

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

Subject: **JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE - 25 February 2003**

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Tuesday 25 February 2003:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Julian Braithwaite	• The new Bosnia and Herzegovina ID card
b. OSCE	Emir Salihovic	• Education
c. EUPM	Jon Oskar Solnes	• Positive cooperation in NEUM • EUPM vehicle damaged • Internal control procedures against Local Police • EUPM Commissioner in Mostar
d. UNHCR	Bakir Jalovcic	• No Statement
e. ICTY	Rafik Hodzic	• Electronic statement not available
f. SFOR	Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier	• Allegations of misconduct by SFOR troops.

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

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

Julian Braithwaite - OHR

I would like to take this opportunity to set out the OHR's position on the new Bosnia and Herzegovina ID card, which is part of the CIPS project.

The High Representative's view, and this view is shared by the whole of the IC, is that this project is too important to be allowed to fail.

Let me underline what is at stake. The new ID card for the first time since the war introduces a single, uniform ID card for the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in line with European standards, and backed up by a single database and one of the most powerful computer systems in the whole Balkans.

Why is a single reliable ID card for Bosnia and Herzegovina so important? Five reasons.

First, Bosnia and Herzegovina needs it to fight criminals who at the moment can forge multiple ID cards to evade the law.

Second, Bosnia and Herzegovina needs it to tackle all those who use fake ID to defraud the pension system, veteran's benefits and other social systems.

Third, Bosnia and Herzegovina needs it to crack down on the illegal property ownership that still prevents many refugees returning.

Fourth, Bosnia and Herzegovina needs it to tackle tax and customs fraud, and introduce VAT.

And fifth, Bosnia and Herzegovina needs it to convince the European Union and other countries that Bosnia and Herzegovina can control its borders and account for its citizens – a vital precondition for introducing visa-free travel, particularly since 11 September 2001.

I want to make it clear that the HR does not believe that any responsible politician in Bosnia and Herzegovina wants this project to fail.

However, recent statements and actions by a number of politicians have had the effect of creating uncertainty and confusion about the new ID card, and therefore undermining public confidence in the project.

We are firmly of the view that these politicians did not intend to undermine the whole project and with it the fight against crime, fraud, and Bosnia and Herzegovina's prospects of getting visa free travel for its citizens.

The CoM, who are ultimately responsible for the success of this project, of course have every right to be informed about how it is being managed.

That is why DH and the OHR experts who have been assisting the CIPS project will give evidence to Mr Halilovic's Commission this afternoon.

The OHR team will address three myths about the ID card:

- First, that the price of the card has gone up.
- Second, that the price of the card is a rip off for Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens.
- And third, that the citizens' money is being misspent.

Let me take the issue of the price of the card. The price has not gone up.

The total price of the card paid by the citizens was fixed at KM 14.5 last June. This is made up of KM 10, which pays the contractors, Siemens, for the production of the card; KM 3.5 which pays the Post Office who are issuing the card; and KM 1 which pays the bank handling charges.

Initially, the decision was taken to fix the administrative price in a contract with the 3 Post Offices, and only put the price of KM 10 to cover the Siemens contract in the CoM Rule Book. However, legal advice last December was to put the administrative price in the rule book as well. This is where the myth of the KM 3.5 increase comes from.

Let me now deal with the second myth. That the card is a rip off.

This is clearly not the case, since the new CIPS ID card is significantly cheaper than the price may of you have to pay for the old ID cards.

In the Republika Srpska, the old card costs 60% more than the new card. And in some cantons in the Federation, the old card costs 130% more. A graph is available showing the differences in prices outside.

Moreover, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina pay less for the new CIPS ID card than the citizens of many other countries in the region.

IN Croatia, the price of the national ID card is 90% more than the new CIPS ID card. In Slovenia, the price of their card is 200% more than the CIPS card.

I now want to come on to the third myth. That the money is not being properly spent, and that the CIPS project is being mismanaged.

A pie chart available outside shows where the money is going. The greatest cost is the highly secure polycarbonate cards and the specialised equipment that produces these digitally coded, forgery resistant ID cards. This costs over 50% of the whole project, or about 8.5 million **EURO**. The second largest cost is the cost of the computer system that links up all these ID cards in a national database. This costs 35% of the total project or about 5.8 million **EURO**. This involves countrywide system extending to all 147 municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, all linked to the latest generation central server.

