

BiH Media Round-up, 29/5/2002

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NATO accuses RS air force of spying on peacekeepers

NATO on Tuesday accused the RS air force of spying on its mission in BiH and suspended the RS air force commander from his duties after an investigation showed his forces had

eavesdropped on alliance troops. An SFOR investigation established that the RS army "radio monitoring group located near Prijedor, has been electronically monitoring SFOR and NATO aviation activities," said SFOR in a press release which was carried by all media in the Federation and the RS. The preliminary inquiry "has determined that this was a willful act directed as policy by members of the VRS (RS Army) Air Force higher command against SFOR and NATO," SFOR said. The commander of SFOR, the US General John Sylvester, suspended General Milan Torbica, commander of the RS air force and air defense from all his duties pending the final outcome of the investigation. Sylvester also imposed an "immediate and complete ban" on air force training and movements until further notice. RS Defense Minister Slobodan Bilic issued an order to the RS military headquarters to conduct a thorough investigation regarding these claims on spying and "reveal eventual responsibility", a statement from ministry said.

(This was the top story in all the main electronic media in the Federation and the RTRS, but it was covered less prominently by newspapers)

IPTF Commissioner prevented dismissal of the Chief of the Federation Police

BHTV, Federation TV as well as all print media in Sarajevo reported that the IPTF Commissioner, Vincent Couderoy, asked the Federation Interior Minister, Ramo Maslesa, on Monday to revoke his decision on dismissal of Dragan Lukac, the Federation Chief of Police, and Mirsada Zutic-Beganovic, the Ministry's secretary. At a press conference in Sarajevo, Couderoy informed the press that the UN mission in BiH asked Maslesa to revoke the decision, as it, as he argued, has no legal grounds. "Some people in this country simply cannot understand that the rule of law must finally be established in this country," said Couderoy, adding that all dismissals in police must be made in consultations with the UN. "Maslesa failed to discuss his move with us," he said, also expressing his concern over the fact that the Federation Interior Minister tried to exert pressure on police.

Dnevni Avaz writes, quoting anonymous sources, that Maslesa was extremely dissatisfied with Lukac, who

allegedly failed to inform him about a number of recent police actions, including the arrest of the so-called Algerian group of suspected terrorist, the Pogorelica group, as well as yesterday's arrest of Jusuf Piralic, charged with illegal storing of large quantities of arms in Mostar. Another source from the Federation Interior Minister told the daily that Lukac has been performing his duties illegally, as he was named to this post 14 months ago by the then Interior Minister, Muhamed Besic, without any approval by the Federation government. The same source argues that Lukas could have been acting chief of police for no longer than six months as stipulated by the law on Mol, but that he was kept in this post this long because he is "a suitable personnel solution for the International Community."

Paddy Ashdown visits Mostar and Bobita company in Citluk

The new High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, arrived on Monday in his first official visit to Mostar. At a press conference of international organizations, Ashdown said that he will not allow the adoption of laws which are detrimental to identity of any constituent people in BiH. "I will never allow constitutional amendments which could fundamentally endanger the security or identity of any constituent people in BiH. One of the characteristics of modern and prosperous European states is to see diversity as their strength, rather than a threat," **FENA** quotes Ashdown as saying. **Federation TV** and **BH TV** carried similar reports, quoting Ashdown as saying that Croats have a great role to play, as "they represent one of the biggest strengths and talents in BiH." **Vecernji List** reports that the new High Representative called on Croats in BiH to take part in building of institutions in BiH. "We cannot survive and you (Croats) cannot make any progress unless you do participate (in building of state institutions)," said Ashdown. The daily also notes that Ashdown arrived in Mostar with significantly lower security than his predecessor or the Provisional Administrator of Hercegovacka Banka, Toby Robinson. "This way, the former soldier and the leader of the British Liberals tried to demonstrate that he trusts the local institutions or that he is testing them," writes **Vecernji List**, commenting on the fact that Ashdown's arrival at a press conference was secured by only ten local policemen.

Vecernji List ("There will be lay off in the OHR") and **Dnevni List** ("I will respect more those who will propose solutions than those who will only point out to problems"), and **Oslobodjenje** (Ashdown announces reduction of number of employees in the OHR") also carry excerpts of the letter Ashdown addressed to his colleagues and workers in the OHR. **Nezavisne Novine** and **Slobodna Dalmacija** quote the letter as well, also focusing on the reorganization in the OHR.

