

Neum Workshop on Security and Defense

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, Lieutenant General Charles-Henri de Monchy, DCOM SFOR, and Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Willcocks, DCOMOPS SFOR, yesterday attended the final day of a two day workshop in Neum. The workshop was designed to develop methods that could ensure democratic control over the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The High Representative and Commander SFOR were disappointed that the members of the Presidency did not attend. Annex 4 of the GFAP and the subsequent legal opinion presented to the Presidency by OHR in December 1999, shows clearly that it is the responsibility of the Presidency to represent the interests of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in matters pertaining to the armed forces. It is the Presidency who must ensure that security policy in BiH is realistic, affordable, pragmatic and effective.

Present was the Standing Committee for Military Matters (SCMM) and senior members of both entity armed forces. Also participating in the talks were military representatives from the headquarters of NATO, the United Nations, the OSCE and OHR. The workshop provided the opportunity for informal and professional discussions on future security and defense requirements of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A modern security and defense policy will open the way for further integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into European structures. The High Representative praised the entity military establishments and the SCMM for taking responsibility for the challenges they face in making Bosnia and Herzegovina, from the perspective of defense, a modern European state. They have set an example to their civilian counterparts.

The establishment, by the Presidency, of a Defense Ministers working group, which will look at the difficult question of state defense, is also an important step. It sends a positive signal to the countries of South Eastern Europe as they prepare for the forthcoming Stability Pact Table 3 meeting in Sarajevo.

The High Representative and Commander SFOR feel that Bosnia and Herzegovina has a crucial role to play in the Stability Pact and, like all European nations, BiH must develop a policy that meets its specific security and defense requirements for its people. Bosnia and Herzegovina must concentrate on the future and grasp the opportunities on offer now.