

Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

Avis Benes, OHR Spokesperson: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to another press conference of International Organisations seated in Mostar.

My colleges have much more interesting statements than the OHR today. Actually I only have a brief reminder for you. This information has already been reported on in the press and in other media, but it is significant to remind that 1st of July is the deadline for submission of claims for repossession of flats that were in the FBiH on 4th of October 1999 devastated or uninhabitable. So, irrespective of whether the flats are still devastated or have been reconstructed in the meantime, it is important that the people who have not submitted their claims for the repossession of socially-owned flats that were devastated at the time do so by 1st of July.

There are such buildings in Mostar and this deadline applies to the people who had tenancy right for socially-owned apartments which are still devastated. So this is the appeal to them not to miss this deadline.

This was all on behalf of the OHR and now I give the floor to Richard and OSCE.

Richard Medic, OSCE Spokesperson: Just a couple of short points. I am sorry but I will speak in English, because I did not have the time to translate my statement.

Just one very short correction to what FENA reported yesterday. I will just quote to you what they said.

"The OSCE Mission to BiH expressed its satisfaction today with the fact that the retroactive payment of 600.000 KM would be made for working of the BiH Election Commission after passing of the BiH State Budget."

So just a slight correction – what our Spokesperson in Sarajevo actually said was:

"We are looking forward to see the retroactive 600.000 KM, pledged by the BiH authorities". So basically we are not expressing satisfaction as yet, we are just looking forward to the payment coming.

And just a couple of short points today:

– Ambassador Thomas Timbermann, the Director of OSCE Mostar, will be visiting the SW Municipality today. There will be a press conference at 12:30 at the SW Municipal offices. So I encourage you to come.

– The Head of OSCE Mission to BiH, Ambassador Robert Beecroft, is visiting the region at the end of this week. He will be in Trebinje on Friday, and early next week he will be visiting Ljubuski, Siroki Brijeg and Mostar. And I will be sending you all Media Advisories about the exact times of the press opportunities. That is all. Thank you.

Kirsten Haupt, UNMIBH Spokesperson: Good morning. On Monday, 10 June 2002, the new IPTF Commissioner Sven Frederiksen and the Head of Civil Affairs, Jaque Grinberg, met with the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Minister of Interior, Goran Bilic, the Deputy Minister, Sead Sehic, and with Police Commissioner Dragan Brkic. Both sides expressed their satisfaction over the co-operation between the Ministry and UNMIBH and their willingness to continue this co-operation in order to solve outstanding issues. Among those issues, IPTF Commissioner Frederiksen mentioned the reduction of personnel in the Ministry that are not in line with the Bonn-Petersberg Agreement, the elimination of remaining parallel structures in the Ministry and the establishment of the Independent Selection Review Board for the Police Commissioner. Saying that there was already a good level of inter-entity co-operation in this area with the PSC Trebinje, the Ministers and the Police Commissioner expressed their wish to increase this cross-entity co-operation further, with the aim to fight organised crime and promote returns. The IPTF Commissioner also visited Stolac and met with the local police there.

The fourth part of the UNMIBH campaign "Your Police Serving You" will start on 15 June 2002. This fourth part is focusing on the issue of returns and evictions and on the role of the police in this process. All media are included in this campaign. TV spots will be aired twice a day from 15 June through to 28 June on 22 stations and radio jingles will be broadcast during the same time period on 23 stations. Fifty billboards displaying messages of this campaign will be put up across the country. And thousands of leaflets are going to be distributed to the population,

explaining their rights in this very crucial issue. The campaign material tells returnees that they should expect the police to create a secure environment for their returns so that they can return without the risk of violence, harassment and intimidation. Should such incidents occur, the police have to actively investigate these incidents and bring perpetrators to justice. The information material also explains to returnees which role the police play in evictions. It also clarifies that anyone who commits any looting or vandalism is committing a crime and will be charged accordingly. Again, the campaign will start on Saturday 15 June and will last until 28 June.

If you have any additional questions on this subject, you are free to contact me and I will be able at the end of this week also to give you more material.

The last issue I have today is not included in the statement because I just got it prior to the press conference. You might have received the press release today issued by MoI. The statement explains or speaks about the suspension of six police officers here in Mostar. The suspensions come as a consequence of an incident that took place on the evening of Monday, 10th of June. A vehicle that was evidence in the incident regarding car-theft was stolen from the closed compound of Police Administration Mostar. So these six police officers have been suspended for neglect of their duties. These six includes the two guards of this compound, as well as the Commander of Police Station Centre in Mostar as this compound was under the jurisdiction of the Police Station Centre. Some of you have already asked me to give you out the names of these six police officers, but I am not in the position to give you their names. You may contact the MoI. They have not released their names in their statement, so I do not feel at liberty to do that. The investigation into this case has been launched and we will monitor this very closely because this is very, very closely connected to the performance and professional conduct of police officers. You can also see by the very quick and swift reaction that the Ministry also takes this case very seriously. Please understand that we can not say anything else at this moment, it is very fresh and new case and we will keep you updated as information come up. Thank you

Ltc. Nicolas Rambaud, SFOR / MNDSE Spokesperson: Thank you very much and good morning. I have two short statements.