Dnevni Avaz carries a shorter article on Ashdown's visit to Bobita alcohol-production company in Citluk, where the new High Representative inquired about the cost of production of alcohol beverages and the final sale of the product in stores. According to the daily, Ashdown also engaged in cheerful but serious chats with the employees and managers in the company and at the end expressed satisfaction with what he saw.

BiH Politicians comment on Ashdown's address (sources: SRNA and Nezavisne Novine)

Dragan Mikerevic (The chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers and the European Integration Minister), has voiced optimism regarding the priorities of his work in BiH which the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, set out in his inaugural speech to the BiH Parliamentary Assembly on Monday. "Lord Ashdown gave an excellent portrayal of the situation in BiH, which confirms that he has been briefed well. The fact that he made positive and not just negative remarks about the work of the authorities at all levels is especially encouraging," Mikerevic added. Mikerevic expects the new High Representative to ensure full affirmation of the interests of BiH, its entities and peoples, while respecting the constitutional structure in BiH, and that he will have the full support of the BiH Council of Ministers in this, says a statement issued by the press service of the BiH Council of Ministers. "Such a balanced approach is the best guarantee for a speedier implementation of the embarked upon reforms and BiH's accession to European and trans-Atlantic integration processes," Mikerevic said.

Cvijetin Nikic (a member of the main committee of the Serb Democratic Party [SDS]), on Monday voiced the expectation that the new High Representative would work for the benefit of all three nations in BiH in line with the Dayton peace agreement provisions. "We expect that the new High Representative will contribute with his work to

the stabilization of the political and economic situation with the aim of raising living standards in BiH,” Nikic told an SDS news conference in Bijeljina.

The acting president of the HDZ, **Barisa Colak**, has welcomed today the arrival of the new High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, to BiH and his address to the BiH Parliament and the public, said the party in a statement. “We especially welcome your view that ‘Dayton is a foundation, not a ceiling’ in the building of the state, and your determination not to allow ‘constitutional amendments which threaten the identity and security of any constituent people in BiH’” – the HDZ said. “The road to Europe has no alternative for a democratic BiH. We are well aware that this goal is unrealizable without sweeping reforms, especially without creating an atmosphere in which the law will be a foundation of democracy. A prerequisite for the realization of this

goal is an essential economic transformation, rationalization and increase of efficiency at all levels, fight against corruption and terrorism” – the same statement goes on to say. “The HDZ wants to carry its share of responsibility for the future of BiH and all its citizens” – the statement concludes.

Jovan Mitrovic, the deputy chairman of the Democratic National Alliance [DNS], said Paddy Ashdown, the new High Representative for BiH, would not work for the interests of the RS but would rather continue his predecessor’s job on centralizing Bosnia-Herzegovina and making it a unitary state.

The Croat Christian Democrats believe that the new High Representative Paddy Ashdown will have to pay attention to the fact that the Croats in BiH do not have institutional liberties at present. “We demand that the Croat people be guaranteed all the rights enjoyed by the other two nations,” the founder of the Croat Christian Democrats, Petar Milic, told a news conference in Kiseljak. Milic said that the Croat Christian Democrats supported Ashdown’s efforts to establish the rule of law and to stimulate the economy.

Mirko Banjac (Peoples’ Revival Union): Banjac said that he interpreted Ashdown’s statement that Dayton is a base that could be built upon as an allusion to internal reorganization in BiH. “I did not expect that he has any ambition to change the territorial organization of BiH...He can think what he wants, but he cannot change the Dayton, for he has no authority to do so.”

Seada Palavric (SDA deputy in the Federation Parliament): Palavric said that she agrees that the Dayton had a task to stop the war, but added that its solutions could not be permanent. “Dayton barely contains a framework for the state. BiH has no future unless it is self-sustainable and a state.”

Nikola Spiric (the speaker of the BiH Parliament’s House of Peoples): Spiric agreed with Ashdown’s statement that the administration at all levels in BiH is entirely too expensive and leads to corruption. He also said that the Dayton will inevitably be changed – to better.

Gavrilo Grabovac (member of the Presidency of Party for BiH): “Ashdown’s assessment on expensive administration is completely correct and I support the initiative to reduce the number of those who use public funds.”

Milorad Dodik (president of the SNSD) welcomed the determination of the new High Representative to advocate the rule of law and fight crime and corruption. Dodik is of the opinion that local political forces should deal with crime but that the High Representative’s involvement will accelerate the process. “We shall support any effort of the High Representative aimed to fight crime and corruption.”

