

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

CPIC/Media Conferences

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Tuesday 13 August 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Oleg Milisic	• No statement.
b. OSCE	Henning Philipp	• No statement.
c. UNMIBH	Kirsten Haupt	• Withdrawal of provisional authorisation. • Arrest in return related incident. • National Theatre Trust Fund project.
d. IOM	Jennifer Brown	• IOM and Operation Florian offer fire fighter Training to former soldiers.
e. SFOR	Major Scott Lundy	• SFOR sponsors a course for select BiH young officers.

2. Thirty-one members of the media and four television crews attended the conference.
3. The transcript of the questions and answers is attached.

C. Barraud

Lt. Col. (FR A),

Chief Operations and Plans

Oleg Milisic - OHR

Good morning everybody.

The Office of the High Representative does not have a statement today, but we are willing to take your questions afterwards, thank you.

Henning Philipp - OSCE

Good morning everybody.

OSCE does not have a statement either.

Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

I am not going to follow that line; I do have a statement, there are three items today, the first is on withdrawal of provisional authorisation.

The IPTF commissioner Sven Frederiksen has withdrawn the provisional authorisation from two police officers following receiving information relating to their wartime activities.

Mr. Mladenko Kordic, a police officer of the support group of Canton 7 Ministry of Interior, was an active member of

the Convicts Battalion in the period February 1993 to February 1994. During this period, this military unit was involved in crimes against non-Croats in the area of the Mostar Municipality.

Mr. Marko Misić, was a police officer in Stolac from January 1983 to December 1992 and following that he worked as crime technician in the same Police Administration in Stolac. He has been identified as having been actively involved in the persecution, robbery and forceful displacement of Bosniaks in the Stolac area in 1993.

Based on these findings, both officers are deemed unfit to serve in the police forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As always the withdrawal of provisional authorisation from police officers prevents them from working within any law enforcement in Bosnia and Herzegovina now or in the future.

The second item is a follow up to a recent return related incident, you may remember, on 25 July 2002, a Serb female returnee to Sarajevo was badly beaten and sexually abused. The perpetrator was arrested in Trnovo on 7 August 2002, by the police and legal proceedings are being initiated. UNMIBH would like to commend the police of Sarajevo Canton for their professional performance in relation to this case. In the light of the ever-accelerating return process, it is imperative that the police vigorously investigate all return related incidents. Professional police performance ensures necessary security conditions in support for the further return of displaced persons to their homes.

The last item is in response, to a TV report last night on the National Theatre, UNMIBH would like to clarify the current situation. UNMIBH and the Federal Ministry of Culture have committed funds to the reconstruction of the old roof of the National Theatre. The contracted building company removed parts of the roof prior to last weekend and did not cover it properly. Over the weekend there was some heavy rain causing some minor damage, the damage report provided by the Drama Director of the theatre to the media clearly exaggerated the extent of the damage. Only minor damage was caused and the contracted building company has already accepted its responsibility to repair the damage, that is all from me, thank you.

Jennifer Brown - IOM

Good morning.

I have one item from the IOM, IOM through its Transitional Assistance for Discharged Soldiers programme and in co-operation with the British NGO Operation Florian. Will start a program this fall to train and equip up to 200 former soldiers from the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina to become fire fighters in their communities.

This program is available to any soldier who has been or will be discharged from the Federation Army in 2002 and who are able and willing to work as a fire fighter in the municipalities of Busovaca, Banovici, Donji Vakuf, Foca-Srbinje Gradacac, Kalesija, Kupres, Lukavac, Mostar South-East and Siroki Brijeg. These municipalities have agreed to hire the former soldiers for a period of at least two years, after they complete their training. Through this initiative the municipalities will receive trained fire fighters and all necessary equipment for the fire stations, including vehicles such as fire engines.

The same activities will be conducted in the Republika Srpska later this year where a number of municipalities have already agreed to hire former soldiers trained as fire fighters.

Former soldiers who are registered with IOM are being contacted and advised of this opportunity. Interested soldiers who have not registered are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. The selection process for the first 50 candidates will be completed in August and the first training session will begin September 30 and will last for 6 weeks. Operation Florian will carry out the training. Operation Florian has extensive experience working in the region, aiming to provide fire fighting and rescue equipment and training for community development purposes.

Upon completion, program participants will also receive an internationally recognised National Fire Protection Association certificate from Texas A & M University in the United States.