It is a myth that money is being wasted on international consultants. Yes, there is ONE consultant working for CIPS at the moment. He is paid for directly by the government of Canada, not by the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Yes, there were four consultants working on designing the project. They were paid for directly by the EC, the US and Canadian governments.

It is also a myth that the project is being mismanaged. The government of Slovenia has sent their experts here to learn how we have done it. They say this system is one of the most advanced in Europe. UNMIK in Kosovo intend to model their ID card programme on the CIPS project.

So what do you get for your KM 14.5?

You get this [hold up new card]. A credit card sized ID card representing the latest in security technology. A hologram and digitally laser engraved photograph to prevent forgery. Electronic data storage of your address, even your fingerprint is encoded in the bar codes on the back for additional security. [more details]

This replaces THESE. The current range of paper ID cards offered by the RS and the cantons. Expensive. Low tech. Easy to forge. Well below standards in EU countries, and increasingly, in the region.

Mr Halilovic's Commission may recommend that the overall price for the ID card should be reduced from KM 14.5. But if he does so, he will call into question the economic viability of the project.

The ID card is self-financing, because there is no money in the State Budget to pay for it. As you may well know, the State Budget is smaller than the budget of Tuzla Canton, and about half that of Sarajevo Canton.

So, the initial investment was paid for by a bank loan. The terms of the repayment of this loan were based on the overall price for the card agreed last June. If the CoM changes it now, Bosnia and Herzegovina will not be able to meet its financing obligations under this loan. Not only that, the impression given will be one of a lack of seriousness and of irresponsibility. This will undermine Bosnia and Herzegovina's reputation in the international banking community and make it harder for Bosnia and Herzegovina to get favourable banking terms for other loans.

Under the current financing plan, the CIPS project breaks even – covers its costs – in late 2004 early 2005. At that point, the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina starts to make a surplus. This surplus will go into the State Budget, for the government to invest, fund social programmes and so on.

Let me end by repeating the HR's view: this is a time for the politicians of Bosnia and Herzegovina to show leadership and responsibility, not score political points at the expense of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and this country's future.

Emir Salihovic- OSCE

Education was the main item on the agenda of a meeting between the OSCE Deputy Head of Mission, Ambassador Henry Zipper de Fabiani and Mr. Safet Halilovic, Bosnia and Herzegovina Minister of Civil Affairs yesterday. The meeting was very constructive, the Ambassador and the Minister discussed education reform, now that his ministry has taken on the co-ordination role on education issues within the Bosnia and Herzegovina government. The meeting focused mainly on the law on primary and secondary education and the question of an urgent consideration of the law in the State parliament. Furthermore, Ambassador de Fabiani invited Minister Halilovic to attend the next meeting of entity and cantonal education ministers, in order to introduce the draft law on primary and secondary education. That meeting will be held in Sarajevo on March 5.

Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft, Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, is returning from Banja Luka today, where he has had several meetings with RS officials, mainly regarding issues of education and property law implementation. In his meetings with the president and the vice-presidents of the Republika Srpska, as well as the Republika Srpska prime minister and minister for refugees and displaced persons, Ambassador Beecroft, informed them about OSCE activities. He stressed the need to finish Property Law implementation by the end of this year and emphasised the need to further support sustainable returns. Ambassador Beecroft informed the Republika Srpska authorities about OSCE and international community's efforts in that regard, and informed them as well about the meetings OSCE and UNHCR missions in the region had last week in Zagreb regarding regional refugee return. Ambassador Beecroft also met with the Republika Srpska education minister and welcomed the minister's commitment to work on implementation of the education pledges that were endorsed by the Peace Implementation Council in Brussels last November.

This morning Ambassador Beecroft met with the RSNA speaker, Kalinic, and discussed amongst other things, passage of law on primary and secondary education through the RSNA.

As so often before, Ambassador Beecroft took some time to meet with a group of young people, who introduced action plans they have been developing to improve youth participation in official life to him. Ambassador Beecroft was impressed and encouraged by the enthusiasm of the group, which he said had prepared a worthwhile strategy plan that deserved full support.

Head of OSCE Mission, Ambassador Robert Beecroft, is visiting Modrica tomorrow, where he will participate in a donation of school supplies to the town's two elementary schools, Sveti Sava and Sutjeska. This event is a result of an initiative by members of Apache Troop from Camp Morgan in Donja Slatina to build relationships between schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the US. All media interested to attend the event at the Sveti Sava school in Modrica, should arrive there tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10:00 hrs.