The People’s **Party Working for Prosperity** fully supports speech of the High Representative. “Energetic and confident Ashdown’s inaugural speech before domestic politicians and his clear vision of the solution to the problematic situation in the state convince us that BiH is to expect brighter future” – the statement issued by the party points out. “We specially welcome his strategy of the fight against organized crime and gray economy, because we find that it is just crime which has become the main barrier on the way toward the building of BiH as a legal and modern state.

Without independent and strong judiciary, police and prosecutor’s office we cannot build mutual trust, nor can we expect good results in any field.”

For additional reactions, see the full transcript of Monday's BH Radio 1 report

Excerpt from report by Bosnia-Herzegovina public radio on 27 May [Announcer] At a joint session of both Houses of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly [Bosnia-Herzegovina House of Representatives and House of Peoples], Paddy Ashdown, who assumed the post of the new High Representative to Bosnia-Herzegovina today, outlined the concept of his policies, which envisage laying the ground for the rule of law, implementing reforms and providing job opportunities. Mirsad Bajtarevic reports:

[Reporter] Establishing a law-governed state is the prime concern for the new High Representative because organized crime activities are the cancer at the heart of the Bosnian society...

Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly [lower house of the Bosnia-Herzegovina parliament] **Mariofil Ljubic** is confident he will have a good working relationship with the new High Representative.

[Ljubic] The decision-making power should be transferred, or rather, it should be returned to parliament, as the latter is made up of deputies elected by the people. I believe we have been able to widen our cooperation. I hope that this cooperation [with the OHR] will continue to grow and that it will be more frequent.

[Reporter] Speaker of the House of Peoples of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly **Nikola Spiric** said that it is difficult to predict how capable the new High Representative will turn out to be.

[Spiric] I would like to believe that he will be able to successfully cooperate with the Bosnia-Herzegovina government at all levels and that we will work in the interest of the citizens through joint efforts.

[Reporter] Asked if Paddy Ashdown will be more expeditious than the previous High Representative, the parliamentary assembly deputies, **Ibrahim Spahic** and **Ibrahim Djedovic**, had the following to say:

[Spahic] Parliamentary democracy will start functioning if Paddy Ashdown works for two years like Wolfgang Petritsch did in the last 48 hours.

[Djedovic] I think that circumstances will force him to be more energetic. We are running out of time. Too much time has been wasted.

[Reporter] The words spoken by the High Representative testify to the fact that too much time had been wasted. He demands only two things from the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina: that everyone vote in the elections on 5 October and to reflect on what they want to achieve with their votes.

Source: BH Radio 1, Sarajevo, in Serbo-Croat 1300 gmt 27 May 02

Reactions to Petritsch's Last Decisions

Nezavisne Novine, Glas Srpski reports

One of the conclusions of the RS Government from the session held yesterday in Banja Luka is that the former High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, misused his authority from the Annex 10 of the DPA by making the most recent decisions and laws, and amendments to the RS Constitution. Explaining the Government conclusion, the RS Justice Minister, Biljana Maric, stated that the RS Government supported the **reform of the judiciary** and therefore, cannot agree with the fact that authorization of the RS institutions was taken away. Nezavisne Novine quote Maric as saying that the RS Government will ask for the opinion of the Peace Implementation Council, Council of Europe and some other authorized institutions. Glas Srpski also quotes the RS Minister for Traffic and Communications, Branko Dokic, as saying that the RS Government was strongly dissatisfied with the imposition of the RTRS law due to the fact that all objections the OHR had on the law were accepted and incorporated in the law. Dokic is also disappointed with an explanation from the Banja Luka OHR that the law had to be imposed due to the

fact that the RS Government could not understand that the founder concept was an outdated communist principle.

In an interview with **Dnevni Avaz**, the newly appointed Director of the **Civil Service Agency**, Jakob Finci, said that the Decision on his appointment to this post could be considered as a joint Decision by the then High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, and the Council of Ministers, which approved it. Finci explained that the OHR sent a letter to the chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Dragan Mikerevic, asking for the Council's opinion on the appointment.

Speaking about the purpose of the new Agency, Finci said that its job will be to ensure that civil servants are impartial, efficient and not dependable on changes of political administration. He explained that the Agency, which will employ about 20 people, will have jurisdiction only over the civil servants bureaucracy. Finci said that the experiences in this field from the Great Britain, Austria, France and the US will be very useful in this process.

