

Transcript of the International Agency's Joint Press Conference at CPIC

Subject: JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 3 December 2002

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Tuesday 3 December 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Kevin Sullivan	• HR's trip to Brussels.
b. OSCE	Henning Philipp	• Mayors of eight municipalities of the Upper Drina region are meeting today.
c. UNMIBH	Kirsten Haupt	• Certification review panel.
d. UNHCR	Majda Prljaca	• PLIP Statistics for October 2002.
e. ICTY	Rafik Hodzic	• No statement.
f. SFOR	Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier	• Tomorrow's media day at Camp McGovern for the Joint Resolve XXVII exercise. • Invitation to attend a presentation and question and answer session with representatives from SFOR's Joint Military Affairs.

2. Sixteen members of the media including one television crews attended the conference.

3. The transcript of the questions and answers is

attached.

A. Ollivier
Col. (FR A),
Chief Operations and Plans

Kevin Sullivan – OHR

Good morning everybody. I have never heard such pregnant silence in this room. Sorry again that we are starting a few minutes late that is my fault we will try and get our act together on Thursday.

One main point from the Office of the High Representative, this morning concerns the High Representatives trip to Brussels, he left this morning. This afternoon he will be addressing the European Union Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs.

As you know, the High Representative also serves as the European Union's Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Following his address this afternoon, he will be travelling to The Hague tomorrow, to give evidence in the Brdjanin case.

This afternoon he will draw attention to the changing circumstances in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the country moves from post-conflict peace implementation to the transition economy status, of its neighbours and other countries in Central Europe.

This transition itself presents a new emphasis and will require support. The support that is required will be of a new and distinct nature, from the European Union.

The Stabilisation and Association process presents Bosnia and Herzegovina with the reforms that it has to implement, essentially the process is also the message. The process

defines the steps that have to be taken not only for Bosnia and Herzegovina to be integrated in the European Union, but for it to furnish itself with the kinds of political and economical institution and practices that are characteristic in a modern democratic economy.

The Stabilisation and Association process will drive the agenda of the politicians of this country as citizens increasingly demand and demand more stridently that Bosnia and Herzegovina follows Slovenia's example. Slovenia, as you know, is set to become a member of the European Union in 2004. Bosnia and Herzegovina has the prospect of going down that road; alternatively it can regress into a position of economic stagnation and endemic crisis.

The High Representative will emphasise that his job is as he has put it several times and I quote, "to do himself out of a job." By this he means that politicians in the country increasingly have to be proactive in implementing the necessary reforms, so that Bosnia and Herzegovina begins to move in the right direction. Essentially under its own stem and without the constant prodding of outsiders.

In the light of the Stabilisation and Association process, the High Representative will be outlining the key areas of reform, strengthening the rule of law, noting the European Union's significant commitment to this through the European Union's follow on Police Mission, economic reform including Vat and Customs reform, and political reform. In that context he will be mentioning the agreement reached last week by the parties on the Council of Ministers.

The High Representative will brief the European Union's Parliamentarians on the election results, highlighting that this is a cry for faster reform and he will call for the European Union to stay engaged in Bosnia and Herzegovina and support the country as it moves through the reform process. At the same time he will be calling for the leadership of

Bosnia and Herzegovina to demonstrate its commitment to real and rapid reform

He will tell the European Union Parliament that in the period up until June next year, when a special European Union summit is to be held in Thessaloniki, there is a chance for the leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina to demonstrate that it is serious about promoting, introducing, fostering, supporting and initiating significant reforms.

On the of Council of Ministers, there will be a meeting of a working group, which is a following on from the working group that drafted the law, which was brought into force yesterday, by the High Representative. The follow on working group will met this afternoon at the OHR in order to define the competencies of the ministries, which are referred to in yesterdays law.

I have brought along copies of the law for any of you who have not already read through them, annotated them and written your comments on them. That is all from the OHR, thank you.

Henning Philipp – OSCE

Good morning, everybody.

Mayors of eight municipalities of the Upper Drina region are meeting today, in Foca-Srbinje with representatives of various youth organisations, including the recently established Upper Drina Youth Council.

