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 1130 hours on Tuesday 06 August 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Patrik Volf	• High Representative to visit Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. • SDHR Schroembgens visits school in Dobrinja.
b. OSCE	Henning Philipp	• OSCE calls upon all parties and candidates to conduct a fair election campaign.
c. UNHCR	Majda Prljaca	• 12,653 returnees were recorded in their respective pre-war Municipalities.
d. UNMIBH	Alun Roberts	• Ceremony of the opening of a newly constructed water supply. • Example of the unprofessionalism of the judiciary. • Rocki night club, trafficking case.
e. SFOR	Major Scott Lundy	• SFOR's operations on the Foca-Srebinja area.

2. Thirty 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

Patrik Volf – OHR

I just have two announcements for you today.

The High Representative Paddy Ashdown will visit Mostar and the Herzegovina, Neretva Canton tomorrow. During his one-day trip, he will meet with local officials, including the Mayor of Mostar, Mr Jahic. This is the third time since his arrival to Bosnia and Herzegovina that the High Representative has visited Herzegovina. It is part of an extended series of regular visits, all over the country through which the High Representative intends to find out about and address practical problems the citizens of this county are facing.

The High Representative appreciates that just ahead of his trip, the Cantonal Assembly has finally adopted the budget of the Herzegovina, Neretva Canton for 2002, it was finally adopted yesterday. This ultimately sets the scene for urgently needed work to be done in improving the efficiency of the administration of the Canton and it is clear the pace of reform must now increase significantly. A detailed program of the visit will be sent out later in the day.

The second announcement is, the Senior Deputy High Representative Gerhard Schroembgens, will be giving an address on the importance of practical, progressive and non-discriminatory education policies, on Thursday when he visits Dobrinja Primary School.

The Senior Deputy High Representative has invited ambassadors to take part in a fund raising activity at the school. The school for your information has been rebuilt with funds from USAID but money must now be raised for textbooks and equipment. This used to be the biggest school in Dobrinja, its large role of pupils was ethnically mixed and its academic standards were very high. Ambassador Schroembgens will look at the ways in which this school, and others throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, can develop a healthy educational environment that is secure, inclusive and academically challenging. This is all from my side.

Henning Philipp – OSCE

Good morning everybody.

With only two months to go to the election date OSCE, calls upon all parties and candidates to conduct a fair election campaign. Fighting for the votes of citizens is an integral part of the democratic process. However, this fight should be based on proper arguments rather than on unproven allegations and personal offences against competitors.

We urge all parties and candidates to concentrate in their election campaign on those issues, which are of concern for the citizens. The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina are waiting for answers to the questions of economic progress, employment opportunities, quality education and integration into the European Institutions.

Bosnia and Herzegovina should take the opportunity to give an example for a fair election campaign to countries across Europe, thank you.

Majda Prljaca – UNHCR

Good morning from UNHCR.

In June of this year, 12,653 returnees were recorded in their

respective pre-war Municipalities; this figure is higher than the corresponding figures for June 1999, 2000 and 2001 combined.

Werner Blatter UNHCR Regional Co-ordinator for South Eastern Europe and UNHCR Chief of Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina said, “While UNHCR is pleased with this continuing and important increase in minority returns. The reconstruction efforts by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Governments and the International Community must keep pace with this trend to allow all those who wish to return to be able to do so.”

In the first six months of 2002, 24,102 Bosniaks, 6,082 Croats and 21,953 Serbs have returned to their pre-war homes, the statistical package is available outside on the table, thank you.

Alun Roberts – UNMIBH

Good morning form UNMIBH.

Just an announcement first of all, tomorrow the Special Representative of the Secretary General Jacque Paul Klein will visit Teslic in the Republika Srpska.

He will attend the opening ceremony at a school in Kamenica in Teslic. Which is the inauguration of a water supply project made possible by funds from the UN trust found of the UNMIBH in Banja Luka; there is a press advisory outside for you to take away.

