

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

Subject: **JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE - 22 April 2003**

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Tuesday, 22 April 2003:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Oleg Milisic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High Representative visits Republic of Croatia• The regional fight against organized crime• The upcoming EU Thessaloniki summit• Return of refugees, particularly in the return of Serbs to Croatia.
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina will be visiting Banja Luka• The ten winning projects of the OSCE Student Competition will promoted tomorrow at the Camil Sijaric Primary School in Sarajevo
c. SFOR	Captain Dale MacEachern	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commander of SFOR meeting with Federation and Republika Srpska officials

Oleg Milisic - OHR

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, is visiting Croatia today. As we speak he is meeting the President of Croatia, Stjepan Mesic; Deputy Prime Minister Goran Granic; Minister of Foreign Affairs Tonino Picula and other Croatian Government officials.

There will be three main topics of discussion; the regional fight against organized crime, the upcoming EU Thessaloniki summit to be held in June dedicated to closer association of South Eastern Europe into the European Union, and thirdly the issue of refugees return, particularly in the return of Serbs to Croatia.

On organized crime, the High Representative will highlight that the only way we can rid the Balkans of the curse of organized crime, is to beat them at their own game. Organized criminals use the region as a single criminal space, to combat them efficiently requires operating internationally. The High Representative will repeat the same message he gave in Belgrade last week; we need tighter operational links between the law enforcement agencies in the region with more effective extradition provisions and closer co-operation between customs agencies and border police so that criminals can't hide from the law by crossing borders. After these meetings the High Representative will hold a short Press Conference today in Zagreb. There is a media advisory with details available on the tables outside. I will just briefly draw you attention to the fact that the High Representative will be meeting the Bosnia and Herzegovina Minister of Security, Barisa Colak, the FBiH and Republika Srpska Ministers of Interior, Mevludin Halilovic and Zoran Djeric, as well as the Director of the State Border Service, Nijaz Spahic, tomorrow in Sarajevo to discuss the fight against organized crime and what more Bosnia and Herzegovina can be doing in this regard - there will be more details later.

PDHR in Banja Luka - Principle Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, is in Banja Luka today where he will have a succession of meetings focusing on the Republika Srpska parliamentary process on the legal and economic reforms which are currently before the RSNA. The PDHR will give a short statement to the press following these meetings in the Republika Srpska Parliament Building at 16.00. The PDHR will be meeting with the Speaker of the RSNA, Dragan Kalinic, and Deputy speakers Tomislav Tomljanovic and Sefket Hafizovic and with the RSNA Caucus chairs. The topic of the meetings will be the new Republika Srpska Criminal and Civil Codes and Procedure Codes and the Bulldozer legislation which the Republika Srpska Government is putting into RSNA Procedure.

Bulldozer Progress

More on 'Bulldozer progress' – as you know, the Bulldozer process – 50 reforms in 150 days – is now in its final stages. This week the State and Entity parliamentary assemblies will consider the Bulldozer reforms that have been sent to them by the governments. The Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Representatives and House of Peoples are meeting this morning to debate three laws which encompass four of the 50 reforms. The High Representative has commended the State and Entity governments and the Brcko authorities for their constructive and timely approach in moving the Bulldozer Process forward. He calls on parliamentarians to show the same professionalism and seriousness in getting these reforms into law. The Bulldozer reforms will help new companies to start up and existing companies to expand – and that means creating new jobs.

The Bulldozer Process is part of a broad strategy that aims to take Bosnia and Herzegovina into the European Union, in a matter of years not decades. The Foreign Affairs Commission of the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Representatives has summed up what may be a new mood among parliamentarians. The Committee notes that EU integration is now viewed as the highest priority by parliamentarians and there is "full political consensus" for a concerted reform program that will prepare Bosnia and Herzegovina for membership – and of course, those reforms are going to improve the lives of citizens even before membership becomes a reality. Both chambers of the Parliamentary Assembly have tasked the Council of Ministers with drafting a strategy, in co-operation with the European Commission, that will lead to full-fledged EU membership in 2009. Bosnia and Herzegovina politicians are now focusing on this goal, and that in itself is a positive step.

The Bulldozer Process shows that real change is possible in Bosnia and Herzegovina, when the political process is focused on getting things done. The first Bulldozer phase can be completed successfully this week – that is in the hands of parliamentarians.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir - OSCE

Ambassador Victor Tkachenko, Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina will be visiting Banja Luka tomorrow and Thursday. He will meet with the Republika Srpska ministers of Interior, Justice, Refugees and displaced persons and Labour and Veterans and War victims. The talks will be concentrated on property law implementation and refugee return in Republika Srpska, the problem of trafficking in human beings, situation of the entity courts and protection of social and economic rights in Republika Srpska. Furthermore he will award certificates to 9 employers who participated in the Fair Employment Project.

