

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

Subject: JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 11 March 2003

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

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Mario Brkic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bijeljina Atik Mosque Reconstruction• The HR in Banja Luka• Bulldozer Committee to Present 50 Recommendations to Joint Meeting of BiH Governments
b. OSCE	Henning Philipp	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislation• Bosnia and Herzegovina reform of defense<ul style="list-style-type: none">• OSCE's Municipal Infrastructure Finance and Implementation Project (MIFI)• 'Srebrenica cases' (Ferida Selimovic and others v. Republika Srpska)

c. EUPM	Jon Oskar Solnes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good police work in many parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina • Two women rescued from pimps • Night bar raided and closed down in Novo Sarajevo • Shooting incident in Pale leads to confiscation of weapons • Positive projects in Canton 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explosions in Mostar • Allegations against EUPM and BiH police
d. UNHCR	Bakir Jalovcic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 2003 PLIP Statistics
e. SFOR	Captain Dale MacEachern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations which SFOR conducted on Friday 07 Mar 03

2. Thirty-one members of the media including five television crews attended the conference.

3. The transcript of the questions and answers is attached.

Mario Brkic – OHR

Following years of obstruction, the Islamic Community of Bijeljina began rebuilding the Atik Mosque in December 2002, pursuant to the Human Rights Chamber decision of 8 March 2001. The mosque, built in the 16th Century and located in the city centre, was the main mosque in the Bijeljina area and has important symbolic significance for return.

In the initial phase of reconstruction, ancient tombstones were discovered in the foundation of the mosque. The Municipality of Bijeljina issued a decision to suspend construction so objects of archaeological value could be

safely recovered.

Since then the issue of archaeological remains has been politicized, and acts of vandalism have occurred at the site. Local media have raised the possibility of replacing the mosque with a museum.

The Mayor has been silent on this subject. He has failed to emphasize the very clear legal status of the mosque and he has failed to condemn the vandalism and the threat to use illegal means to block reconstruction of the mosque.

The facts are as follows. The Bosnia and Herzegovina Human Rights Chamber decision upholds the right of the Islamic Community to reconstruct the mosque – regardless of any antiquities found on the site. This is a place of worship that was destroyed as part of ethnic cleansing in 1993. This act of destruction was illegal and morally insupportable. No benefit that might derive from it, such as the discovery of antiquities, can deny the Islamic Community its right to rebuild the mosque. According to the new Bosnia and Herzegovina Criminal Code, disrespect for Human Rights Chamber decisions carries a criminal penalty.

The status of the site is further protected by the Islamic Community's application for monument status for the mosque under Annex 8 of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Blocking of the reconstruction of the mosque would constitute obstruction.

The Islamic Community has suspended reconstruction of the mosque so that the antiquities can be excavated. This work must not be used as a pretext for holding up the reconstruction of the mosque. The reconstruction of the Atik Mosque in Bijeljina is an important symbol of restoring religious tolerance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is the European norm, and those opposed to this process are simply demonstrating that they do not understand the law or the basic conventions of modern and tolerant European societies.

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will visit Banja Luka on Wednesday, where he will meet ordinary people and talk about issues such as employment, the cost of living and the quality of public services. He will visit a soup kitchen. He will also visit the successfully privatized paper processing company CELEX, and the newly opened CIPS center in Banja Luka. More details on his visit later on in the Media Advisory.

Five representatives of the Bulldozer Committee, Tomislav Grizelj of the Federation Employer's Confederation, Mevlida Kunosic-Vlasic of Taldi business association in Tuzla, FIPA Director General Mirza Hajric, Sinisa Sarac from the "Successor Generation" initiative, and Zoran Gazibaric, of the REZ business association, will present the 50 recommendations drawn up by the Committee to a special joint session of the Bosnia and Herzegovina governments on Wednesday 12 March 2003 at 15:00 at the Joint Institutions Building (Trg Bosne i Hercegovine 1)

There will be a photo opportunity at 14.55, in the forecourt of the Joint Institutions Building. Journalists will also be allowed to cover the opening of the meeting, when the Committee will present its recommendations to the three Prime ministers and the finance ministers, and there will be a press conference at the end of the meeting, at 17.00 tomorrow afternoon.

Henning Philipp – OSCE

A key aspect in carrying out reforms in the defence sector is legislation. In order to identify problems in the existing law at state and entity level that could slow down already approved reforms and to agree on possible ways ahead; a legal seminar is being held here in Sarajevo from 10 to 12 March. Representatives of the state and entity parliaments, of the SCMM, both Ministries of Defence, and both armies are taking part alongside with experts from OHR, OSCE, and SFOR.

