

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

JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE - 26 November 2002

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Tuesday 26 November 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Oleg Milisic	• PDHR in Banja Luka.
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	• No statement.
c. UNMIBH	Kirsten Haupt	• International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. • Human rights watch report. • Five military observes to go to Congo. • Ambulance for Sarajevo Airport.
d. ICTY	Rafik Hodzic	• No statement.
e. SFOR	Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier	• No statement.

2. Twenty-nine members of the media including three television crews attended the conference.

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

A. Ollivier

Col. (FR A),

Chief Operations and Plans

Oleg Milisic - OHR

Good morning everybody. I have item from the Office of the High Representative for you today.

The Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays will be in Banja Luka today and tomorrow. This evening at 20:00 he will attend the formal opening of the CIPS identity document personalisation centre.

As you know, under the CIPS project, citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina will receive state-of-the art identity cards that cannot be faked or issued illegally. Each citizen's personal details name, photo, signature and so on and will be laser engraved on the blank plastic cards at the card personalisation centre.

Now that the CIPS project is up and running, citizens will begin to benefit not least by possessing identity documents that are accepted without question throughout Europe.

During his visit to Banja Luka Ambassador Hays will also hold talks with Republika Srpska leaders on the economic crisis this country faces and the consequent need to take aggressive action to implement economic reform.

Unless reforms are made to jump-start the private sector to covert Bosnia and Herzegovina into an export oriented economy, Bosnia and Herzegovina could face economic collapse. The setting up of a countrywide customs service and the introduction of countrywide VAT are critical to this effort as they will increase and stabilise the flow of revenue while making it possible to lower the overall tax burden.

A single State-level Customs Administration will cut administrative costs, facilitate trade, create a single economic space, increase revenue and tackle fraud, smuggling and corruption.

Under the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliament is responsible for defining Customs Policy, and implementation is the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations. Currently, three separate customs services operate, without adequate co-ordination.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's thieves are clearly more united and effective than the customs administrations, which are supposed to prevent them from stealing money from citizens. As a result, hundreds of millions of KM that should have gone to teachers, doctors, pensioners and war veterans goes to criminals instead.

The same applies to sales tax. VAT will make tax evasion much more difficult. A countrywide VAT system will eliminate the absurd complications that arise from trying to run two tax systems side by side. Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot afford the vast bureaucracy, manifest inefficiency and hundreds of millions of KM in losses to citizens that running two tax systems entails.

Do countrywide customs and VAT mean less money for the Entities? No.

They mean more money for the Entities. The issue is not big government but efficient government and discussions are now focusing on ways to ensure that the countrywide customs and VAT systems operate with optimal efficiency. Revenue will continue to be spent on citizens by the Entity authorities.

The Entities cannot continue to lose huge amounts of revenue through customs and tax evasion. As it is, they do not have enough money to run social services and together they face a massive international debt crisis, because politicians have failed to implement necessary reforms fast enough or without months and months pointless squabbling. If politicians continue to defend the interests of criminals rather than citizens then Bosnia and Herzegovina will go bankrupt and services will come to an end.

Ambassador Hays will be giving a press conference tomorrow morning in Banja Luka at 11.00 and we will be issuing a Media Advisory, with details of where and so on later today. That is all I have for you, thanks.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir - OSCE

Good morning. OSCE shall remain silent today.

Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

Good morning. We shall not, I have several issues for you.

The first is on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which was yesterday. It has been the third time that this day has been commemorated after the United Nations General Assembly designated the day on 17 December 1999.

UNMIBH has been working closely with the police to combat the phenomenon of domestic violence and violence against women and children. UNMIBH not only closely monitors police performance in such cases, but has also launched a number of initiatives.

For instance, local Police Commissioners appointed local police focal points for domestic violence in every police administration and public security station. These focal points oversee the handling of such cases in order to ensure that they are treated as potential crimes rather than as private affairs.

UNMIBH also initiated, in close co-operation with the two Police Academies, intensive training courses for the domestic violence focal points with the aim to develop a better understanding of what constitutes domestic violence and to develop proper police response procedures.

Local women's Non-Governmental Organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina have made an invaluable contribution in addressing and raising awareness about this problem. Their services include legal and psychological assistance as well as vocational training for victims. They are important partners of the police for victim assistance. The UNMIBH Trust Fund is currently rehabilitating three buildings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, geographically distributed across the country in northern Republika Srpska, Sarajevo and Herzegovina, to be used as safe houses run by three local women's Non-Governmental Organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and designated for victims of domestic violence.

