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 16 July 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Kevin Sullivan	• High Representative Address to Bosnia in Herzegovina Parliament. • Board of Principals' Statement.
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	• Ambassador Beecroft visit to Banja Luka.
c. UNMIBH	Kirsten Haupt	• Trilateral Summit. • "Operation Common Purpose" successfully completed. • Withdrawal of provisional authorisations from eleven police officers. • Visit of SRSG to Vraca Police Academy.
d. SFOR	Lieutenant Commander John Coppard	• Project Harvest.

2. Twenty-nine members of the media and five-television crew attended the conference.

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

C. Minck
Lt. Col. (FR A),
Chief Operations and Plans

Kevin Sullivan – OHR

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will address a joint session of the Bosnia in Herzegovina House of Representatives and House of Peoples in about an hour and a half from now. The high Representative will call for a swift passage of legislation that promotes the rule of law and recovery. He will speak for 15 minutes, and then spend an hour answering the deputies' questions. He sees this as a way of developing the partnership that exists between the International Community and domestic institutions. He is making himself available to parliamentarians to answer questions, explain the position of the OHR and the International Community and establish useful dialogue.

The High Representative will call for a new sense of purpose in day-to-day politics, and an end to the pointless delays in passing crucial legislation on legal and economic reform. These delays are depriving citizens of access to justice and access to jobs. Amoung the laws that the High Representative will mention are the PBS Law, the last piece of legislation on the European Union's Road map. When this law, which guarantees free and fair media in Bosnia in Herzegovina is passed, Bosnia in Herzegovina will be able to begin the process of negotiating a stabilisation and association agreement with the EU. The Road Map will not be considered complete until the PBS Law is passed.

Copies of the High Representative's address will be made available after one o'clock.

The Board of Principles met this morning and, amoung various topics, discussed the latest developments in the process of

the implementation of the amendments to the Entity Constitutions. They warmly welcomed the new amendments to the election law related to indirect elections to Entity institutions, namely the Federation House of Peoples, the Federation President and vice-presidents, and the RS Council of Peoples.

The Board of Principals wishes to acknowledge this legislation as an outstanding step undertaken by the Bosnia Herzegovina institutions showing full responsibility for the future of this country. This is at the core of a responsible and responsive government.

The amendments to the election law allow for legal certainty and transparency with regard to the election of all bodies, in particular those chambers of the Entity Parliaments, which guarantee the respect of the rights of Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats as constituent peoples in each Entity.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft is heading for Banja Luka this afternoon, for a two-day visit. During his stay, Beecroft will meet with RS authorities, discussing education, demobilisation and property implementation. The Ambassador will be meeting with RS Deputy Prime Minister Kunic, Defence minister Bilic, Micic – Minister of refugees and displaced persons, Pasilic, Deputy minister on Education and RS president Sarovic, to name a few. Beecroft will hold a press conference tomorrow, Wednesday, at the International Press Centre in Banja Luka at 12:15.

The key to success in economic development in municipalities is strategic planning, budgets that aim at producing growth, and improving the information and services available to small and medium enterprises. This is a part of the conclusions of an OSCE-held conference, which was attended by 70 senior municipal representatives over the weekend. The conference

focused very much on the need for increased co-operation between municipalities as well as with other authorities, and to improve the relationship with the media and the general public. A press release on the conclusions of the conference will be available later today.

Finally a reminder for the football match tomorrow, Zeljo vs. IA, a team from my home country. There are 9 die-hard fans from Iceland have arrived in Sarajevo to support the team, and the more people joining the Vikings, the better. I will surely be amongst them.

Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH

Good morning, just one remark follows the summit yesterday. You have seen our statement on the issue. SRSG Klein had separate meetings with President Kostunica and President Mesic. In these meetings, the SRSG underlined the importance of their positive actions to encourage Bosnian Serbs and Croats to fully participate in the development of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He also underscored the importance of further promoting intra-regional cooperation against organised crime and terrorism.