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina has facilitated this meeting, which will focus on enhancing youth participation in municipal governance. Its aim is to initiate greater youth participation at the local level and to promote a stronger partnership between the municipalities and their youth. These activities support implementation of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal Life. Our mission is encouraged by the willingness

of the Mayors to include youth in municipal politics and commends the young people for their initiative and their active approach to democratic participation. Thank you.

Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH

Good morning. I have one item for you.

Following the review of all law enforcement personnel and the certification of 15,786 police officers, many police officers that were not granted certification, some of them have now made use of their right to appeal. You may recall that UNMIBH established a review panel outside the command structure of the IPTF to ensure the independent and fair review of cases of non-certification and the following appeals.

As of today, UNMIBH has received 380 appeals to decisions on non-certification or on pending cases. Of these cases the panel has so far reviewed 48. In 23 cases the panel recommended to overturn the original decision and to grant certification to the police officers involved. In the remaining 25 cases the panel recommended that the original decision of non-certification be upheld.

The cases were submitted to the IPTF Commissioner Sven Frederiksen, by the panel and the Commissioner concurred with the findings of the review panel and confirmed their recommendations. Letters will be sent out in the coming days to the respective Ministers of Interior, the Police Commissioners and the police officers concerned to notify them of the IPTF Commissioner's decisions. That is all I have you today.

Majda Prljaca – UNHCR

Good morning from UNHCR. We have one item for you today on behalf of the Property Law Implementation Plan agencies, the Property Law Implementation Plan statistics for October 2002.

The Property Law Implementation Plan agencies the OHR, UNHCR, OSCE, CRPC and UNMIBH would like to announce the results of the Property Law Implementation for October 2002. The overall implementation ratio reached 64 percent in October, which is an increase of 2 percent from last month throughout the country.

In Brcko District, 70% of properties have been repossessed with an increase of 4% in October, while in the Federation ratio has risen by 2 percent to 68 %, and the Republika Srpska recorded a 1 percent increase since September, to 57% in October. Out of a total of 254,730 claims in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina, around 92,000 claims are still to be resolved.

The Property Law Implementation Plan agencies would also like to inform the public that an amended Property Law Implementation Plan Questionnaire was introduced this month, which will be effective as of the beginning of 2003. It is aimed at obtaining more detailed information, resulting in a better recognition of the housing authorities' work countrywide. The publicised version of the Property Law Implementation Plan statistics will be slightly modified to reflect the changes made in the Questionnaire. A new column on the chronological order of processing claims will be introduced in the 2003, publicised version as per the New Strategic Direction in order to provide more transparency regarding the work of the housing offices as well as publicising information useful to claimants throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. Copies of the press release and the Property Law Implementation Plan statistics can be found on the table outside. Thank you that is all.

Rafik Hodzic – ICTY

Good morning. There is no statement from ICTY today.

Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

Good morning, I have two points for you today.

First, tomorrow there will be media day at Camp McGovern for the Joint Resolve XXVII exercise. All media are invited to attend a demonstration of the capabilities of SFOR when responding on short notice to a crisis situation that affects a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Personnel from the Italian Carabinieri and United States northern task force, with the support of helicopter assets, will conduct a crowd and riot control exercise, which will take place at a mock village created on the grounds of Camp McGovern.

In conjunction with the crowd and riot control exercise, personnel from MND Southeast, MND Southwest and the "Over-The-Horizon-Forces" or Operational Reserve Force from Kosovo's 1st Battalion of the UK Staffordshire Regiment will be conducting joint patrols throughout Multinational Division North.

Members of the media interested in attending this event should contact Major Shawn Mell, Eagle Base Public Affairs at 035 814 285. Those attending are requested to arrive at Camp McGovern no later than 1230 for access. The event is scheduled to begin at 1300.

My second point deals with the restructuring of the Armed Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Members of the media are invited to attend a presentation and question and answer session with representatives from SFOR's Joint Military Affairs on the subject the restructuring of the Armed Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina this coming Thursday, following our regular press conference.

