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BiH State-related Issues

RS Supreme Defense Council rejects state Presidency's defense strategy

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

The RS Supreme Defense Council on Thursday rejected the BiH Presidency's draft decision on the set-up and work of defense institutions at the level of BiH and concluded that talks on this issue with a view to BiH moving closer to NATO should be continued in the Standing Military Committee, ministries of defense of the two entities and with NATO representatives, Glas srpski reports on its front page. RS President Mirko Sarovic said after the session that BiH Presidency member Zivko Radisic said that should this issue be imposed by the Presidency, he would use the right to declare it an issue of vital national interest. "The RS Supreme Defense Council is unanimous in its stance that all unconstitutional solutions should be rejected and that talks on how to improve coordination should continue in the relevant institutions," Sarovic said, adding that the BiH Presidency was not authorized to discuss security and defense matters, because under the constitution, this matter is to be discussed by the Standing Military Committee. "Nobody from the RS took part in preparing such a decision; its masterminds are probably some military officials in the BiH Federation," Sarovic said. The RS president said that it was necessary immediately to do away with the practice of the Presidency making decisions which are not within its jurisdiction, and talks should continue on this issue in the Standing Military Committee, ministries of defense of the two entities and with NATO representatives "who have never asked to go beyond what the BiH Constitution says". Sarovic repeated that this draft decision directly violated the BiH Constitution and that with it the BiH Presidency abused the good intentions of the RS. He confirmed that the BiH Presidency and the RS National Assembly would be informed about the decision of the RS Supreme Defense Council.

Serb deputies ask president to apologize for calling war "aggression"

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

RS deputies in the BiH Parliament House of Representatives have asked Chairman of the BiH Presidency Beriz Belkic to apologize for using the word "aggression" at Thursday's session of the house when he was talking about his role in the war in Bosnia, 1992-1995, SRNA news agency reports. Belkic addressed the deputies in reply to the request of deputy Mirko Banjac to include in the agenda the forming of an "inquiry committee which would determine the war activities of the BiH Presidency chairman with regard to his involvement in issuing recommendations on the basis of which civilians were being taken to forced labor camps". Belkic said in his address that during the war he worked within the "organized, legitimate system of an internationally-recognized state and defended his country from aggression". He added that he was not shying away from establishing everybody's responsibility in breaking international conventions of war and that he spent the best part of the war in Sarajevo where a "safari to hunt people" was taking place. He also said that according to what he heard Banjac used to go to the hill of Trebevic to watch the safari. Banjac said that Belkic's term "aggression" was not appropriate as it was inappropriate that anybody who was involved in the war should hold public office. Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers also reacted asking Belkic in reply who he referred to as being the aggressor and, if he referred to the Serb people, how could he, Mikerevic, as a Serb, be the chairman of the Council of Ministers. Belkic replied that he did not refer to BiH citizens as the aggressors on the country but the war time Yugoslav People's Army and paramilitary units. The chief whips of the SNS, PDP, SNSD, SPRS and SDS (all parties from the RS) beside from asking Belkic to apologize, also said that the term "aggression" was inappropriate and was not contributing to BiH people's living together. The deputies of these parties also suggested that public addresses should rely on the official terminology used in the Dayton Peace Accord, which stated that the war in BiH was a "tragic conflict".

SPRS top official says BiH lawsuit against FRY has no legal grounds

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Glas srpski quotes vice-president of the RS Socialist Party (SPRS), Miroslav Mikes, as saying that the SPRS cannot support commanding coordination between the armed forces that exist in BiH. Mikes said the SPRS hoped that the Serb member of the BiH Presidency, Zivko Radisic, would veto the decision on the restructuring of the BiH defense institutions. He said that the BiH Presidency made a decision to transfer the item on the financing of BiH legal agent, who represents BiH in a lawsuit against the FRY, to current reserves, but that it would be the best if BiH dropped the lawsuit because it has no legal grounds. "The law suit would jeopardize the vital national interests of

the Serb people in BiH", said Mikes.

The BiH Coordination of the Journalist's Associations astonished by Mirnes Ajanovic's verbal attack on Oslobodjenje

According to Oslobodjenje, the Coordination of the Journalist's Association in BiH (The Independent Union of Professional Journalists, the BiH Association of Journalists, the Apel Association of Journalists and the Independent Association of RS Journalists) on Thursday expressed its astonishment by BOSS leader Mirnes Ajanovic's verbal attack on the Oslobodjenje Editor-in-Chief, Senka Kurtovic, an Oslobodjenje journalist, Almir Terzic, and a FTV journalist, Bakir Hadziomerovic, as a part of his speech delivered to the BiH Federation House of Representatives on May 22. the Coordination emphasized that, by such behavior, Ajanovic was misusing a parliamentary session and the freedom of expression.

