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 09 July 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Julian Braithwaite	• High Representative's Schedule. • Srebrenica commemoration. • Education. • High Representative draft criminal code.
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	• Education reform. • Srebrenica DPRE returns.
c. UNMIBH	Kirsten Haupt	• Srebrenica security planning. • Scholar's Initiative Conference. • Mostar Police file charges for illegal possession of a weapon.
d. UNHCR	Majda Prljaca	• Minority returns.
e. SFOR	Major Scott Lundy	• Nothing to report.

2. Thirty-one members of the media and two-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

Julian Braithwaite – OHR
Four items for you today.

The High Representative will be meeting with the BiH Presidency this afternoon at 4 p.m. There will be a doorstep following the meeting.

They will discuss two issues: the renewal of the UNMIBH mandate; and the plans for the meeting of the presidents of FRY, Croatia and BiH next week.

On the UNMIBH mandate, the High Representative will tell the Presidency that he agrees with Belkic: this is a serious problem but is it not a catastrophe

He will brief them on his visit to the EU last week, and his view that the EU stands ready to fill the vacuum should the mandate not be renewed. As the Presidency and other BiH politicians have said, this will not affect security and stability in BiH. The US remains committed to the country, and US troops will remain either way.

On the meeting of the presidents, Paddy Ashdown will congratulate the Presidency for making this happen.

He will say that regional co-operation between FRY, Croatia and BiH is an essential part of the process of reconciliation and European integration. Paddy Ashdown will say that the long-term security and success in the Balkans depends not on the international community, but on good and close relations between the sovereign states of FRY, Croatia and BiH. He will say the new agenda is free trade, the fight against crime and corruption, and European integration.

The High Rep will attend the Srebrenica commemoration on 11

July.

PA visited Srebrenica ten days ago, and he wants to take the occasion of 11 July to focus on two things: the families of those who lost their relatives and loved ones in Srebrenica in July 1995; and the practical assistance that those people need in order to return to their homes .

In PA's view, each return is a small miracle given what happened. In the last 18 months, there have been 500 returns, of which nearly 300 are Bosnjaks. This year alone there have been 109 Bosnjak returns. 25 per cent of the pre-war population has now returned there. A dozen people are now returning every week. But what they need most, after security, is help reconstructing their homes and the prospect of a real job and a good education for their children.

PA hopes that the international community, when they visit Srebrenica on 11 July, will reflect on how we can help in these areas in particular.

This afternoon, Principal Deputy High Representative Don Hays will meet university students in Banja Luka, and the rectors of Banja Luka University and Srpsko Sarajevo University.

Douglas Hays will brief the rectors on the outcome of the OSCE Permanent Council last week, in which it was decided that the OSCE would take over the role of co-ordinating the IC's work on education

In Vienna last week, Paddy Ashdown argued strongly in favour of the OSCE taking the lead on education. With its strong field presence and experience handling education issues in other countries, the OSCE was uniquely qualified to take on this task. The OSCE will continue to involve other institutions, including the OHR and the Council of Europe

In Paddy Ashdown's view, the international community is at its most effective when one agency takes a clear lead on an issue,

co-ordinating the others as necessary. This has now been achieved with education

Paddy Ashdown was very satisfied with the political support for this approach in the OSCE, particularly from the EU. He was also very impressed with Bob Beecroft's determination to make a success of this mandate

There will be a press release today on the letter that the High Rep sent to Dragan Mikerevic and the Minister for Civil Affairs and Communications, Svetozar Mihaljovic at the end of last week

This concerns the draft state-level criminal code, which in Paddy Ashdown's view is an essential part of strengthening the criminal justice system in this country so that it can effectively fight organised crime and corruption

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

The OSCE permanent council has responded positively to the High Representatives request. The OSCE mission takes the lead on education and reform in the BiH.

We are grateful for the support we have received to take on this fundamental task and we look forward to the challenge. Education reform is key to stability and reconciliation, institution building, sustainable refugee return and economic recovery. The OSCE will be working with international organisations and local authorities to modernise the education system, to create a functional legal and institutional framework to ensure equal access to quality schools and to promote multi-ethnic education.

The OSCE mission to BiH has made support to young people one of its priorities. It's modernisation one of its priorities, The modernisation of the education system is of paramount importance, because it has been widely used as an ideological and political tool to reinforce ethnic bias, intolerance,

segregation and discrimination. The poor state of the education system has further led to a brain drain amongst young people many of who do not their future in BiH.

The OSCE Head of Mission Ambassador will be inviting the heads of national agencies on education to a co-ordination meeting on Thursday. Where a collective effort on education reform will be discussed. We will be able to provide you with further information following that meeting and I will give you a location and a time later today or tomorrow at the latest.