As it says in the statement on the tri-lateral summit, UNMIBH is playing a significant role in bringing together the law enforcement agencies in the three countries to cooperate for the common benefit of their citizens.

The “Operation Common Purpose” is an example of this cooperation. The six-month operation was launched in December 2001 to combat international crime and terrorism in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region as a whole. It brought together, under UNMIBH facilitation, law enforcement agencies from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Republic of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the BiH State Border Service. So as to counter criminal activities such as illegal migration, trafficking in women and children, illicit drug

trade, weapons smuggling and international terrorist activities.

The overall operation was successful and clearly demonstrated that regional law enforcement agencies can cooperate in information sharing, co-ordination of activities and carrying out of assigned responsibilities. The parties are currently engaged in developing similar operations for the future. The "Operation Common Purpose" was carried out under the umbrella of the Regional Task Force Working Group on Illegal Immigration and Organised Crime that was created by the three governments. A document outlining the background of the establishment of this Regional Task Force and presenting the results of the "Operation Common Purpose" is available after the press conference.

The IPTF Commissioner Sven Frederiksen has withdrawn the provisional authorisation to exercise police powers from eleven police officers. Following investigations into the background of ten police officers, IPTF found that their war time conduct renders them unfit for service in the police forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These ten police officers are Goran Babic, Miroslav Hrvacanin, Mico Jurisic, Drasko Krndija, Mirko Vrucinic, Krsto Skakavac, Dragan Janjic, Elvis Djuric, Milorad Zivkovic and Milomir Milosevic. They have until recently been working as police officers in Banja Luka PSC, Srpsko Sarajevo and Bijeljina PSC respectively.

In all ten cases, it can be reasonable concluded that the respective police officer committed, planned, instigated, ordered or otherwise aided and abetted the planning, preparation, or execution of crimes against non-Serb civilians. It can also be reasonably concluded that they bear liability for crimes against humanity, breaches of the Geneva convention and violations of the laws and customs of war, punishable under RS Criminal Code.

In the cases of Mirko Vrucinic, Dragan Janjic and Milorad

Zivkovic, the authorities of Bosnia-Herzegovina had already initiated criminal investigations into their wartime conduct and received approval from ICTY to prosecute these individuals locally.

One police officer, Rade Gvero, from PSS Laktasi in PSC Banja Luka, had his provisional authorisation removed for gross misconduct. Rade Gvero had severely maltreated an individual during an interrogation and was found guilty for having extracted a statement under duress for which he was sentenced to four months imprisonment. All of these Police Officers will not be eligible to serve within any law enforcement agency within Bosnia in Herzegovina, now or in the future.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Jacques Paul Klein, will visit Vraca Police Academy on Wednesday, 17 July 2002. He will tour classrooms, speak to cadets and academy officials and will inspect newly built dormitories. There will be a media opportunity and a respective advisory will be sent out early this afternoon.

Lieutenant Commander John Coppard – SFOR

Following on from the Project Harvest results announced by SFOR last month, I am pleased to say that our January to June figures have proven particularly encouraging. When compared with the same period last year, we have noticed a 200% increase in the turn in of hand grenades, small arms and explosives, and a 330% increase in the turn in of weapons. Our initial analysis suggests that this increase is due to a combination of factors including more home visits by SFOR troops, and increased involvement by Armed Forces in BiH and local authorities. In order to encourage people to continue to support the program, SFOR has produced and distributed a 90-second public service announcement to five television stations in the Sarajevo valley for use throughout BiH. The announcements should be appearing in the near future.

Questions and Answers

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC:

Can you tell us what was the real reason SFOR set up roadblocks yesterday and the day before, on the roads leading to Sarajevo?

A: Lieutenant Commander John Coppard – SFOR:

The more increased patrolling, the more robust patrols and road checks were a result of a decision by SFOR to intervene and increase it's normal framework operations in response to an overall assessment of the security situation. I cannot provide you with any more information than that

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC:

Can you at least tell us if those check points had anything to do with yesterday's meeting of the three Presidents?