Last weekend, some incidents against SFOR personnel and vehicles took place in Mostar region after rowdy World Cup celebrations.

As COMSFOR Lieutenant General John B. SYLVESTER said, "football hooliganism and a 'safe and secure environment' don't mix and violent behaviour and firing shots have no place in Bosnia and Herzegovina".

Celebrating a sports victory is fine and we understand well the emotion of sporting contests. However, as all citizens, we would like to enjoy the competition as spectators and fans in secure conditions.

MNDSE Commander, Brigadier General Philippe SOMMAIRE, appeals to civilised behaviour for all the future games to come and recalls that keeping public order is a local police and leaders task.

A couple of days ago, The Centre for Children and Youth with Special Needs contacted MND-SE and asked SFOR to provide them with any kind of help. This Centre is in a really bad financial situation and is facing a possibility to be closed due to the lack of means to continue with their work.

This Centre depends on occasional help from different organisations or individuals in order to continue providing their protégés with necessary activities they need. SFOR decided to meet one of their requests and will provide these children and youths with lunch boxes for their one-day trip to Rujiste. This trip is made possible also by "Mostar Bus" company which is providing a bus free of charge.

I would like to use this opportunity to call on all International, Non-Governmental and other organisations and individuals to help this Centre in any way they can. Thank you.

QUESTIONS:

Zvonimir Jukic, ONASA: I have one question for the UN. You already have said that you can not uncover the names of the police officers that have been suspended. But can you tell us who the owner of the car that was stolen is and in which criminal case this car is the evidence?

Kirsten Haupt: I can not answer the first part of your question right now because I do not know. The second one, as I said already, is in a relation to a car-theft case that we had some actions some days ago. Regarding further

details on this case, I would recommend you to contact the Mol, they would be at liberty to give you more information on this.

Pejo Gasparevic, HINA: I also have a question for the UN. I have been dealing with and have been trying to investigate the case this morning because I find it quite interesting that six police officers have been suspended because of this one car – it's a curiosity, a precedent. Can you, from the IPTF, throughout the day help us learn more about the very car? It must be some trophy. Who was using this car, which institution did it belong to, who was the owner? Was there any tapping equipment on the car?

Kirsten Haupt: First of all, let me clarify my position here. I am not the spokesperson of the Mol. All these kinds of details are part of the investigation and part of the case that has been dealt with by the Mol. Of course as soon as I get the information – if I get it – I will make it available to you. But I think that the first to address should really be the Mol, they are first address to deal with this. Now just on the significance of this case, you said that you find it funny that six people have been suspended on just the theft of one car. Mind you, the car was not just stolen off the street somewhere. It was stolen out of the guarded police compound. And that includes a number of people who are responsible, one way or the other, for the situation. Like I told you already, the two guards of this compound have been suspended, they are among those six people as well as the station Commander who is responsible as in a commanding position for this compound, responsible for making sure that this car is safely guarded in this compound. Now, this car is evidence in a significant case of dealing with car-theft, so I think this explains the significance of this case and also the consequence meaning that six people have been suspended in that connection. I said earlier also, I mean, this is very closely connected with the performance of the police. If the car gets taken out of a guarded compound, that is quite a serious situation. This case happened only Monday evening, the measures have been taken and I am sure that more information will be available in the coming days. You have seen that the Ministry has taken this also seriously. The first statement was issued today, and I am sure that within the coming days more information will be available by the Ministry on this case. So, again please contact the Mol and also you are free to contact me, as soon as I have anything I will give it to you.

Mirsad Behram, RTV MO: I also have a question for the UN. For how long will these suspensions be on? And are these police officers under the investigation as well?

Kirsten Haupt: Yes, of course. This is just the start of the investigation, it is the first measure. As I said, all six have been found to be responsible one way or the other. Either directly or due to the commanding position. So there will be investigation also including these six, that is normal. And as far as I am aware, the suspensions will be valid as long as the investigation continues. And then we will see, according to the outcome of the investigation, either more measures will be taken or these suspensions will be taken back again. I mean the investigation will, of course, hopefully establish how this could happen, and will establish the responsibilities of each of these six – or even more – and then the appropriate measures will be taken. What they will be I can't say at this moment because we do not know anything at this point.

Avis Benes: Any other question? If not, thank you very much for your attention. See you next Wednesday.