

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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OHR

Schwarz-Schilling to visit Mostar and Stolac

The High Representative and EU Special Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, will visit Mostar and Stolac today and tomorrow where he will meet with municipal, cantonal and party officials.

The High Representative and EU Special Representative will use the visit to update himself on the situation in Mostar and Stolac. He will also both make clear the importance of appointing a new government in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton and spell out further financial consequences if no government is appointed.

Tomorrow morning, Mr Schwarz-Schilling will visit Stolac and meet with Stjepan Boskovic, Head of Stolac Municipality, and Ahmet Habota, President of Stolac Municipal Council.

Tomorrow afternoon, Mr Schwarz-Schilling will visit Mostar and meet with the cantonal party presidents to discuss formation of a cantonal government. He will use this meeting to remind party officials of the additional financial penalties that will kick in on Thursday in case they are unable to form a government.

The High Representative already suspended disbursement of party funding from the BiH, FBiH and Herzegovina-Neretva Canton budgets to the HDZ BiH, the HDZ 1990-HZ, the SDA and the SBiH from 1 June. This suspension will remain in effect until the cantonal government is formed.

In addition, funding yet to be disbursed from the budget of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton for 2007 has been reduced by 40 per cent for the HDZ BiH and the SDA and by 20 per cent for the HDZ 1990-HZ and SBiH. The reduced allocation will only be paid after a government has been formed.

If, however, a government has not been formed in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton by 7 June, an additional 20 per cent of party funding for 2007 that is yet to be disbursed to these political parties shall be deducted on a weekly basis until a cantonal government is formed.

If the cantonal government is not in place by 28 June 2007, the High Representative reserves the right to issue a further decision reducing party funding to political parties from the budget of the FBiH and/or state level.

Details of press opportunities will be published in a media advisory later today.

SDHR Bas-Backer to Visit Banja Luka

The Senior Deputy High Representative, Peter Bas-Backer is in Banja Luka on Wednesday 6 June. The focus of the visit is a meeting with the RS Minister of Education, Anton Kasipovic, to discuss key reforms required for Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet European standards in the field of higher education.

The SDHR will also meet with RS Prime Minister Dodik, RS Minister of Urban Planning Fatima Fatibegovic and the Banja Luka Deputy Mayor, Jasmin Komic. Tomorrow afternoon Ambassador Bas-Backer will also meet with the Banja Luka Mufti, Edhem Efendi Camdzic.

We will be issuing a media advisories later today that will outline the media opportunities that will be made available during the course of the visit.

EUFOR

Clarification of EUFOR role in the movement, import and export of weapons

Over the past weeks there have been several articles in both domestic and international media questioning the role of EUFOR with respect to the export of arms from Bosnia-Herzegovina to other foreign nations, namely Iraq and Afghanistan.

I would like to take this opportunity to clarify once again, the role of EUFOR in this area.

In order to transport any form of weapon or ammunition within BiH, local authorities must seek the permission of EUFOR in order that we can track the location of all weapons in the country. EUFOR also assesses whether there is any threat created to the safe and secure environment by transporting such arms around Bosnia-Herzegovina. We do therefore have visibility of all weapons destined for export however we have no responsibility whatsoever for controlling imports and exports. To make it quite clear, any permit or permission issued by EUFOR for the movement of arms, only relates to the domestic transportation of weapons around Bosnia-Herzegovina.

For imports and exports, the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations hold sole responsibility. This responsibility includes arranging the necessary export licences and ensuring that Bosnia-Herzegovina adheres to the international commitments it has made including the European Union Code of Conduct on arms exports.

It is completely incorrect to state that EUFOR controls the export of weapons from BiH though we do have visibility of these transactions.

This story is an old one which has been reported several times in the press. The sale of weapons referred to was a bilateral arrangement between the BiH government and countries who were equipping their police and armed forces. EUFOR has no information which suggests that these sales were illegitimate or that the BiH government did not follow its own internal procedures or breached international conventions. Our experience is that the BiH authorities are scrupulous in following procedures for export and fulfilling their international commitments.