Federation

Dnevni List on the Eronet case

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Dnevni List carries an article about Eronet written by Marko Markovic. After the strong conflict between Provisional Administrator Toby Robinson and President of the HPT Steering Board Slavo Kukic, who called Robinson "a cowgirl, who thinks that all of us are sheep", Dnevni List decided to conduct an investigation and see what will happen with the 70,000 of Eronet subscribers. DL writes that Article 6 of the Contract between the Ministry of Traffic and Communications and Eronet, says that the concession that Eronet has obtained can not be forwarded to a third party without approval of the Ministry, which might become the reason for shutting down Eronet's signal. Markovic brings the history of the Eronet case from its beginning up to the present moment. Saying that 51% of Eronet shares were traded for 4,5 million KM debt with three private companies, Hercegovina Osiguranje, CroHerc and Alpina Commerce, the author writes that members of the Steering Board of HPT voted for such a decision, except Ivan Bacak, who was against it. Markovic says that the debts of Eronet towards Hercegovina Osiguranje and CroHerc companies were incurred HVO. HVO was doing jobs for HPT, and the obligations of Eronet were transferred to Hercegovacka Banka and Cro Herc through cession. Now, the HPT Steering Board is suspicious about the quantity of work that HVO soldiers did and they believe that they were exaggerated. The daily says that the fact that the concession was given directly to the Eronet company in 1996, and not to HPT of Herceg Bosna, was that like the case in Sarajevo and Banja Luka, indicates that the intention to privatize Eronet existed already at that time. In that context, the debts towards Hercegovina Osiguranje and other two companies were made deliberately in order that those companies become owners of the golden goose. DL says that there are rumors that the whole operation was done by people close to Ante Jelavic, a removed HDZ President. The daily says that it may be coincidental, but one of Jelavic's assistants at the time when Jelavic was the Minister of Defense, was Boze Knezevic, who later became a Manager of Eronet, the other assistant Miroslav Rupcic became the Manager of Hercegovina Osiguranje. The third assistant was Nikola Planicic, one of leaders of CroHerc and the fourth assistant was Ivica Karlovic, who became Manager of Hercegovacka Banka. However, DL says that it is maybe too coincidental. DL mentions that a even more important role than all of them was planned by retired HVO general Ivan Medic, who is now in Split, Croatia. The whole situation changed after the change of the political authorities in the Federation of BiH, helped by fascist-like Decisions of the High Representative. The article says that after the Federation Agency for Privatization found out that the change of ownership in Eronet was not done according to the law, everything has to be returned to the starting position. After that decision, the three companies that were damaged did not complain, however, the HPT Management with Marinko Gilja at its head complained because they got back 51% of Eronet shares but they had to return 3,5 million KM debt. Meanwhile, Slavo Kukic and Stipe Prlic became the Heads of the Steering Board, that is, the Manager General of HPT Mostar, and DL says that the whole process would have been finished soon, if the case of Hercegovacka Banka had not happened.

(The daily says that the article will be continued in next issue)

Retired HVO members file lawsuit against Federation Ministry of Defense

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Vecernji List reports that a group of 750 prematurely retired members of HVO who were left without pensions last year have filed a lawsuit against the Federation Ministry of Defense. Representatives of the group held separate meetings with the Croat member of BiH Presidency Jozo Krizanovic and Federation Minister of Defense Mijo Anic informing them about the problems they and their families face on a daily basis. The spokesman of the Federation Ministry of Defense Antun Mrkonjic said that the Ministry has nothing against the lawsuit stressing that the Ministry respects any decision coming from the legal authorities. Mrkonjic added that although the current Ministry is not responsible for decisions taken by the former Ministry, the current Ministry is willing to help the prematurely retired members of HVO and that in this sense Minister Anic has promised help and sent a concrete proposal to the Federation Government how to solve the issue.