Jon Oskar Solnes - EUPM

One of the key tasks of the European Union Police Mission is to foster co-operation between police forces within BiH to strengthen the Rule of Law in this country. We have already seen significant progress in this regard in the first weeks of the year.

However, we have also seen the obstacles to further development of co-ordination and information sharing. These are quite often of a technical nature rather than an unwillingness to work together over ethnical and political lines.

A good example is Neum. Last year there was limited co-operation between the SBS in Neum and the local police, in fact there was also limited surveillance of the beaches in general during last summer. Information sharing was insignificant and a lack of a central database available to both the SBS and the local police made their jobs more difficult.

Having identified this problem, the EUPM has now facilitated meetings between the SBS Neum and the local police at police chief level. This has led to the following proposals:

Daily exchanges of intelligence, operational facilities shared by the two services, joint access to common database and improvement and synchronisation of communications equipment.

The results we should see in the coming months. They should on the one hand make life more difficult for criminals and smugglers, on the other hand Neum will become a safer place for holiday makers. In fact, both the SBS Neum and the local police will be equipped with boats very soon, increasing safety on the beaches and in the water.

This is a positive step forward in the law enforcement development in that region, where the EUPM will both foster closer co-operation and increase technical policing capabilities.

In the early hours of Sunday, around 1:30 in the morning, an explosive device detonated under a EUPM vehicle parked outside private accommodations of a EUPM police officer in Bijeljina. The explosion caused minor damages to the rear of the vehicle, there were no injuries.

The local police is investigating this incident and the EUPM is monitoring the case. It is too early at this stage to speculate on the motives and perpetrators but the EUPM is satisfied with the current efforts of the BiH police and will continue to monitor further developments closely.

On a more somber note. The EUPM is aiming to increase the transparency in BiH law enforcement and also the accountability of the police to the citizens of this country. The trust of the population can only be assured if BiH police officers are subject to professional codes of conducts and internal control.

In Zenica, following an internal control investigation by the ministry of internal affairs of Canton 4, a disciplinary procedure has been initiated against a senior police officer in Visoko. This was the result of a lodging of a complaint with the local authorities, which was monitored by the EUPM. In such cases the procedure is thus, the complaint should be lodged by the local police, the EUPM will monitor such cases and make sure they are brought to a conclusion.

Tomorrow, Wednesday 26 February, the EUPM police commissioner will hold high level talks in Mostar tomorrow to discuss the law enforcement situation there and in Canton 7. The commissioner will among others meet with the Minister of Interior, the Police commissioner and the Mayor of Mostar. A media advisory on the visit will be issued to the press shortly.

Bakir Jalovcic - UNHCR

No Statement.

Rafik Hodzic - ICTY

Electronic statement not available.

Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

I have one point for you today and it concerns allegations of misconduct by SFOR troops.

Recent accusations made by RS President Dragan Cavic of misconduct by members of the Italian Carabinieri assigned to SFOR in a letter to COMSFOR, LGen William Ward deserves a response.

All allegations of wrongdoing by SFOR troops that are brought to our attention are taken seriously and as such, COMSFOR has initiated an internal investigation.

The investigation will concentrate on the events surrounding the operation conducted by members of the Italian Carabinieri on 20 February 03. Whilst the investigation is not completed, all work completed to date indicate that there is no evidence of wrongdoing by members of the Carabinieri.

COMSFOR will officially respond to Mr. Cavic's letter upon completion of the investigation. As the investigation is still in progress it would be inappropriate to comment further on this issue.

SFOR has conducted searches of private residences in the past and will continue to do so. These searches are conducted within the SFOR mandate, as part of a sustained effort to create a stable environment for every citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Questions and Answers

Q: Yasin Rawashaden - Kuna

Why is OHR involved in the case of ID cards pricing? Is it not the case between the CIPs and the Bosnian council of ministers? Why you don't leave them to solve the problem?

A: Julian Braithwaite - OHR

I mean obviously the CIPs Director is in charge of the project, he's managing it. The international community has been heavily engaged in this project from the start. I mentioned the five consultants paid for by the US government, the Canadian government and the European Commission. They have been fully involved from the beginning, this is formally a matter between the CIPs project team and the council ministers. However, recent events have shown that unfortunately there's a danger that the project will be brought into a state of uncertainty and confusion by the actions and statements of some politicians. Therefore, unfortunately, yet again the OHR had to be forced...is being forced to intervene in order to make sure that this project, which is vital to the future prospects of this country and is important to every single citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina, succeeds and is not damaged.