One of the handicaps in addressing the problem of violence against women is the lack of substantiated and reliable information. UNMIBH has recognised this need and is currently finalising the design of a database to be used by local police for cases of domestic violence and violence against women and children. The database will allow for the collection of a wide range of statistics. It will also be an important tool for police in tracking the details of individual cases, as well as the frequency of incidents in specific households.

In 2001, UNMIBH had launched a public awareness campaign to encourage women in Bosnia and Herzegovina who have become victims of violence to turn to the police and not suffer in silence. UNMIBH is however, aware that often violence against women is not considered a crime, that there are cases of insufficient police response, and that therefore victims are often very reluctant to seek help, in particular in repeat cases. It is for this reason that UNMIBH has been committed to working closely with the police on this issue of violence against women.

Also related to the issue of violence against women is the next item in relation to the published report of Human Rights Watch, I think it is being published today.

UNMIBH has received the Human Rights Watch report on human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The mission considers the study as a valuable contribution in the fight against human trafficking. In the light of this report and yesterday's conference in London on organised crime in the Balkans, we can only reiterate what has been stressed many times, namely that all efforts need to be undertaken to stop this terrible crime of human trafficking. The Human Rights Watch report is currently being considered within the mission and I will make the response available to you in due course.

Two more items as announcements.

Bosnia and Herzegovina are sending five military officers to be military observers in the UN mission in Congo. They will receive their blue berets this afternoon at a ceremony in the UN house. I believe you have all received a media advisory on that. They will depart Bosnia and Herzegovina tomorrow to take up their duties in the UN mission in Congo.

This is already the second UN peacekeeping mission that will have Bosnia and Herzegovina military officers serving in its ranks. The first military observers from Bosnia and Herzegovina served in the UN mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2001/2002. Currently, the second contingent of nine officers is deployed there with a third contingent of again nine officers waiting to be deployed early next year.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is actively engaged in UN peacekeeping since 2000 when the first group of police officers from Bosnia and Herzegovina were sent to the UN mission in East Timor. Currently, ten police officers from Bosnia and Herzegovina are serving in this mission.

As a country that has been the focus of UN peacekeeping for over ten years, Bosnia and Herzegovina, through its police officers and military observers, contributes valuable expertise to UN peacekeeping in other countries around the globe.

The last announcement for today, in a ceremony on Wednesday, 27 November, Special Representative of the Secretary General Klein will hand over the first ambulance to Sarajevo International Airport. The recent reconstruction of the Terminal Building provided conditions for normal and functional air-transport between the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the rest of the world. However, the airport was still lacking a sophisticated ambulance, in order to fully meet the standards of a completely operational institution.

Therefore, UNMIBH's Trust Fund approved a donation in the amount of 42,283.84 US Dollars in order to purchase an ambulance vehicle with all the necessary medical equipment in accordance with relevant technical specifications. The hand over ceremony will take place tomorrow, 27 November, at 11:00 at Sarajevo International Airport. We will send out a detailed media advisory to you this afternoon. Thank you.

Rafik Hodzic - ICTY

Good morning. No statement from ICTY.

Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

And no statement from SFOR.

Oleg Milisic - OHR

Are there any questions?

Questions and Answers

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic - Reuters

Kirsten, regarding the Human Rights Watch report, one paradox was revealed while the IPTF mission here is trying to pursue criminal investigations against those who violated human rights and were involved in trafficking. On the other hand IPTF monitors who were caught in the same business were granted complete immunity according to this report. They said that the 18 who were caught in this business were only repatriated to their countries. It was not reported that one single case was prosecuted or criminal investigations were launched. Could you comment please and say whether IPTF can acknowledge failure in this case or the whole approach to this?

A: Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

In general I have to say, that we have to study that report it is a rather extensive report and it has to be looked at by several people who are dealing with these matters within the mission, I announced that just now. As a matter of principle, yes, we have announced that 18 IPTF officers have been sent home due to sexual misconduct, if you want to call it that. The issue is such that the UN mission has no executive authority over these officers. The means that are available to us is sending these people home immediately from the mission. Making sure that they cannot serve in any other UN mission in the future and making documents available to their home countries, for them launch respective administrative and legal procedures, its not in our authority to do so. Again, I have to say the report has to be looked at in all its details and then I can give you a better answer on this.

