Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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NATO HQ, Derek Chappell

OHR

The High Representative meets RSNA Caucuses

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, is in Banja Luka today where he will be holding meetings with the RSNA party caucuses.

The High Representative will be making it clear to RS politicians that Police Reform is not about abolishing the Entities, or the Entity Ministries of Interior – it's about creating an efficient police service, accountable to the community.

Police reform will offer service that is modern, efficient and more effective in fighting organized crime. Those who say police restructuring is a guise to abolish the Entities are simply scare mongering.

Numerous polls have shown that organised crime and corruption is the number one concern of the BiH public – this reform offers politicians in BiH a concrete way to support law enforcement agencies in the fight against crime.

After his meetings the High Representative will hold a press

conference at 16.00 today at the International Press Centre in Banja Luka – you will find copies of the Media Advisory at the back of the room.

High Representative to attend BiH War Crimes Chamber Ceremony

The High Representative will tomorrow attend the inauguration ceremony of the War Crimes Chamber of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Special War Crimes Department of the BiH Prosecutors Office.

The High Representative, together with BiH Justice Minister Slobodan Kovac, ICTY President Theodor Meron, ICTY Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte, BiH Court President Meddžida Kreso and BiH Prosecutor Marinko Jurčević will address guests and media present at the inaugural ceremony.

The setting up of the war crimes chamber has required a substantial and sustained logistical and financial effort. ICTY President, Judge Theodor Meron, has played a leading role in setting up the Chamber, providing invaluable technical knowledge and expert advice in establishing its legal framework and related facilities such as its detention unit. BiH Court President Medzida Kreso and BiH Chief Prosecutor Marinko Jurcevic have also made invaluable contributions.

The High Representative will hold separate meetings with Judge Meron and Chief ICTY Prosecutor del Ponte.

The High Representative will note that while the work of the Hague Tribunal will continue, the Tribunal's work is necessarily finite. The inauguration of the War Crimes Chamber in the Court of BiH means that as many cases will be heard as are necessary – there will be no cut off point. The BiH Court 's War Crimes chamber is a permanent institution. It will be here long after the International Community has left BiH.

It is worth underlining that while this week the Court of BiH – BiH's flagship judicial institution – will open its

specialised War Crimes Chamber, this is but one element of the Rule of Law reforms that BiH has put in place during the last two years. BiH's Courts, criminal codes, judges and prosecutors have undergone a process of reform which will enable them to handle more cases, including war crimes cases, more professionally and more efficiently.

There is not statute of limitations on war crimes, and the Rule of Law reforms will ensure that those who committed crimes are brought before the courts.

International Women's day

…a final note, the High Representative extends his very best wishes to all the women of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the occasion of International Women's Day.

OSCE

Belgium Ambassador to OSCE visits BiH

Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrugghe, Belgium Ambassador to the OSCE, will head the Belgium delegation on an official visit to BiH tomorrow, 9 March 2005. Belgium will take over as the OSCE Chair-in-Office next year and the purpose of the visit is for the delegation to familiarize themselves with the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina 's work and the pace of reforms in the country.

During his visit to BiH, Ambassadorde Crombrugghe, accompanied by Ambassador Douglas Davidson, Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH, will meet with Ms. Lidija Topić, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, BiH Parliamentarians, Election Commission members, dignitaries from political, cultural and religious structures of BiH, as well as with the representatives of International Community.

EUPM

No formal statement.

EUFOR

EUFOR Reserve Forces Deploy to Kosovo

In a demonstration of the European Union's ability to contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability throughout the Balkans region, approximately 70 Italian troops from EUFOR have been deployed to Kosovo.

This deployment is part of a NATO Operational Rehearsal of reserve forces called 'determined effort 05'. EUFOR maintains flexible reserve forces in BiH at the tactical level, available to deploy rapidly throughout the Balkans region. Deployments are frequently rehearsed, as in this OPREH. There is a reciprocal arrangements for NATO to support EUFOR which will be practiced in the coming months.

The EUFOR troops will integrate and operate with a robust and capable NATO force already stationed in Kosovo. The deployment of EUFOR troops to a NATO operation strengthens the strong relationship and excellent operational cooperation between the European Union and NATO.

This deployment clearly illustrate EUFOR's capacity to rapidly deploy reserve forces within the region, while at the same time maintaining an effective military capability in Bosnia and Herzegovina . EUFOR's priority remains the preservation of the safe and secure environment in this country. EUFOR will therefore continue its full range of operations, in close coordination with the BiH authorities and the International Community.