This training program is one component of the larger IOM initiative to provide transitional assistance to soldiers discharged from the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. IOM has received start up funding from USAID, and the British and Polish governments. Operation Florian has received funding from the British Government. The purpose of this program is to assist former soldiers reintegrate into civilian life and the civilian workforce. The support provided includes assistance with employment seeking, one-on-one educational and career counselling,

business and agricultural advice services combined with consulting and planning and tool kits for those who can engage in sustainable employment.

IOM has undertaken similar projects of reintegration and support for former soldiers in 11 countries during the past 10 years. IOM's experience in these areas has shown that such initiatives, broadly implemented through a given society, have contributed significantly to facilitating the transition into civilian society and the civilian workforce.

For more information on this programs participants are asked to contact, IOM Sarajevo, the contact information is available on the press release and there is a back-grounder available in the lobby, that is all.

Major Scott Lundy - SFOR

Dobra Dan from SFOR.

As is the case with all armed forces, the young captains and majors of today are the generals of tomorrow. With this in mind, SFOR is sponsoring a course for select young officers of the Armed Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina that focuses on military restructuring, modernisation and Peace Support Operations.

The Young Officers Course will show participants that all professional militaries face a range of challenges, not just those of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many SFOR officers and non-commissioned members have experienced dramatic organisational downsizing and constant modernisation efforts. Many armies are following the same track as the Armed Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This course will share the experiences of some of the SFOR nations in these important areas so young officers from the Armed Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina can draw from these lessons as they chart the future of their own armed forces.

The Young Officers Course is not simply a series of lectures from SFOR. In addition to presentations from the Commander of SFOR and other senior leaders, a number of panel discussions, question and answer periods and group studies are planned. The aim is to stimulate frank discussions and generate fresh ideas among the participants on a host of military topics.

The course begins today at Camp Butmir and will conclude with a field trip to Eagle Base, Tuzla on Thursday, 15 August 2002.

Oleg Milisic - OHR

Are there any questions?

Questions and Answers

Q: Adnan Kavazovic - RFE

My question is about the matter of the International Criminal Court. I would like to have a comment from, the Office of the High Representative, maybe SFOR and the UN. One of the Articles of the new United States Congress Law on Terrorism says, there is a possibility of stopping all military assistance to states that do not sign the Criminal Court Convention. Since Bosnia and Herzegovina still has not signed the convention, if it signs what will that mean in consequences, considering Bosnia and Herzegovina's strong dependence on United States aid, military assistance and Partnership for Peace project?

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

I can answer on behalf of the Office of the High Representative straight away; this issue was widely reported in the press this morning. As far as we are concerned it is really an issue that has to be resolved by the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities themselves you should direct your questions to them.

A: Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

From the side of the UN, I do not have any further comment. That would be an issue that has to be dealt with on a different level altogether, that would be in New York, it is more of an issue of International Law, I guess that is really out of scope for us.

Q: Nicholas Hawton - BBC

In the light of an article in The Sunday Times, to what extent does the Office of the High Representative and the UN think that foreigners are involved in sex trafficking in Bosnia?

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

Again on behalf of the Office of the High Representative there is no indication of the Office of the High Representative staff being involved in anything related to trafficking at all, on that no comment really.

A: Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

I can only repeat what I have said earlier in answer to similar questions. There have been a number of allegations over the past years regarding UN officer's involvement in trafficking. To date no information or evidence supporting such allegations has come to light. There is at this point no more to say than that, if information is available or exists it should be made available, so proper procedures can be followed.

Q: Nicholas Hawton - BBC

Does the Office of the High Representative or the UN have any opinion about the fact that two people have allegedly been sent back to America for sex trafficking?

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

I have seen reports in the papers, really it is a question that you are going to have to direct to the United States Embassy.

A: Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

In the press you have also seen the statement of the United States Embassy, which mentioned the zero tolerance policy, that is a term we have also often used when dealing with this issue. Should we ever get evidence or information that would point to the involvement of a UN staff member or an IPTF officer in the crime of trafficking, we would apply our zero tolerance policy. You also know that the UN as such does not have any executive authority over its staff members, it would be up to the member countries, their proper procedures would have to be followed disciplinary or legal. Again to date no cases have been confirmed, no allegations have been confirmed by firm evidence, of course the trafficking of human beings is a hideous crime and I think everything should be done to prevent it, so the zero tolerance policy is the way to go.

Q: Antonio Prlenda - Oslobodenje

This question is for Oleg. Mainly I would like to get back onto the first question about the International Criminal Tribunal and the United States position. We know that Bosnia is a country that wants to achieve membership in the Europe-Atlantic situation and the international Community is actually supporting that. Partnership for Peace is one of those associations that is helping Bosnia to reach this, so do you support the idea that Bosnia joins the countries that support the Americans in not being under the tribunal, you have to have some kind of statement?