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic - Reuters

I just wonder whether you are aware that according existing United States law for example, that people who were employed in UN missions and accused of something while a part of the UN mission, they cannot be prosecuted in the United States?

A: Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

You will really have to address this question to the United States. I have just told you, this is outside of our authority. We have no authority over these officers to try them, arrest them or bring them to court.

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic - Reuters

Nobody has the authority there is no authority over these people. While they are here they are protected, because they are part of the UN mission and when they are back home they are protected, because their country is not in charge of what they were doing while they were part of the UN mission?

A: Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

I have to correct you there it is incorrect to say we protect them. The investigations have been carried out by us and the results of these investigations have been made available to the home governments. You cannot blame the UN for the failure of the home governments of these officers to launch appropriate proceedings; the material was made available in all of these cases. So, I would kindly ask you to turn to those governments and question them, as to why these officers have not been prosecuted. Thank you.

Q: Amra Hadziosmanovic - AFP

About these 18 IPTF officers were they found to be only customer to the brothels or were they involved in trafficking?

A: Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

To my knowledge these 18 were found to be soliciting. To have solicited prostitution these are the cases we have

been speaking about in the past and they have accordingly been sent home. Again, I have to tell you that this is a very detailed report from what I have seen so far and we really need to have the appropriate time to look at it, to give you a good reaction on various issues that are laid out in this report.

Q: Amra Hadziosmanovic - AFP

Do you know which countries the 18 came from?

A: Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

I do not have that information at hand right now.

Q: Amra Hadziosmanovic - AFP

A question for SFOR, could you confirm that you received the letter from Amnesty International regarding this Fijuljanin guy?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

Yes, we did receive a letter from Amnesty International on Thursday. We will provide Amnesty International with an interim reply in the following days and a more detailed reply will be staffed through our chain of command to Amnesty International in the near future.

Q: Amra Hadziosmanovic - AFP

Is there anything new on this case?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

The only thing new that I can report to you today, is that last night Mr. Fijuljanin met with his lawyer for approximately one hour.

Q: Amra Hadziosmanovic - AFP

Did you talk to the lawyer has he requested anything from SFOR, that is the purpose of such visits?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

It was a discussion between Mr. Fijuljanin and his lawyer. That is all I can say at this time, we did not speak with the lawyer. It was just a conversation between the lawyer and Mr. Fijuljanin.

Q: Amra Hadziosmanovic - AFP

So, the lawyer cannot request anything from you, right?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

I do not know if he has asked anything of us. The only thing I can tell you is the two met last night. I have not received and do not know of any request made by Mr. Fijuljanin through his lawyer to SFOR.

Q: Amra Hadziosmanovic - AFP

Was this visit a result of the letter, did you allow this visit after receiving the letter?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

No.

Q: Antonio Prlenda - Oslobodenje

Yves, do you know if the lawyer is a local person?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

I do not know the name of the legal representative that Mr. Fijuljanin met last night. I think he is a lawyer from the area where he resides, but I do not have his name or the law firm he represents.

Q: Senad Slatina - Slobodna Bosna

Today, is a full month since that person has been detained can you walk us through the legal grounds for keeping that person in detention for a full month? As far as I can remember, there was one clarification earlier that SFOR stated at one of these press briefings, that SFOR has authority to intervene and implement and so on. But, once it was more specified that SFOR has the authority to detain a person and keep them for 72 hours, has anything in that regard been changed? Again, I am going back to the beginning of my question can you walk us through the legal grounds for keeping a person?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

The 72 hours is something that we imposed on ourselves, we try to release a detainee within 72 hours if we can. In the case of Fijuljanin we have reasons to believe he still poses a threat to SFOR personnel and installations. The General Framework Agreement for Peace gives us the authority to detain him as long we deem necessary to continue our investigation and his detention will continue for as long as we deem it appropriate.

Q: Senad Slatina - Slobodna Bosna

How much of the investigation is being shared with the local police authorities?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

I cannot release any of these details as to how the investigation is being conducted by SFOR and what other agencies are involved in the investigation.

Q: Senad Slatina - Slobodna Bosna

Can you at least confirm are there any local police officers included in the investigation?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

I cannot reveal any of these details.