Our main issue is, UNMIBH notes again examples of inefficiency and unprofessionalism by the judiciary in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the Republika Srpska in the Ferhadija Mosque case, namely the serious rioting in Banja Luka on the 7 May 2000. Which after lengthy but slow police investigation, saw the first attempts at a main trail hearing scheduled for 14 June, now

postponed after the third attempt to hold a trail on the 29 July.

Postponed by Judge Mirela Jugodic, to the 2 September. The reason for that postponement, being that one of the 16 defendants, called to appear before the court Vitomir Jovanovic, failed to appear for what is a group offence of public disorder by all 16 persons.

Although Judge Jugodic, postponed the trial again for the third time, she did however, issue a detention order to be served on Vitomir Jovanovic, by the police and to bring him into custody for one months detention. Two days after the 29 July court session where Judge Jugodic issued the detention order.

The UNMIBH Criminal Justice Advise Unit, contacted the Director of the Banja Luka Prison at Tunjice, he confirmed that so far Jovanovic, had not been detained. On 31 July, Criminal Justice Advise Unit, then contacted the President of the Basic Court in Banja Luka Vukasin Boskovic, Criminal Justice Advise Unit officers, requested a copy of the original detention warrant order issued by Judge Jugodic, on the 29 July.

The Criminal Justice Advise Unit themselves delivered that warrant order to the Public Security Centre Banja Luka and demanded Mr. Boskovic, ensure the warrant order was delivered officially to the Public Security Centre. Although this was done, the Public Security Centre had the warrant for detention since the 1 August, now is the 6 August.

According to the UNMIBH Criminal Justice Advise Unit in Banja Luka, Vitomir Jovanovic is still at large.

In fact out of interest, the Criminal Justice Advise Unit, was especially interested to learn. That on learning that a warrant order has been issued against him for detention Jovanovic, around late July, even visited the President of the

Basic Court personally, the reason for his visit was to request the President of the Basic Court, to not serve the detention order on him. Hence the delay on serving it actually took place.

A further focus on the judiciary, this time in Canton 6, Vitez. We have now the quite famous case of the Rocki night club, trafficking case.

The owner of the bar Mr. Amir Sarajlic, from Vitez who is accused of involvement in trafficking and physical assault on 5 women. Was supposed to face sentencing before the court, although the actual prosecution had ensured the Criminal Justice Advise Unit, that a strong indictment would follow on Mr. Sarajlic, in regard to the evidence against him.

The Criminal Justice Advise Unit, was astonished to learn that when the trial went ahead at the main hearing the Deputy Prosecutor Dragon Popovic. Said according to Article 183 on the Law on Criminal Procedures, there was no real reason to detain the owner of the night bar regardless of the strong evidence against him. The defendant Mr. Sarajlic had pleaded before the court to show him respect and some mercy, as he had a wife, a child and a house in Vitez, and to let him leave the court. The Deputy Prosecutor, therefore abided by the request, so the defendant Mr. Sarajlic, is now free in Vitez, despite the strong evidence against him.

We are asking from the Criminal Justice Advise Unit, why the Deputy Prosecutor decided to bring such a strong indictment, and then on the request of the defendant. Allow him to leave the court, without further detention based upon the strong evidence presented in the court. That is all we have this morning.

Major Scott Lundy – SFOR

Dobra dan from SFOR, looking around I see a few tired faces.

I will be speaking to you today about the events yesterday afternoon and evening concerning SFOR's operations on the Foca-Srebinja area.

Yesterday afternoon and into the evening, SFOR conducted a low-level unannounced inspection of the Republika Srpska armies 711th Brigade in Srebinje, this inspection which took place with full co-operation of the local Republika Srpska army commander. Was conducted after SFOR received information, that three civilian pattern vehicles had entered the 711th Brigade Barracks, and as there was no record of any SFOR patrol going to either do an inspection or conduct other official business in that barracks.

SFOR then initiated an inspection, to confirm that these vehicles had not been stolen or were being used in some illegal manner. The inspection found nothing, there was nothing removed as a result and I should say that, the Republika Srpska army, were very compliant throughout the procedure.

There have been reports in the media concerning a possible shot having been fired in the direction of SFOR from the barracks, and that this then became the reason for conducting an inspection. Those reports are entirely false.