The OSCE mission has developed together with young people from across BiH an initiative to provide young citizens with the tools necessary to take part in shaping the countries future. We have called it the 'successful generation initiative', and the aim is to develop future leaders of the BiH. This initiative provides fast track training to a multi-ethnic group of fifty-five individuals under thirty. The participants have been identified as having the capacity to reach senior leadership levels or positions of influence in politics, business, education, media or non-governmental organisations.

The programme started in spring and takes place over a one year period, it is based on an in-country programme with two out of country visits. So far the participants have taken part in three training periods in country and they have recently gone on a study visit to European institutions such as the Council of Europe in Strasburg. The lectures have included topics such as economic development, human rights, elections, the legislative process, conflict resolution, public speaking and project management. The next phase of this process is focused towards the practical aspects of gaining hands on experience by integrating the number of the participants successfully into their chosen field of expertise. We expect that the programme will help develop the political infrastructure of BiH by creating young leaders who have the competence and will to resolve differences peacefully and to

facilitate the political and economic development of the country. Some of the short-term benefits of this project may be realised through a number of young candidates expected to run in the forthcoming elections in October.

The significant improvements taking place in Srebrenica should all be leading to a greater return and normalisation in the municipality. The arrest of war criminals, the opening of the white mosque, increased donor funding, better implementation of the property laws and the return of families with children all point to increasing confidence. The new school year in September should see many families enrolling their children in the Srebrenica primary school and secondary school for the first time. The security concerns are rarely raised by returnees as an issue, despite the occasional efforts of a tiny group of troublemakers in the town. What is apparent is that Srebrenica might be close to the crucial brink where the momentum for return will become unstoppable.

What is there for holding things up? It is the lack of jobs. There is a need for municipal authorities to make greater efforts to perform more effectively and to encourage returns. OSCE has promoted some recent improvements in administration and the way the municipality takes decisions, but there is still room for much improvement in this regard, the deputy mayor for example recently drew attention to the continuing absenteeism of many local officials. The RS Government needs to take a more active role in assisting Srebrenica.

The Government must honour the commitments it has made for alternative accommodation in the town and in Bratunac to enable several hundred families to repossess their homes without more delay.

Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH

With the seventh Commemoration on 11 July 2002 in Srebrenica approaching, preparations go into the final phase. Local law

enforcement agencies have prepared a security plan according to which about 2000 police officers are going to be deployed to ensure the security of the participants of the commemoration. IPTF will closely monitor the performance of the local police. There is also close co-operation with SFOR in the matter of security. Federation police will establish a checkpoint at Kladanj, which will also serve as a staging area for buses to depart to Potocari. More than 100 buses are expected to bring participants to the commemoration site. A large number of national and international officials are also expected to attend the commemoration. More than 250 accreditation's have reportedly been handed out to journalists.

The Scholars' Initiative conference, organised by Purdue University (USA) sponsored by UNMIBH, will come to a close today. Over the last four days, 60 scholars from USA, Great Britain, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro have come together to discuss and analyse historic developments in the former Yugoslavia in a 15-year period between 1986 and 2000. Ten key controversies are the core subjects that were and still are being discussed in a number of working groups during this conference.

In his address to the scholars at the opening of the conference on 6 July 2002, SRSG Klein said, "Your objective analysis of the controversial issues of the last decade can determine whether the region recovers or continues to languish in isolation. We all know that only by identifying those few who are really guilty do we absolve the many more that are innocent and give them hope for a better future that they so desperately want and rightfully deserve." The Scholars' Initiative which is its research phase now will be completed in the year 2004 when the results will be published.

Following his arrest on 6 July 2002, the Mostar Police Administration on 7 July 2002 filed criminal charges against a Bosniac man from Zenica for the illegal possession of a weapon

and for falsifying documents. During a regular traffic control in a street near the centre of Mostar the man was stopped and the police found an automatic rifle with a silencer and an optical device on the back seat of the vehicle. The case is now with Basic Court in Mostar while the individual remains in detention. Reports in the media that this man was attempting to assassinate a US general are mere speculation.

Majda Prljaca – UNHCR

More that 40,000 so-called minority returns were recorded by UNHCR in first five months of 2002, according to UNHCR statistics released today. An additional 9,504 persons returned to their homes in May, representing a 30.5 per cent increase in the rate of return since January 2002 compared to the same period in 2001.

"The return season is well underway, and it is expected that in 2002 returns will surpass the 2001 figure of 92,061. Disturbingly the rate of returns continues to outpace the availability of funds for housing reconstruction and other sustainability activities, factors which impede returnees' efforts to rebuild their lives in Bosnia and Herzegovina", said UNHCR Officer in Charge, John Farvolden.