The ten winning projects of the OSCE Student Competition will be promoted tomorrow at the Camil Sijaric Primary School in Sarajevo. The competition was for the best project describing students' vision of a better school, and was a part of the OSCE's efforts to promote education reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Head of OSCE Mission, Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft, and a popular artist for children, Troko, will address the students. The ten winning schools will then receive certificates and their project proposals exhibited. You are cordially invited to attend this event, which starts tomorrow, Wednesday, at 11:30.

Captain Dale MacEachern - SFOR

Good morning, I have one point today. The Commander of SFOR, Lieutenant General Ward, will meet today with Federation Minister of Defense Nikolic, Republika Srpska Minister of Defense Stankovic, Colonel General Dudakovic, Major General Zeko and Colonel General Savic. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss defense reforms and the restructuring of the Armed Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina (AFBiH). The intention is to agree upon a new structure for the AFBiH for implementation in January of 2004. This effort is in response to the High Representatives directive for military reform including increased support to the Standing Committee on Military Matters, State-level civilian command and control over the AFBiH and restructuring of the armed forces, including downsizing and destruction of surplus weapons. Among other reasons, these reforms are required to address problems highlighted by the ORAO matter and as a prerequisite for participation in Partnership for Peace. Furthermore, changes are necessary because dual structures and needless redundancy cause numerous inefficiencies and waste. A number of the people involved in this meeting have indicated their preparedness to move forward with these much needed reforms. This meeting will be an opportunity for them to demonstrate their resolve.

Thank You.

Questions and Answers

Q: Tausan Marija - SRNA

Can you comment on the allegations that in the military defense plan of the Federation, the Republika Srpska and Serbia are treated as enemies.

A: Captain Dale MacEachern - SFOR

I didn't get that story.

Q: Tausan Marija - SRNA

Can you comment on the allegations that in the military defense plan of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republika Srpska and Serbia are treated as enemies.

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

With regard to OHR's position, I can certainly say that OHR has seen the media reports. I mean regardless of whether these reports are accurate or not, I can certainly set out the OHR position in this regard. And that is firstly that the days when the FBiH or the Republika Srpska need to concern themselves with a possible military attack are long gone. What this story does very clearly show if the media reports you mention are in fact correct, and let me just highlight again that we've seen nothing further than the media reports, is the need for proper defense reform. In particular it shows the need to insure that the use or the threat of force is a state competency and neither entity shall threaten or use force and the proper implementation of this commitment must take place. Secondly, command and control of the armed forces is a state competency exercised through a unified state level institution with both civilian and military competencies. And finally the transparency of all defense structures in Bosnia and Herzegovina is absolutely essential. Now much has been said about these reforms already and I just again want to highlight the defense reform commission which the High Representative announced some weeks ago is going to be set up shortly and this will certainly be the vehicle for putting these reforms in place. I don't know if you have anything to add.

A: Captain Dale MacEachern - SFOR

Just add that from an SFOR perspective we deal in facts. Accuracy is very important for us and fact is we know nothing about this alleged plan. We know nothing about this alleged theft of the alleged plan and that's pretty much all I have to say on an article that was produced based on unnamed sources.

Q: Nedeljko Zelenovic - Glas Srpski

If it turns out that this is true, what will the international community do?

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

First let me say what we are talking about are media reports so we're certainly not going to speculate. But as I've said with regard to reforms that need to be put in place I think I was quit clear in the previous answer so I don't really have anything to add to that.

A: Captain Dale MacEachern - SFOR

From SFOR's perspective we're not prepared to speculate on a potential hypothetical scenario.

Q: Nedeljko Zelenovic - Glas Srpski

Why did SFOR not inspect the military factories in the Federation when there was official information from the Office of Federation President about the violations of the arms embargo and that the factories of the military had exported weapons into the countries which were under the arms embargo.

A: Captain Dale MacEachern - SFOR

SFOR conducts it's operations equally throughout the entire area of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We do not base our operations on ethnicity, entity, anything like that. We base our operations on intelligence that we have and we go from there. Having said that part of your question enters into the realm of intelligence, which obviously I cannot share with you if we are to continue to be effective in the execution of our mandate.

Q: Nedeljko Zelenovic - Glas Srpski

But the President of the Federal government admitted that there was arms embargo violations and SFOR did nothing although this was recognised by the Federal Vice President.

A: Captain Dale MacEachern - SFOR

What's your question?

Q: Nedeljko Zelenovic - Glas Srpski

How come SFOR hasn't done anything about it?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern - SFOR

Again, our operations, the way we conduct our operations, it's driven by intelligence. I can't get into matters of intelligence with you because if I were to do that, that would impact directly upon our effectiveness as a force here in Bosnia and Herzegovina and would also impact upon the security of our troops when they're on the ground. And I'm not prepared to do that.