Kevin Sullivan – OHR

Just before we have the questions. We will have the press conference on Thursday, as usual. Although, some of the organisations represented on the podium will not be here

UNHCR, OSCE, UNMIBH and ICTY will not be here, so it will be a double act, SFOR and OHR. Also on the issue of coming festivities a week from tonight, OHR and OSCE will throw a party for all of you and the rest of people on the podium, which we hope you will come to. We will send out details closer to the event on 10 December, in the evening. Any questions

Questions and Answers

Q: Fedzad Forto – FENA

Kirsten, about this group of policemen were they members of the Sarajevo Canton Special Task Police?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH

I cannot confirm that exactly. I only know that the police officers in question were the decision on non-certification was reconsidered and overturned, as well as the group where the decisions were upheld come from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina, from the Republika Srpska and from a number of Cantons in the Federation. I would have to check whether any of those 19 police officers are already within this group. That is the first update I have, at least to tell you that the process is on the way and that it will continue. I will see if I can get you further updates.

Q: Nedim Dervisbegovic – Reuters

Anything new in the Fijuljanin case?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

Yes, there is. I can tell you that SFOR is progressing with its investigation with the assistance of the Federation Ministry of the Interior, which is presently investigating Mr. Fijuljanin's citizenship and his multiple passports. However, to date as a result of our investigation we now have information that links Sabahudin Fijuljanin to the Al Qaeda.

Yesterday, SFOR contacted Prime Minister Behmen and the Federation Ministry of the Interior to tell them of this information. For reason of source protection SFOR will not release any further details. Mr. Fijuljanin will be afforded the opportunity to meet with his lawyer and in addition SFOR is presently working to facilitate the request by the international team for the Red Cross to visit Mr. Fijuljanin, and that is all I can bring as far as new information for today.

Q: Nedim Dervisbegovic – Reuters

Maybe I did not hear very you well. You said you have evidence linking Mr. Fijuljanin to Al Qaeda?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

That is correct. We have information, which links Mr. Fijuljanin to Al Qaeda and that information was provided to Prime Minister Behmen and the Federation Ministry of the Interior.

Q: Nedim Dervisbegovic – Reuters

But, you cannot tell us anymore?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

No.

Q: Nedim Dervisbegovic – Reuters

We have to take it for granted?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

At this time that is all I can provide you.

Q: Nedim Dervisbegovic – Reuters

Do not take it personally. You maybe the third or fourth

spokesman that has been dealing with these kind of issues over the last 12 months and you have never got any information. There have been similar and pretty serious charges and none of them have resulted in judicial process for any of these people and a lot of them have been expelled. So, do you not think it's about time you stated giving us some real evidence?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

I do understand your concern about the lack of information. But, at this time that is all I am permitted to give you. We have ways by which we get our information and to say more would prejudice the investigation and the ways by which we get information. We did share this information with officials in positions of power within Bosnia and Herzegovina. They have the information that we were able to make public to them and we have enlisted their support in conducting further investigations on the threat posed by Mr. Fijuljanin. Unfortunately that is all I can provide at this time.

Q: Nedin Dervisbegovic – Reuters

I really do not want to enter into a row with you or SFOR over this. Even Western Governments, and you are all witness to this, when they discover similar cases they go public with at least some evidence that would convince the public of what they are saying is true. So, why are you treating us in a different way, do we not deserve to have at least something that would prove what you have just said. We cannot take you for granted?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

I understand you cannot take what I say for granted but that is all I can say at this time. To say anymore would prejudice the investigation that we are conducting in conjunction with the Federation officials and also prejudice how we conduct our business and that is not something that we are prepared to do at this time. I do understand your concern that there is not

sufficient information, but there is nothing I can do to make more information available at this time. But, we do feel at SFOR that we are processing the information in the most appropriate way enlisting the assistance of the Federation in the investigation. Unfortunately that is all I can give you and I understand your concern for more information, but there is nothing I can personally do to give you that information.

Q: Viola Gienger – Freelance for Cox Newspapers

Kirsten, I want to ask about the appeals, the overturn rate just about 50 percent, that seems quite high is there any pattern as to the reasons that these had to be overturned?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH

The reasons for the decisions are widely spread. Do you remember the categories that I always mention when talking about certification? You have a number of criteria based on which these decisions were made, they include property issues, performance issues, there was a third one, that I cannot remember right now and in any case it is widely spread. What we have said and what has in fact been done in those cases, if police officers were able to provide additional information, that was not available at the time when the original review was made towards certification. Then of course we faced a new situation and based on the additional information these decisions were made.