Commenting on the future structure of the civil service, the director of the CS Agency said that his prime concern will be the professional background of the future employees, their number as well as the national balance based on the population census from 1991. "However, I do not believe that the quality should not be at all times sacrificed for the sake of national representation," Finci stressed.

Bosniaks in Stolac freeze their participation in Municipal Assembly

FRONT PAGE STORY IN DNEVNI LIST

Bosniak members in the Stolac Municipal Assembly sent a letter to the High Representative (although the name is not indicated, the letter obviously refer to Wolfgang Petritsch) informing him that they will freeze their participation in this body in a protest against the May 23 Decision by the OHR whereby the thus far necessary requirement of two-thirds quorum for the work of the Assembly was abolished. The undersigned Bosniak members argue that the status of the Bosniak population in this town is humiliating and that Bosniak returnees to Stolac have a very difficult time finding a job or exercising their right to free education. According to the letter, Bosniaks in Stolac can in no way get a job in any public institution, cannot practice their religion in a central mosque or even in an improvised prayer site, and they are discriminated against by the bodies of executive authority.

The undersigned members of the Assembly stressed that Petritsch's decision to change the rules of operations in the MA was hasty and could prevent further positive and integrative development in Stolac.

Investigation into the secret ammunition caches in Mostar

In reference to the secret ammunition caches found in Mostar and the ongoing investigation into the case, **Vecernji List** reads that Jusuf Piralic, one of suspects and a man in charge of military industry for Herzegovina between 1994 and 1997, was taken before an investigative judge of the Mostar Municipal Court II Tanja Kazazic. Piralic, escorted by his lawyer Faruk Balijagic, opted to defend himself with silence. Furthermore, Vecernji List learns that whilst Piralic was transferred to Mostar County Prison, another suspect namely Mehmed Bajgoric, was sent to Sarajevo for psychiatric evaluation over alleged mental incompetence. No electronic or print media have had information that was aired by Banja Luka based BIG radio yesterday, 28 May, at 12:00 h, that war time Director of the production Unit in the East part of Mostar, Mehmed Bajgoric, accused the former Mayor of Mostar, Safet Orucevic, and the former Defence Minister of the BiH Federation, Hasan Cengic, to be most responsible for the secret caches, which SFOR recently detected.

Former RS president steps down as head of Serb Radical Party

Former RS president Nikola Poplasen stepped down as head of his ultra-nationalist party, Serb Radical Party (SRS), in a bid to keep it in the general elections, the RTRS reported on Tuesday. According to the BiH Election Law and in line with the Decision on Eligibility of Candidates by the High Representative, no party containing in its senior leadership politicians who were removed and barred from public office by the OHR, Provisional Election Commission (PIC) or the Elections Appeals Sub-Commission (EASC) in BiH is allowed to take part in the elections.

Poplasen was removed by the High Representative, Carlos Westendorp, in March 1999 for obstructing the implementation of the Dayton peace agreement.

HPT Mostar Steering Board: Eronet signal to shut down

Jutarnji list carries a statement by Slavo Kukic, the Head of HPT Mostar Steering Board, that as of Saturday 70,000 mobile phones in Herzegovina will lose a signal if co-owners of Eronet do not return illegally transferred shares to HPT Mostar. Kukic added that the HPT Mostar expects that they get back 51% of shares in Eronet.

Editorials on Wolfgang Petritsch

In an editorial in **Dnevni list**, Ivica Glibusic wrote that Wolfgang Petritsch, when he assumed the duties of High Representative, promised to win a great support by the International Community in terms of resolving the property laws, the arrest of indicted war criminals and the return of refugees and DPs. However, says the author, things were set very differently. "The work of a strong Serb lobby, that was created during 70 years in diplomatic and consular offices of the former Yugoslavia, with the assistance of English and Russian diplomacy resulted in the fact that Serbs were rewarded for the war on territory of former Yugoslavia," writes Glibusic. The results of the war are well cemented, says the author, for the Republika Srpska is a state within the state, adding that politicians from the RS are satisfied with Petritsch's work because he has achieved all the plans of the Serb politics. The author concludes the editorial by saying that Bosniaks were portrayed in international circles as victims of war, Serbs have good diplomatic protection and Croats are left on their own in fight for their rights.

In the editorial in **Slobodna Dalmacija** "Tears on monument's face", Petar Milos notes that he could not understand Petritsch's tears prior to his departure from BiH. Milos wonders as to "why and before whom was Petritsch pretending to be a human being." According to him, the former High Representative was a person who lacked personality and humanity, "the person who was more interested in his hairstyle than in BiH," as he puts it.