

OHR's Statement at the International Agency's Joint Press Conference

CPIC - June 17, 2003

Ashdown Meets Rumsfeld

HR met Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, Mark Grossman (State Dept. Undersecretary for Political Affairs), Daniel Fried (National Security Council), and Nancy Lee (Treasury Dept) among others in Washington on Monday.

At all his meetings, he briefed on where things had got to in BiH. He said that he was where he expected to be after one year:

- The State Court was up and running
- The first major case, perhaps the biggest human trafficking case in the Balkans, was now before the court
- The State level government had been restructured, with the Prime Minister in post for 4 years not 8 rotating months
- Security and Justice Ministry established at the State level
- VAT and Customs well on the way
- Bulldozer process removing obstacles to business
- Defense reform commission
- Intelligence reform commission

Long discussion with Rumsfeld on defense reform. The HR explained that BiH could only qualify for membership of PFP if it undertook far-reaching reform and established a single command chain

Also discussed with Rumsfeld the vast networks of organized crime that were beginning to be uncovered by the investigations set up into customs, sales tax, the public utilities, and as a result of Operation Balkan Vice. They discussed the next steps necessary to exploit this information and ensure that these networks were destroyed.

HR also briefed Rumsfeld on the new approach being taken to undermine the networks that support war criminals. We were now actively "shaking the tree", going after people and the money that had allowed indicted war criminals to evade arrest for all these years.

HR described the enemies as three fold - indicted war criminals, organized crime, and terrorism. He explained that there are five allies deployed in the field - the US and the work they were doing to freeze assets and target supporters; the EU and its visa bans against those who support indictees; SFOR and its operations; the BiH authorities; and the OHR itself. Each had their own contribution to make. And for the first time, all these activities were being coordinated.

Rumsfeld and HR also discussed the lessons that could be learned from Bosnia for Iraq. HR set out some of the themes that he will be expanding on in his speech to the IRC on Thursday:

- First, you need to go in hard. Establish authority, and get the tough tasks done early on
- Second, you need to make the RoL the first priority. Without RoL, democracy and a stable economy are undermined.
- Third, you need to be ready for the long haul. Measured not in months or years, but decades.

HR told Rumsfeld that in 2 ½ years, it would be 10 years after the war and it might be possible to transition to a different type of international mission. But we should only do that once it has become clear that the process of stabilization and progress to Europe is irreversible.

OHR on Canton 7 Govt. Formation

As we have seen, after eight months of wasted time the HNC Government has finally been formed. This is not the time for patting each other on the back, but the time to start getting down to the serious work that lies ahead, too much time has been lost already.

Government formation is an important step but ONLY the first step. It is time for action, as this is the only way that the elected representative of Canton 7 Assembly will be able to restore the trust of the citizens of C7 and BiH in them.

The citizens in C7 suffered because of the irresponsible behavior of their elected officials – now those same officials must show their commitment to resolving the economic and social problems that have accumulated in this Canton.

What we expect now is the Government to start working immediately. The OHR vetting process of the Ministers of Interior, Education and Justice will go ahead and it will be rigorous as ever but the HNC Govt. can start working, as the BiH CoM did, in the interim period.

Tea and Medicinal Herb Festival BiH

Reminder that the Tea and Medicinal Herb Festival will continue through the whole week at the Trg Oslobođenja, Sarajevo, after its opening on Sunday. OHR supports such initiatives because BiH has the potential to raise export possibilities in specific and well-defined market's niches.