“Enacting legislation that can most effectively implement Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Defence Pledges is a necessity and of paramount importance for the reform process,” stated Ambassador Henry Zipper de Fabiani, the Acting Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the opening session of the seminar.

He added that the need for parliamentary control of the Armed Forces would demand a Security Policy Committee to be established within the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly. Equally important were the strengthening of the SCMM as a body capable of representing Bosnia and Herzegovina internationally, serious efforts to make the Armed Forces affordable, and the creation of an overall Security Policy of which Defence Policy was an essential part.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has committed itself to a reform of defence aimed at ensuring security and stability in the country and in South Eastern Europe. A related document, titled “Defence Targets of Bosnia and Herzegovina – Mission and Pledges” was presented to the Peace Implementation Council in January 2003 by the Secretary General of the Standing Committee on Military Matters (SCMM). The Council endorsed the document, which contained five pledges aimed at transforming the Armed Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina to become modern, credible, affordable, and capable of protecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ten municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina have completed the OSCE’s Municipal Infrastructure Finance and Implementation Project (MIFI). Through participation in the project, these municipalities have improved their development planning, budget and financial management, they have increased the understanding of roles and responsibilities of elected officials and parliamentary procedures, and developed their relations with the citizens. The municipalities of Banovici, Bugojno, Bosanska Krupa, Bosanski Petrovac, Doboj, Jablanica,

Ljubuski, Maglaj, Pale/Praca and Rudo will in the coming weeks join a group of nine municipalities that have completed the MIFI project since its establishment in 1998.

Through improved financial management, in particular a realistic budget policy and strict expenditure control, MIFI municipalities were able to free money for urgently needed improvements in municipal infrastructure. As a result, new roads have been constructed, sewage systems built, traffic-and streetlights put up, electrical lines established, water supply systems built and sport centres constructed.

The OSCE mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomes the March 7 decision of the Human Rights Chamber concerning the first 49 of the 'Srebrenica cases' (Ferida Selimovic and others v. Republika Srpska). The Chamber considered the question whether authorities in the Republika Srpska violated the human rights of family members of missing persons from Srebrenica by failing to inform them, since December 14 1995, about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones.

The Chamber ruled that the Republika Srpska Government had violated the human rights of the families and relatives by taking minimal steps to clarify the fate and whereabouts of the presumed victims of the Srebrenica events, or to take other action to relieve the suffering of surviving family members. The Chamber also noted that the Republika Srpska authorities were directly involved in the disappearances, the destruction of evidence of those disappearances, and had not undertaken prosecution of any persons responsible, in breach of international law. The Republika Srpska authorities offered no arguments to the Chamber on the merits of the applications.

OSCE highlights the findings on reparations. OSCE also calls on the Republika Srpska authorities to conduct an investigation into the Srebrenica events of July 1995 that is "full, meaningful, thorough and detailed" as ordered by the

Chamber and to issue an interim status report by June 7, 2003 with a full report by September 7, 2003.

Jon Oskar Solnes – EUPM

In the recent weeks, the gradual improvement, aimed for, within the Bosnia and Herzegovina Police has been overshadowed by explosions and other criminal incidents, which by nature get substantial coverage in the media, and justly so. The EUPM will not be complacent and thus takes incidents of the foresaid nature extremely seriously. Furthermore, the EUPM will not try to paint an unrealistic picture of the current security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It needs improving, there is no doubt about that. I would, however, like to take this opportunity to point out a number of actions by the Bosnia and Herzegovina police, which indicates that in many parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, by now, significant and solid police work is undertaken. The EUPM welcomes this, especially structural improvements, where the Bosnia and Herzegovina police is sharing information across political boundaries and where the police is working in a professional and proactive manner in sensitive areas. Let me briefly point out a few efforts by the Bosnia and Herzegovina police in the last recent days.

On the evening of 6th March, local police in Livno stopped a vehicle and found two girls who were in the forced custody of two males. They were apparently being forced into prostitution by the two men, who were immediately arrested. The investigative judge and the prosecutor have been informed.

A few days ago a police team from the Canton 9 MOI raided the Victory night club in Novo Sarajevo. There were no victims of Human Trafficking found, however, due to tax irregularities the nightclub has been closed down.