The inspection concluded at approximately 00:30 hours this morning.

The helicopter some media have reported sighting in the Foca-Srebinje area, throughout the afternoon and evening, were engaged in other routine SFOR operations. As many of you will be aware, living in the Sarajevo valley area SFOR conducts helicopter operations throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, all the time around the clock.

A press release will be issued by Headquarters SFOR later today in the mid-afternoon, confirming these details and

perhaps gathering a few more small items for you, we will have that out to you at about 16:00 today, that is all.

Patrik Volf – OHR

Thank you very much, can I ask for any questions?

Questions and Answers

Q: Nedim Dervisbegovic – Reuters:

There are a couple of questions for Scott, first of all, what happened to the vehicles? Did they disappear in the barracks?

A: Major Scott Lundy – SFOR:

No, it turned out that information was also false. So, in the end nothing was found, it was just a false report, but we have to take this sort of information seriously.

Q: Nedim Dervisbegovic – Reuters:

Another one, about the same operation SRNA news agency recorded eyewitnesses as saying that, besides Foca there are some SFOR APC's on the way to Celebici and Zavajt. Which is another village in the area of Celebici, which is some 15-20 KM from Foca and there are helicopters flying around the area. Could you tell us what they are doing there?

A: Major Scott Lundy – SFOR:

My understanding is that at a certain point, the operation was over and that people had to leave the area. That is probably a fairly major route, I would not read anything into this.

Q: Nedim Dervisbegovic – Reuters:

This is not a major route the road to Celebici and Zavajt is not a major route. It is the road only to Celebici and Zavajt it is not the road to Filipovici, if I am correct, were the SFOR base is?

A: Major Scott Lundy – SFOR:

If that is the case, they also have a patrol route that they follow, that is issued by their Headquarters. It does not necessarily mean they will return directly to their base of operation.

Q: Nedim Dervisbegovic – Reuters:

Alun, what is the update on the Matanovic case?

A: Alun Roberts – UNMIBH:

I think this morning there is nothing more to say. We have spoken last week with the Republika Srpska Ministry of Interior officials at senior level; we are now giving them some time to respond. In terms of the original criminal report on the 21 Prijedor police officers. Which, are to be returned all the way back from the Bureau for Relations with The Hague of the Republika Srpska Government, back through the district prosecutor, back to the Minister of Interior with so called new information. We have given them some time to see if there is anything in that new information, that needs to be addressed and see what they do with the original criminal file report. We have made it very clear that this is now a round robin route of a criminal report that should have been sent before a basic review. In regard, to an investigative process commencing, we will give it a bit more time, to see what the Ministry of the Interior do with it.

Q: Nedim Dervisbegovic – Reuters:

Had the prosecutor decided over the weekend or late last week, I am not sure if it was indicting or going against the 21?

A: Alun Roberts – UNMIBH:

Last week the District Prosecutor decided to expand the investigation on the original 5 former police officers to include 6 more, as of yet he has not done anything further.

In regard to the 21 police officers, who as far as the Criminal Justice Advise Unit aware, from UNMIBH, are facing charges of destruction of property and illegal detention, that file has to go back from the Ministry of Interior to the District Prosecutor on the 21 police officers.

Q: Amra Hadiosmanovic – AFP:

Alun, any comments on yesterday's resignation by the Federation Supreme Court Judge leading the investigation into the terrorism related case?

A: Alun Roberts – UNMIBH:

We are aware of it and we are just trying to get a comment from the Criminal Justice Advise Unit this morning, I have not got anything as yet. We will probably have something for Thursday or maybe even tomorrow.

Q: Amra Hadiosmanovic – AFP:

Have you contacted her?

A: Alun Roberts – UNMIBH:

I am not sure what the Criminal Justice Advise Unit, will have this morning.

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC:

A question for Scott, some Serb media also reported that SFOR was actually looking for a war crimes suspect, in Foca last night?

A: Scott Lundy – SFOR:

I can flatly squash that. That was not the purpose of the particular inspection, not at all.

Patrik Volf – OHR

No further questions thank you very much and have a nice day.