Q: Denis Zaimovic - HAYAT

I have a thorough question for the SFOR spokesperson. First of all, I would like to know whether SFOR has received a protest letter from the Bosniac member of the presidency, Mr. Tihic, with regards to the events of the 17th of February this year at the presidency building? Do I need to elaborate?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

Are you referring to the article in this newspaper about COMSFOR's visit to Mr. Tihic? To my knowledge we have

not received any correspondence, official correspondence on the issue.

Q: Denis Zaimovic - HAYAT

But in the office of the presidency member, we were told that the letter of protest had been sent to SFOR yesterday and you say that you haven't received it yet? Do you know about that?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

Well I can tell you is that personally I don't know if the letter has been received. It may have well been sent, but COMSFOR is away on business at this time and I'm not aware the letter has been received.

Q: Denis Zaimovic - HAYAT

All right then; all right then, can you tell us whether you know; are you aware why this letter of protest has been sent in the first place. Because as they told us at the office of the president, this is with regard to the fact that COMSFOR security entered the presidency building with arms, with weapons while General Ward and Mr. Tihic had a meeting on the 17th of February? Do you believe that it is inappropriate for his security to enter with long-barrelled weapons into the office of a member of presidency of this country?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

What I can tell you is that I did read the article in the newspaper today. As I've said, I have not seen the letter that would have been sent yesterday to COMSFOR to elaborate on this issue. So I can't comment on any of these details because they're only media reports and until we get the official letter, I will hold all my comments on the issue.

Q: Denis Zaimovic - HAYAT

Have the letter arrived to the OHR? This question is for you.

A: Julian Braithwaite - OHR

I haven't seen the letter.

Q: Nedeljko Zelenovic - Glas Sprpski

Mr. Braithwaite you said that, from the very start, when we started speaking about the CIPs project, people from the OHR office were involved in this? So why are you reacting in such way now when for example, six months ago you said that 10 KM will be enough to cover all the cost. That it was said that the passports are going to cost 30 KM and as of today, they already cost over 40 KM. So, apparently the prices of the driving license have almost changed? So, tell me, why are we dealing with all these issues now? Your experts were involved in the whole project from the very start. If I recall properly, in September a decision was made that the ID card is going to cost 10 KM and that amount would be sufficient to cover all the associated costs. So now we get the story about all different kinds of costs.

A: Julian Braithwaite - OHR

If I've got your question right, why are we reacting now to this price given that we knew about it all alone? My point is that the price has been known all along in the CIPs project, it's been discussed obviously with the international community. What's going on now appears to be more a misunderstanding for the new authorities who obviously weren't involved in this process last year and we're reacting now because the uncertainty that this is creating is undermining the project. Obviously people, citizens are going to wait until they're certain that they know what the price is before they go and buy their ID cards. Now until the uncertainty about the pricing, the ID cards are not going to be sold in any great numbers, and that means that Bosnia and Herzegovina will not be able to meet it's financing obligations under loan it took out in order to invest in all this expensive equipment. Now that would then bring the whole project into question. Now since the project is so important, we have now intervened; ideally we wouldn't have to; ideally this would all be dealt with between the CIPs project team and the council of ministers. There would be no need for us to intervene with a High Rep's decision to keep the price, the overall price, the 14.5 KM that is being planned for, budgeted for, ever since last June. But, unfortunately we did have to

react following the decision of the council ministers last week. Do we want to be in this position? No. Are we going to, are we determined to make sure this project works and that the prospects of the systems of Bosnia and Herzegovina are not damaged by this project failing? Yes we are.

Q: Markus Bickel - Jungle World

A question for SFOR; yesterday the European Union Foreign Minister specified their plans to overtake SFOR in Bosnia; from a SFOR point of view, is it realistic that the next COMSFOR, lets say a year from now, the COMSFOR will be a European?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

There's been a lot of discussion lately as to the European Union wanting to take over NATO and SFOR's role in the Balkans. As far as we're concerned, SFOR is here and it's present form of 12,000 soldiers from 35 nations, ensuring peace and stability in the region and there's been no change to our mandate; and change to our mandate will only come from above. As we're concerned, we're here to stay until further direction.