Following a shooting incident in Pale, local crime department inspectors investigated the crime scene, which had witnessed a

shooting by two locals at a returnee's house. Following a swift investigation, the perpetrators were apprehended and detained in the Pale police station. In an ensuing search at the perpetrators houses and in other premises in the close vicinity a substantial number of weapons was found. The confiscated weapons included 6 automatic riffles, a machine gun, 5 hand grenades and hundreds of rounds of ammunition. The EUPM monitored a truly professional response to the reckless shooting in Pale and is pleased with the rapid response that led to the apprehension of perpetrators and weapons.

In some areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EUPM has monitored a very satisfactory development regarding the security of returnees, one of them is Canton 1. In Canton 1, the local police is carrying out two important law enforcement projects: "Community Policing" and "Security of Returnees". The police thus conducts regular visits to returnee areas and makes assessments of the security situation and the needs of the refugees, not the least on laws and regulations pertaining to opening up small businesses. The findings of these visits are moreover forwarded to local Municipal and Cantonal authorities, thus fostering a dialogue on how to improve the situation of returnees. Following recent reports a process for improving the information flow from authorities to returnees regarding their civil right has been initiated. Furthermore, the creation of bus lines, taking into consideration the transport needs of returnees, is under way. The EUPM applauds the proactive approach manifested in the current police projects in Canton 1.

Returning to more negative news, we have certainly had too many explosions in Mostar recently, resulting in one particularly tragic case in the death of Mr. Hrnjicic and serious injuries to his son. The EUPM condemns these criminal acts and will continue to push for determined and professional investigations of these incidents. The investigation is still ongoing.

On Friday 7th March, an explosion injured a male of Bosnian Serb ethnicity when he was working in his field. The explosive device detonated as the victim picked up a bag of cement in front of his shed, indicating that it had been planted there with malicious intent. The victim sustained injuries to his legs and chest and was brought to hospital where he is recovering.

The EUPM is monitoring this case and also the other recent explosions, such as the attack on the BINGO premises. That investigation is also ongoing.

There was yesterday an article in Oslobodenje on the CAFAO and local police raid on Kalen premises near Zenica. In that article, allegations were made against Bosnia and Herzegovina police and the monitoring EUPM officers, which were said to have obstructed the press. As the freedom of the press is extremely important we take such stories very seriously and are examining our side of the story. However, I will stress at this stage, that we are not jumping to any conclusions regarding this rather than is the case with other incidents we look into. Thus, I expect to be able to clarify the issue when we meet again on Thursday.

Bakir Jalovcic – UNHCR

The resolution of property claims filed with municipal housing offices throughout the country stands at 74% as of the end of January, according to the Property Law Implementation statistics, announced today by the PLIP agencies (OHR, UNHCR, OSCE, CRPC).

The Federation figures show 80% of all cases have been solved, while in the Republika Srpska the total is 67%. Brcko District has solved 77% of its claims. This rise has been partly influenced by the amended PLIP statistics questionnaire, introduced on 1 January 2003.

Most importantly, the PLIP statistics now include a column showing the date reached in each municipal housing department in its chronological resolution of claims. This will help people know when they might expect their claim to be addressed.

Finally, once again the PLIP statistics show that slower rates of implementation often occur in the larger towns. This is particularly noticeable in the Republika Srpska, with centres such as Bijeljina and Zvornik with 20% or more below the Entity average, and Banja Luka with around 15% below the average. Sarajevo municipalities Hadzici, Ilijas and Centar also fall well below the Federation rate of implementation. Smaller municipalities that take excessive time to process even a minimal number of claims can also be noted in both entities.

Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

Good morning, I am Captain Dale MacEachern from the Canadian Air Force and I am the new SFOR spokesperson. I am very enthusiastic about being assigned as the spokesman and look forward to working with you over the next seven months.

Today, I wish to briefly address the operations which SFOR conducted on Friday 07 Mar 03.

On Friday morning at approximately 1030hrs local, SFOR personnel commenced operations in the vicinity of Pale and Lukavica.

These operations were conducted in support of the Office of the High Representative's efforts to disrupt the activities of persons providing financial assistance to Radovan Karadzic and other Persons Indicted for War Crimes. They consisted of the search of two offices belonging to Milovan Bjelica and the seizure of documentation and computers.

On Friday afternoon at approximately 1400hrs local, SFOR

personnel from MNB (N) and MNB (NW) commenced operations at a number of VRS and VF facilities.

These operations consisted of unannounced inspections aimed at ensuring compliance with the General Framework Agreement for Peace. Specifically, SFOR conducted unannounced inspections of three VRS units suspected of conducting anti-Dayton activity and a routine unannounced inspection of the VF-B Corps Headquarters.