As at end of May, 24,031 returnees were recorded in the Federation of BiH, 14,453 in Republika Srpska and 1,613 in Brcko District.

Major Scott Lundy – SFOR

I have no formal statement for you today.

Questions and Answers

Q: Sead Numanovic – Dnevni Avaz:

Which documents were falsified?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH:

That was documents relating to the car. Basically, the documents that this man had for this vehicle didn't match the vehicle.

Q: Sead Numanovic – Dnevni Avaz:

Is he the owner of the vehicle?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH:

I don't know that detail. I only know that the documents for the vehicle did not really match the details and numbers of the chassis and so forth of the vehicle that he was driving.

Q: Sead Numanovic – Dnevni Avaz:

Was the rifle ready for use or was it just on the back seat?

A: Major Scott Lundy:

You are asking questions that are best directed to the Mostar Police. They are handling the investigation. All I know is what Kirsten has said.

Q: Sead Numanovic – Dnevni Avaz:

There is an SFOR representative in the investigation team.

A: Major Scott Lundy:

The investigation is continuing. Let us not leap to assumptions or worse, let us just see what the investigation turns up.

Q: Sead Numanovic – Dnevni Avaz:

Is this guy what we are calling a Mujahadeen?

A: Major Scott Lundy:

Let us see what the investigation turns up.

Q: Sead Numanovic – Dnevni Avaz:

What is this guy's occupation?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH:

We do not have information on this at this point.

A: Major Scott Lundy:

I have spoken to dozens of you over the last 24 hours about this. We have put out a press release to present SFOR's perspective on an event that took place on Saturday. We could not be any clearer; it was coincidence; there is now an investigation going on. Your best source is the Mostar Police, the Mostar prosecutor's Office. Really, we are now just sitting back watching to see what happens. Yes, SFOR has two criminal investigators from its team down there assisting and watching to see what happens as well. We are curious, but let us let the investigation take its course.

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH:

Just one little addition to that. The case is now with the basic court in Mostar, after the criminal report has been filed. At this point, the investigation of the police has been completed, however the court and prosecutor can always request additional information from the police if that should be required. For the time being, the case is with the basic court in Mostar.

Q: Sead Numanovic – Dnevni Avaz:

If somebody can clarify, what is the nature of SFOR's people in the investigation. Are they observing or are they actively participating in the investigation and if so, can you just point out the legal grounds for that?

A: Major Scott Lundy:

The coincidence involves a major player from SFOR, therefore we have sent two people down to assist and the nature of that assistance, because it is an investigation, is something I have not been told and I do not expect to be told. It is a police investigation; it is as simple as that.

Q: Sead Numanovic – Dnevni Avaz:

What are about the legal grounds?

A: Major Scott Lundy:

Well, SFOR is here to provide a safe and secure environment which you all criticise us for saying, but that is really our mandate: to maintain a safe and secure environment. In this respect, it would appear a major player was involved and we have asked to be part of this investigation, we are now part of it and we will see what turns up.

Q: Sead Numanovic – Dnevni Avaz:

Who are these two gentlemen?

A: Major Scott Lundy:

I do not have an answer for you on that.

Q: Sead Numanovic – Dnevni Avaz:

Other than the media speculations that this guy who was taken by the police might be involved in an assassination attempt on COMSFOR. Do you have any indication that this could happen?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH:

That what happened?

Q: Sead Numanovic – Dnevni Avaz:

That there is any kind of plan to assassinate

COMSFOR in Mostar?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH:

No, it is totally speculation. There is no evidence pointing to this at this point, and it has been repeated by both of us several times now that the investigation is continuing, it is now at the basic court and we will have to see what the outcome of this. At this point, we can only say it is merely speculation.

Q: Sead Numanovic – Dnevni Avaz:

Usually you do not comment so fast on speculation in the media. Why are you so fast this time?

A: Major Scott Lundy:

I think it's a case of not wanting rumours to generate into ridiculous stories. That is why, it is as simple as that. It is a coincidence, but rather than allow the journalists to make wild stories, we thought we would present you with some facts. So please take the facts and continue with your story.

Q: Antonio Prcenda – Oslobodenje:

OSCE is an organisation for security and co-operation. What do you have to do with education?

A: Urdur Gunnarsdottir:

We have a lot to do with education. Education has been a part of the human rights mandate until now, because it is part of sustainable return. And as you know, we have a lot to do with human rights.

Q: Antonio Prcenda – Oslobodenje:

Education belongs to returns?

A: Urdur Gunnarsdottir:

Yes, it belongs very well; it belongs very well within the mandate of human rights, because it is one of the key elements for sustainability. How are people going to be able to return if the children cannot get back to school, and get an acceptable education?