Q: Senad Slatina - Slobodna Bosna

There was once information that in Fijuljanin house there were several passports found can you tell us exactly how many passports were found and from what countries?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

That was in a press release that I sent last week. There were minimum three passports and they were from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Former Republic of Yugoslavia.

Q: Senad Slatina - Slobodna Bosna

Two from Bosnia and...

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

I will have to go back to my news release. I can do that afterwards, I do not have it in front of me right now.

Q: Viola Gienger - Freelance for Cox Newspapers

You mentioned that the lawyer is from where this gentleman resides?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

I do not know exactly, I think he is from the area where Fijuljanin resides.

Q: Viola Gienger - Freelance for Cox Newspapers

Can you tell us where that is?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

I can find out later on. I have it, but I do not have it in front of me right now.

Q: Viola Gienger - Freelance for Cox Newspapers

The High Representative said after the Peace Implementation Council meeting last week that the council is dissatisfied with the investigation that the Republika Srpska had conducted up to that point on the ORAO affair and that the investigation should be continued along with an International Organisation. Which, International Organisation is handling that, is in charge of that?

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

I would have to look into that for you and get back to you.

Q: Viola Gienger - Freelance for Cox Newspapers

I am also wondering, about the CIPS programme do all European Union countries have mandatory personal identification cards and if not, which ones do?

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

That depends on country to country. I think, you will find most do, I know the UK does not require you to have ID cards. But again, that depends on domestic law.

Q: Viola Gienger - Freelance for Cox Newspapers

I wonder if any European Union countries require them?

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

Require what.

Q: Viola Gienger - Freelance for Cox Newspapers

Personal ID cards?

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

Like I said, I think the vast majority of European Union countries do, the only one that does not as far as I know is the UK. But, that is a question to put to individual countries, because of domestic law.

Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

I have got the answer to your question my pronunciation may be off, but it is Gornja Maoca.

Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

That is the area he comes from Gornja Maoca.

Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

That is the area.

Q: Nick Hawton - BBC

You say Fijuljanin poses a continued threat. How does he pose a continued threat if he is in your custody?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

That is why we want to keep him in detention, so we can find out exactly what type of threat he poses. If we do release him then he will continue to pose a threat, while he is in our custody we are able to continue our investigation. He himself does not pose a threat while being detained and that is why we are keeping him to further the investigation as to the threat that he posed. We know that he was surveilling SFOR facilities and personnel, he had access to weapons and that is sufficient for us believe he posed a threat to SFOR and SFOR personnel. If released he will continue to pose a threat to SFOR.

Q: Nick Hawton - BBC

Does he pose a threat because he is linked to other people in Bosnia?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

He posed a threat because the action he himself carried out surveilling SFOR facilities and having weapons, which could have been used in an aggressive fashion against SFOR.

Q: Nick Hawton - BBC

So, you have ruled out the possibility that he is linked to other people who maybe involved in activities against SFOR?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

That is part of the investigation. Nothing has been ruled out in our investigation that is why we have been conducting the investigation for 30 days, the investigation will continue and what comes out of the investigation only time will tell. We are not prepared to release him at this time. Under General Framework Agreement for Peace, we have full authority to detain him and will keep detaining him.

Q: Nick Hawton - BBC

Although you cannot say, do you know whether he is linked to other people in Bosnia as part of some network?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

I am not going to comment on that it is part of the investigation.

Q: Nick Hawton - BBC

So, you will say whether you know or do not know?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier - SFOR

I am not going to comment on your question.

Q Viola Gienger - Freelance for Cox newspapers

Kirsten, the ambulance that will be donated to the Airport, what sort of training is being provided for personnel on all of the equipment that is involved in that. Because some of the problems that have occurred in the past is people get great new equipment, but are not familiar with how to use it?

A: Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

That was one of the issues in the past regarding medical assistance at the Airport plus the technical side of it. We can make through the Trust Found this equipment available that is what we will do tomorrow. I really do not know about the training, I can look into that and see who is taking up the training, so as that this equipment can be put to good use.

Q: Amra Hadziosmanovic - AFP

Copies of this letter from Amnesty International were also sent to the United Nations and the Office of the High Representative, correct?

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

I would have to check on that, I am not sure.

A: Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

Same here, I have not heard of this.

Oleg Milisic - OHR

Thank you all.