brothers to perform a sexual act on each other. He committed all these crimes within a period of about one month or less.

Ranko Češić was originally indicted together with Goran Jelisić. The Tribunal in December 1999 convicted Jelisić to 40 years imprisonment, after he had pleaded guilty to 31 counts of murder, infliction of bodily harm and other crimes.

The terrible crimes that Češić and Jelisić were convicted for were all committed against helpless, detained individuals. These were not acts committed in a battle situation. These were cruel acts that are plainly criminal, regardless of the existence of an armed conflict.

It is noteworthy that both Jelisić and Češić, despite the fact that they pleaded guilty, and Češić additionally striking a plea agreement with the Prosecution and showing genuine remorse, received sentences that are exceptionally high

compared to the general level of sentences handed for war crimes by the courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Obviously, the Tribunal cannot try each perpetrator or prosecute every crime. In the context of crimes committed in Brčko, Jelisić and Češić were chosen for prosecution because they were mentioned by a large number of victims as particularly notorious perpetrators. Evidence of crimes committed in Brčko has also been presented by the prosecution in high-level cases such as those of Slobodan Milošević and Momčilo Krajišnik.

The Tribunal will support the efforts of prosecutors both in the Brčko District and the BiH Prosecutor's Office to bring additional perpetrators to justice for all crimes committed in the Brčko area, regardless of the ethnicity of the victims or the perpetrators.

RTQs

OHR:

Here we go. One question. Nick, BBC.

Nick Hawton, BBC News:

A question for NATO. Is Miroslav Petrović being held by US forces in Bosnia ? This is the guy who claims he was protecting Ratko Mladić recently. And also to EUFOR, you say several millions, I mean can we be more specific? Is it two or three million or ninety million? And was this just a random find, was it just chance, or was this part of EUFOR's new organized, anti organized crime methods that you are adopting?

Derek Chappell, NATO:

If I answer first on the part of NATO, I read that report with interest this morning as well, and I have no knowledge of such a person being held by NATO in Bosnia .

Nick Hawton, BBC News:

Or US forces?

Derek Chappell, NATO:

Well the US is part of NATO, either the US or NATO are not holding that person. I have no knowledge of that.

EUFOR:

I'd answer to your first question Nick. It's impossible to estimate the street value of an illegal substance, especially of this sort of quantity. What I can tell you is that the 52 kilograms of heroin seized yesterday was of very high quality, what I mean by that, it was virtually pure heroin and once processed by the criminals, who were planning to distribute it, it would have been worth several millions of euros on the streets of Europe or wherever it was destined. To give it a monetary value is virtually impossible I'm afraid. The second question was it a chance find. It was part of the ongoing EUFOR operations against organized crime. There were vehicle checkpoints set up around the border region yesterday and I can't go into any more detail about how that particular vehicle was found.

Nick Hawton, BBC News:

So you were not looking for this vehicle?

EUFOR:

Sorry, say it again.

Nick Hawton, BBC News:

So you were not looking for this vehicle?

EUFOR:

I think as you understand I can't confirm or deny that we had

any sources, for operational reasons, about this particular vehicle. The criminal investigation is ongoing, so I'm unable to make any further comment about it I'm afraid.

OHR:

Are there any more questions? If not, thank you very much for coming. See you again.