Q: Viola Gienger – Freelance for Cox Newspapers

How many of the overturns were based on additional information?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH

I believe most of them were, because obviously there had to be new information in order to come to a different decision than the original decision.

Q: Viola Gienger – Freelance for Cox Newspapers

It could have been that the reasoning for the original decision was flawed, so there could be two reasons for overturning the original decision?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH

We have said that the decisions of the review panel are being made based on additional information that is going to be provided, basically to shed different light on the entire case. If the situation is the same there is a greater likelihood that the original decision will be maintained.

Q: Viola Gienger – Freelance for Cox Newspapers

Majda, is UNHCR or any other agency doing anything to try and determine how many cases of returned property are subsequently sold. When you are talking about minority returnees how many of those incidences is the property then being sold within for example one year of repossession to majority owners?

A: Majda Prljaca – UNHCR

Do you mean the link between the minority returns and the Property Law Implementation Plan statistics?

Q: Viola Gienger – Freelance for Cox Newspapers

Yes, I am trying to figure out if the agencies are trying to determine how permanent these returns are?

A: Majda Prljaca – UNHCR

We are for building sustained return, but once returnees get their property returned nobody knows what they do after that.

Q: Viola Gienger – Freelance for Cox Newspapers

Is anyone trying to find out?

A: Majda Prljaca – UNHCR

No.

Q: Viola Gienger – Freelance for Cox Newspapers

To follow up?

A: Majda Prljaca – UNHCR

There is no follow up, once the returnees get their property back we do not have any information after that.

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC

Yves, are there any indications that more Bosnian nationals were involved in this case or that they were some how linked to Al Qaeda or did Fijuljanin act alone?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

As I said, that is all the information that I can give you at this time.

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC

I have also noticed that you did not say anything about Fijuljanin in your statement. You actually waited for us to ask that question is there any particular reason for that?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

That information came to me right after the statement had been drafted and I got this information this morning.

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC

Just one more thing, maybe you will not be able to answer. Did Fijuljanin admit to any of the things that he is suspected apart from surveilling SFOR facilities?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

Not to may knowledge.

Q: Marcus Bickel – Jungle World

Kevin, do you expect yesterday's announcement to speed up the process of government building in the next couple of weeks? Will we see a new government by the end of the year or will we have to wait some more months?

A: Kevin Sullivan – OHR

Essentially the development on the Council of Ministers is setting in place the institutional machinery and it is separate from actually forming governments. Obviously the timing was to do with the fact that the new institutional machinery will be applied in the formation of the new governments. Essentially that is a matter for parties to resolve themselves in forming governments and we will have to see how quickly they can go about it.

Q: Marcus Bickel – Jungle World

Are there any expectations for the New Year or will we have to wait months?

A: Kevin Sullivan – OHR

That is really a matter, which you would have to take up with the parties, which are currently engaged in forming governments and ask them how long they think it will take.

Q: Verica Kalajdzic – RTV FBiH

Kevin, 45 minutes ago the Serb Representatives in the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliament left the session, because the High Representative issued the law of the Council of Ministers yesterday, can you comment on that?

A: Kevin Sullivan – OHR

The consultation process ahead of the law was thorough all of

the parties were invited to take part. There was broad consensus on this law some people were keen to go further, some people were keen to go less far. The law represents a strong consensus behind a workable compromise. I would not expect parties to sustain opposition to something, which is so fundamental to reform and which is transparently so common-sensical in terms of giving the country the kind of government machinery that can actually deliver results.

Q: Nedim Dervisbegovic – Reuters

Yves, did you say you have a briefing on Armed Forces Restructuring on Thursday?

A: Kevin Sullivan – OHR

Yes.

Q: Nedim Dervisbegovic – Reuters

Do you not think it is a bit inconvenient to have this kind of thing on religious holidays, Bajram, Catholic or Orthodox Christmas, do you not think it would be more convenient to reschedule?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

We had thought about doing it next week, but the briefer that we had lined up are not available next week. So, as opposed to waiting we decided to do it this coming Thursday.

Kevin Sullivan – OHR

Do you have anymore questions, then thank you very much.