NATO HQ

NATO Headquarters Sarajevo warmly welcomes the recent statement by the Joint Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina expressing the intention of BiH to join NATO as a full member of the Allience.

NHQSa is here to support BiH's efforts to join NATO and all that it implies, including development of a single military force in line with NATO standards and requirements, and the solemn obligation of Allies to treat an attack on one as an attack on all.

As defence and foreign policy are the exclusive competencies of the BiH Presidency, the way ahead on defence reform is clear. NHQSa therefore expects all elements of BiH state and entity authorities to fully and quickly implement NATO's requirements for defence reform and to carry out the mandate of the Defence Reform Commission, including meeting the legislative deadline of 1 July.

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On the morning of 7 March a NATO led search team conducted an operation at the home of Mr Avram Milic in the town of Vojkovici.

The property was searched under the NATO controlled mandate to gather information concerning persons indicted for war crimes (PIFWCs).

This was a NATO operation with support from the International Police Unit (IPU) of EUFOR and the Republika Srpska Police.

Support for persons indicted for war crimes threatens the progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina . It is both illegal and immoral and is a direct challenge to the Rule of Law. NATO will use all of its resources to locate PIFWCs.

Anyone with information on activity relating to such persons

or their support can telephone anonymously to 061 222 305.

Q&A

Darija Sito-Sučić – Reuters News Agency:

Darija Sito-Sučić, Reuters News Agency. I wanted actually comment from EUFOR, but also now maybe from NATO as well. Carla del Ponte yesterday said that she didn't know whether EUFOR was doing anything to locate Radovan Karadžić, and she said that she didn't know whether he was in Bosnia , Croatia or Montenegro , and it was in an interview for Reuters, but she said explicitly that she didn't know whether EUFOR was doing anything to locate Karadžić. So I would like your comment on this. Can you say whether EUFOR is doing anything to locate him, and the same question, actually, for NATO? Thanks.

EUFOR:

Yes of course, I'll be glad to answer that question. Firstly, both EUFOR and NATO, I hand over to Derek in a moment, but both EUFOR and NATO are constantly looking for PIFWICs. Much of the operations we do are intelligence driven and involve intelligence assets, there's no secret about that. But what is classified is the information we receive and the nature of our operations, and that's why we don't talk about them. Just because these operations aren't visible to the public it doesn't mean that they are not happening. So in answer to any criticism I would say that EUFOR and NATO are actively hunting for PIFWICs all the time. The second point is that if we have actionable intelligence on the whereabouts of a PIFWIC, EUFOR will act in order to apprehend that person, and that will most probably be in coordination with NATO and of course the Bosnian authorities, if that is appropriate. But we will not hesitate to act alone if that's required. And I think the final point with regard to any criticism of the international

military forces in this country is NATO 29 – Republika Srpska 0, with regard to the apprehension of PIFWICs since the end of the war. And that's all I have, I'll just hand you over to Derek. Thank you.

Derek Chappell, NATO:

I would just reiterate those comments and say that we are aggressively seeking to assist the local authorities in the apprehension of PIFWICs we fully recognize that it is one of the outstanding issues that challenges Bosnia and Herzegovina . We have an excellent relationship with the ICTY and details of this operation that I gave you this morning is an excellent example, a very recent example of the sort of day to day work we are doing to try and disrupt the activities of their supporters and to actually locate the people on the ground.

EUFOR:

Sorry, and obviously the other point for you to bear in mind of course is that the onus for capturing the war criminals lies with the Bosnian and Herzegovina authorities, in particular the RS. You know, we're here in a supportive role, we will take active efforts, but the actual onus and the Dayton is on the parties that signed Dayton , and I think that's very important to remember. Thank you.

OHR:

One more.

Journalist:

Can you say is there any progress? I mean are you just a bit closer to Karadžić then it was some eight years ago?

EUFOR:

Like I said to you, a lot of our operations are intelligence driven, I'm not going to talk about intelligence and I'm not

going to speculate whether we are closer, further, where he is, where he isn't or anything like that, because it does no use to speculate like that. It's damaging to the overall effort in EUFOR's view.

Journalist:

But I didn't ask you do you know where he is, just….

EUFOR:

I'm not going to comment whether we're closer or further away.

OHR:

Okay, if there is nothing further. Thank you very much.