A: Lieutenant Commander John Coppard – SFOR:

No I can't, I can't link those two events.

Q: Sehad Slatina – Slobodna Bosna:

Can you confirm or deny that just days before the meeting, there were any threats to security of the participants of the meeting?

A: Lieutenant Commander John Coppard – SFOR:

I am aware of the statements that have appeared in the Croatian media and here. However I cannot divulge that level of detail in this forum. The appropriate authorities to speak to on domestic security threats, involving the visit of foreign heads of states, would be the Ministry of Interior.

Q: Sehad Slatina – Slobodna Bosna:

But did SFOR receive any threat to the security of the participants of the meeting?

A: Lieutenant Commander John Coppard – SFOR:

I can't discuss that for reasons of operational security.

Q: Sehad Slatina – Slobodna Bosna:

What operational security? Is there an operation going on where those speculations confirmed or denied, could have been dangerous?

A: Lieutenant Commander John Coppard – SFOR:

We are not characterising this as a particular operation. From time to time, as I am sure you are aware, SFOR deems it appropriate under it's mandate to intervene, to increase or decrease patrols, to conduct announced or unannounced road checks, and a variety of other tools available at our disposal. But I am not going to go into a reason why we made those decisions.

Q: Sehad Slatina – Slobodna Bosna:

What my concern is, is that there seems to be an effort to create an image of this country as a country full of terrorists. I am we had that incident in Mostar, it was immediately related to the potential assassination of General Sylvester. It appeared not to be linked to that. Nowadays, we have talk that Islamic terrorists were capable of wrapping up the summit, killing them all. I am if SFORs mandate is to provide a safe and secure environment, I think it would be within the Dayton Mandate to confirm or deny those speculations, if there were any potential terrorist threat to security or not. I cannot see why that information cannot be released?

A: Lieutenant Commander John Coppard – SFOR:

Where we deem that there would be, and I am speaking hypothetically here, a threat to the general security of the people of Bosnia Herzegovina, you may be assured we would notify the appropriate authorities, that being the Government in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In this case we assessed that for operational security reasons, we are not going to disclose those details. What you have heard you have not heard from SFOR, you have heard from other sources and it will remain that way.

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC:

You just told us that we should ask the local police for more de5tails on yesterday's operation, but they told us to ask you. So, what is the problem?

A: Lieutenant Commander John Coppard – SFOR:

SFOR has a fairly clear mandate, to maintain a safe and secure environment. I am sure you have heard it before, you will hear it again. The primary points of contact about internal security in Bosnia-Herzegovina are the ministries of Interior in the respective entities. They should be the first points of contact; we will intervene when we deem it appropriate.

Q: Amra Hadziosmanovic – AFP:

Can you give us more detail on the misconduct by these ten police officers, dismissed for their wartime background, and especially those three already being processed by the local authorities, and which authorities are they, RS or Federation?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMBiH:

I have all those cases with me; the point why I didn't go into further details is because I would have read it out for ages. Let me give those three as an example; Mirko Vrucinic has until recently been the assistant to the Chief of sector

Prijedor, Banja Luka. In the wartime he was Chief of Police in Sanski Most and he was also at that time a member of the wartime Serb municipality of Sanski Most. He has been identified as having been in charge and organising the arrest and transfer of the non-Serb population to various detention camps in the area of Sanski Most and he was the supervisor in charge at that point in that area. He has also been identified as having been aware of or to have expressed support for abuses carried out by his subordinates against non-Serb population.

Dragan Janjic has until recently been a Police Officer in Srpska Sarajevo. During the war he was a Police Officer in Foca, since 1988 and throughout the war and he has been identified carrying out illegal acts in the area of Miljevinja in 1992. In particular he has been identified as having beaten non-Serb prisoners; he has also participated in the killing of non-Serb civilians.