All of Friday's operations fall within the mandate of SFOR and constitute normal operations. SFOR is authorised to conduct these types of operations in accordance with the General Framework Agreement for Peace. These operations were executed without incident and with a good level of co-operation from all parties concerned.

The Commander of SFOR has stated that "These operations are a clear indication of SFOR's commitment to its mandate, and its resolve to detain persons indicted for war crimes. Our role is to foster progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina by ensuring a safe and secure environment, and we will continue to do that to the best of our ability".

Friday's operations yielded a significant quantity of information, and we are now in the process of analysing it. Given the amount of material we have, this process will take some time. When we have further information that we are able to make public, we will do so at the appropriate time. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic – Reuters

The statement by General Ward; when you said it showed the resolution to apprehend war crime indictees. Does this

statement also refers to the inspection of military facilities in the Republika Srpska or only to these two in Pale and Lukavica. Because is it's intent to refers to all of the activities on Friday or just morning activities on Friday?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

Friday's activities, the operation conducted Friday, both in the morning and the afternoon. I think both demonstrates SFOR's commitment to it's mandate overall. Specifically you're looking for clarification on the commander's comments. I think that they address both the mandates overall and specifically within the mandate SFOR's commitment to apprehend PIFWICs. Does that answer your question? Can you clarify your question?

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic – Reuters

Not really; the question is whether this SFOR resolution to apprehend war criminals, does it also imply to activities that were conducted in Banja Luca; for example...

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

I see what you are asking. The operations of the morning and the operations of the afternoon are two separate sets of operations.

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic – Reuters

So his statements does not refer to the activities in Banja Luca?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

Well I think they refer to both because it's saying SFOR's commitment to it's mandate, period, and it's resolve detain persons indicted for war crimes. So I would suggest that the commander's comments address both sets of operations. But if you're asking whether or not the operations of the afternoon

and the morning are connected; no they're not.

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic – Reuters

No I just want to know whether these inspections of military facilities in the Serb Republic were connected, were linked to searching for materials against war criminals.

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

The activities of the afternoon, the operations and inspections of the military facilities, the purpose of those inspections were to determine whether or not the military units were conducting anti-Dayton activities.

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic – Reuters

But not specifically related to war criminals?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

Not specifically related to; no the operations of the morning and the operations of the afternoon are two separate sets of operations.

Q: Amra Hadjosmanovic – AFP

A similar question; you said you have significant information you are analyzing now. So, have seized them during morning or afternoon operations, or both; or during both?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

I would say we seized information during both operations. It depends on what operation you are talking about the morning operation or the afternoon. But information was gathered during both operations; yes.

Q: Amra Hadjosmanovic – AFP

And what kind of anti-Dayton activities are the two Armies are suspected of?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

What we believe, what we think, I can't really go into and the reason behind that is we do not want to jeopardize any potential future or present operations; so I can't really go into that.

Q: Amra Hadiosmanovic – AFP

But have..whether your suspicion confirmed after the raid?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

Well again as I said we are in the process of analyzing the information that we gathered from the Friday operations and when we have completed that analyzing and we have information that we believe is appropriate to share, we will do so.

Q: Amra Hadiosmanovic – AFP

Can you rule out any link between information you gathered in the military facilities and in the Pale and Lukavica?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

I'm not in a position to rule out any thing at this point. Again, we are in the process of analyzing the information

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC

If you find enough evidence that Bjelica and Mandic were indeed supporting Karadzic, what would you do; will you arrest them; are they also considered criminals, those persons who support war criminals are they also considered criminals?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

What you are asking there is actually a hypothetical scenario and I'm really not in a position to talk through a hypothetical scenario. As I said, we're analyzing the information. What we'll do, we want to take our time; we want to make sure we do a very accurate and high quality analysis

of the information we gathered and then once we have that analysis completed and we have made some conclusions, then courses of action will be determined based upon those conclusions. But to go ahead and work off a hypothetical, I'm not prepared to do that.

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC

OK, and one totally unrelated question: In case of a military intervention in Iraq, will SFOR troops or facilities be involved in any way?

A: Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

Again that speaks to a hypothetical scenario but what I can tell you is this....that is that we are here as SFOR, as a NATO operation, we have a specific mandate and we are committed to ensuring the execution of that particular mandate. As far as the Iraq situation is concerned, that's not within our radar. Sorry to use that expression, it's not really in our area of responsibility.