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

No like I said, as far as the Office of the High Representative is concerned this is clearly an issue for the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities to look into and decide how to go forward.

Q: Antonio Prlenda - Oslobodenje

Do you encourage them in anyway?

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

You certainly know our general position, which is integration into Europe is or can only be positive for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Like I say for detailed comment you have got to speak to the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities, the United States and so on, it is not for Office of the High Representative to comment.

Q: Antonio Prlenda - Oslobodenje

Do you in the Office of the High Representative see that this case can in anyway harm the Bosnian way to Partnership for Peace or other associations?

A: Oleg Milisic - OHR

Again just speaking in general, it is a complex issue it is going to be clearly a difficult matter that needs the full attention of the responsible authorities and they are at the Bosnia and Herzegovina state level, as I have said.

Q: Antonio Prlenda - Oslobodenje

I would like to also have a comment from SFOR, since you actively support the Entity Armed Forces in getting Partnership for Peace standards, can this situation harm this process in anyway?

A: Major Scott Lundy - SFOR

I think you are linking issues that are not necessarily linked. The Partnership for Peace program is geared toward bringing militaries from non-NATO countries into NATO over time. I am not the expert in this, there are NATO Officials who come from time-to-time, to speak with you and make public the approach that is being offered by NATO. Ultimately we would like to see a unified command structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina and this would be one very important step on the way to potential membership in Partnership for Peace. But to try and link it to the International Criminal Court, I just do not see the connection.

Q: Antonio Prlenda - Oslobodenje

The connection is if you want to get into the association, then you now suddenly have a new term. I do not see the stronger connection that has to be, so you do not see that it could make a problem for Bosnia if it wants to join an association like that?

A: Scott Lundy - SFOR

The Partnership for Peace program is something that the Armed Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina are considering they are looking at it, NATO has held that as a possibility, it has nothing to do with the international legal system in this country. I would suggest you do not link these issues.

Q: Antonio Prlenda - Oslobodenje

As I understand the Partnership for Peace is all about society, not just about the military?

A: Scott Lundy - SFOR

I think we will stand with my comment for now, we can discuss that off line later.

Q: Antonio Prlenda - Oslobodenje

An unrelated issue for the Office of the High Representative, how do you see the current situation with the Rati cemetery in the Foca region. Is there a possibility for dispute there and how will the Office of the High Representative react?

A: Oleg Milisic OHR

Like I said last week, I think I got the question on Thursday. The Office of the High Representative was gathering information, we have met with the families concerned and both visited the site and meeting the Metropolitan Nikolaj. Basically, the Office of the High Representative wanted to ensure that there was sufficient time for both the families and the Serbian Orthodox Church to exchange information. Our understanding now is that the Serbian Orthodox Church has decided against going ahead with their announced action. Likewise I believe this will be discussed further in meetings with the inter-religious council and we will be closely following developments there likewise.

Q: Marcus Bickel - Jungle World

A question for the Office of the High Representative and the UN, this morning local media reported that the United States is giving 1 Million Dollars for the memorial of Srebrenica. My question is will the International Community get the money together so that the first people are buried there by the end of the year or by the fall, as are the plans, as I know them?

A: Oleg Milisic OHR

The High Representative has certainly said that we would like to see developments on the site in the fall of this year, it is certainly positive that the United States has made such a donation.

A: Kirsten Haupt - UNMIBH

I have no further comment we are not really involved with this.

Q: Marcus Bickel - Jungle World

Does that mean you have the money together?

A: Oleg Milisic OHR

I would have to check, I am not sure if it is just an announcement or if the money has actually been transferred yet. As you know there is a working group set up, which is dealing with this and I will speak to them and see what the latest is. It is as you know representatives of the Families Association and other interested organisations, the Office of the High Representative is represented there and I can check with our representatives.

Q: Marcus Bickel - Jungle World

There is no fixed date yet, since fall is going to start in four weeks?

A: Oleg Milisic OHR

As far as I know, not, but I would have to check on the latest.

Q: Senad Pandzic - RTV BiH

A question for Scott, do you have any new information about the incident that happened in Dobo, where an SFOR soldier fired at the guests at a wedding?

A: Major Scott Lundy - SFOR

The answer is that there is an investigation carrying on in Multi National Division North. I do not know whether that has been completed. I did not get word on that before I came here. So I will give the number to Multi National Division North and you can check with their Public Affairs department.

Oleg Milisic OHR

Is there anything further? No, then thank you very much.