Milorad Zivkovic has also been working in Srpska Sarajevo and in the war he was the chief of Cajnice Police station, and having worked there he has been identified as having taken part in the ethnic cleansing campaign in Cajnice in the spring and summer of 1992.

Q: Julie Harbin – IWPR:

At what point does IPTF de-authorise these Police Officers, once the investigation has begun or once it has been completed? In other words if there is a suspicion are they immediately de-authorised?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMBiH:

No. We don't actually call it de-authorisation, that is a short-term we use internally. The proper term would be withdrawal of provisional authorisation, because that is what we have given police officers in the course of last year. We have moved to this step to the withdrawal of provisional

authorisation once we have proof of these accusations that have been brought to our attention against these police officers. So, when we get information on a certain Police Officer that has been authorised by us to work as a Police Officer, we look into this case, gather information in order to find evidence of this accusation. Once we have clear evidence, we move to the step of withdrawing provisional authorisation. That is not the end of the process, the procedure for the withdrawal of provisional authorisation also requires from the respective current supervisors of these Police Officers, to immediately start termination procedures, because our step to remove provisional authorisation doesn't lead immediately to dismissal. That has to be done by local authorities, because we do not hire and fire Police Officers, but we then bring this to the attention of the immediate supervisors and have them initiate termination procedures.

Q: Julie Harbin – IWPR:

So, does this mean you could start these proceedings even if the trial has not been completed or they have not been sentenced? So that means you are making the judgement before the local authorities complete their judgement.

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMBiH:

You make that judgement on the basis of the very clear evidence we have, we never move without that kind of evidence, and also when we have that evidence we also make it available to the proper authorities, and we urge them to start investigating these cases.

Q: Nicholas Hawton – BBC:

Just to clarify then the UN is saying that ten out of eleven of these Police Officers are guilty of War crimes?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMBiH:

We say their ‘war-time conduct’. We do not pronounce them guilty, we say it is their ‘war-time conduct’, that we have evidence of, that renders them unfit to be a Police Officer. To pronounce them guilty is not in our hand, that is in the hands of the courts.

Q: Nicholas Hawton – BBC:

But at the very least you are accusing them of war crimes?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMBiH:

We have clear evidence that there war-time conduct does not befit someone who works as a Police Officer.

Q: Nicholas Hawton – BBC:

Is there anything to suggest that this is the tip of an iceberg and that there could be hundreds more?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMBiH:

It is very difficult to give a figure or an estimation of how many cases there may be. What I can say is that this is an ongoing process, you might be aware that we are now moving into the final phase of certification. That still does not mean that people are protected against new evidence that comes up, as soon as we get information on possible involvement of Police Officers in illegal activities in war time, we look into that, we take it up and it later may lead to de-certification.

Q: Amra Hadziosmanovic – AFP:

Could you give us an update on the number of Police Officers dismissed?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMBiH:

It is one hundred and ninety one who have had their

provisional authorisation removed. Fifty of those on their war time backgrounds.

Q: Amra Hadziosmanovic – AFP:

Would you please describe a situation when you would carry out an operation similar to yesterday's one. In which situation would you do it?

A: Lieutenant Commander John Coppard – SFOR:

That is pure speculation; we act on information from a variety of sources. We make an assessment as to whether that information justifies enhanced patrolling for a number of purposes that could include deterrent value; they could include specifically looking for something. There is such a myriad of circumstances under which we could deem it appropriate to take action that I can not go any further than that.

Q: Amra Hadziosmanovic – AFP:

But your assessment yesterday required such an operation?

A: Lieutenant Commander John Coppard – SFOR:

The Commander of SFOR has been entrusted with the responsibility of making such assessments; he made the decision to conduct those patrols and unannounced roadblocks and searches. He will exercise that prerogative in the future when he deems it necessary.

Q: Amra Hadziosmanovic – AFP:

Sorry, I did not check it this morning. Have you removed the checkpoints?

A: Lieutenant Commander John Coppard – SFOR:

You will probably observe a reduction in

patrolling today.