Vecernji List: Deputy Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Justice Minister Silic says decision on his removal made on the basis of fabricated accusations

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

The Decision from OHR on the removal of the Deputy Cantonal Minister of Justice, Davor Silic, in written form, arrived yesterday at the address of the Ministry of Justice of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton. Silic claims that the Decision was issued because of fabricated accusations by Eva Lynghjem, the Head of Judicial Department in the Regional OHR in Mostar. As Davor Silic emphasizes all the points listed in the explanation of the Decision, which charge him with obstructing the appointment of the Municipal Prosecutor in Citluk, Mirko Milicevic, hindering the unification of the Ministry of Justice, Administration and Local Self-government, and with not handing over on time the apartment he occupied as a double occupant in 2000.

"It is also not true that I provided incorrect data when applying to the position of a state judge", says Silic.

Namely, Silic at that time wrote that B&H HDZ nominated him for this position, but that he was not a member of that party, which, as he says, he anyway cannot be, because he worked as a judge in Konjic and Mostar from 1984 to 1998 prior to coming to the current position. Besides this removal from the post, and a ban on conducting any official duty, Silic has also been suspended from his professional position of a judge at the Cantonal Court in Mostar. This position was anyhow frozen as long as he was working as the Deputy Minister of Justice of the H-N Canton, until, what an absurdity, final decision of the High Judicial Council of BiH, which has not even been established yet.

Dnevni List carries that with regard to the removal of Davor Silic, the HDZ top believes that this Decision was hasty. HDZ says that Silic has a pro-European orientation and they do not understand that such a Decision was passed about a man, who was thought to be a moderate official. Dnevni List carried a headline on this issue on its front page.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Merdzo's men leaving HDZ

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Slobodna Dalmacija reads that the disintegration of HDZ BiH continues despite the election of Barisa Colak as the new acting President of HDZ BiH. Slobodna Dalmacija says that Colak was supposed to bridge moderates and hard-liners within the HDZ BiH, which was initially achieved after Vice President of the party Dragan Covic convinced the moderates to stay in the party but now, as Slobodna Dalmacija learns from sources within the party, the disintegration could resume because the party members gathered around the HDZ BiH Secretary General, Josip Merdzo and the Ljubic brothers are again thinking about leaving the HDZ BiH. The article says that Miro Grabovac

Titan has already left HDZ and established CDU (Croat Democratic Union). Tomislav Zoric, the author of the article, says that due to Titan's leaving, HDZ has lost an important support of a part of the volunteers and veterans of the Homeland War. According to Zoric, they have the information that there is a realistic possibility that Neven Tomic, the Mostar Deputy Mayor, will become a member of CDU, however, this possibility has been ruled out for the time being. Zoric concludes that at the moment there is no a person who might keep together the opposing HDZ options.

Vecernji List: In clinch - Avis Benes v Miroslav Coric

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Avis Benes, spokesperson of OHR: "OHR requests a more vigorous solving of the problems in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, above all in the areas of budget adoption and the seat of institutions. OHR does not treat Macic and Coric as the only ones who obstructed this process"

Miroslav Coric, Deputy Prime Minister of Herzegovina-Neretva Canton: "I do not see a reason why I should be removed. I take the announcements of those removals as speculations, although the Deputy High Representative did state that."

Republika Srpska

RS Government discussed CAFAO report - 26 RS Customs Administration employees suspended

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Glas srpski quotes RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, as saying that the RS Government immediately suspended 26 RS Customs Administration employees whose names are quoted in the CAFAO report. The RS Government also decided that if the allegations mentioned in the CAFAO report prove to be true, the RS Customs Administration will be held accountable. The RS Government formed a special team for investigation made up of 2 representatives of the RS Interior Ministry and one representative of the OHR's Anti Fraud Department. Ivanic said that there had been some objections to the work of the RS Customs Administration and that he had requested that these allegations be proved. "The RS Government received the CAFAO report which, in legal terms, has not been completely finished and cannot be used as a basis for filing criminal charges", said Ivanic. He said that the CAFAO report stated that importers undervalued the goods they imported to BiH thus causing damage to the RS budget, which amounts to 30 million KM. According to him, this indicates that an organized group/cartel exists within the RS Customs Administration which has so far illegally gained more than 4 million KM. The paper quotes RS Vice-president, Dragan Cavic, as saying at yesterday's news conference that the RS leadership supports the RS Government's conclusions and determination to finish the investigation into the RS Customs Administration's work. Cavic also said that the figures, mentioned in the CAFAO report, are slightly exaggerated and that they are based on assessments and assumptions. However, he stressed that no one will be released from responsibility regardless of the party that the persons, involved in this case, belong to.

SNS requests that CAFAO report be included in RS NA agenda

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

The Serb People's Alliance (SNS) issued a statement which says that the SNS requests that the RS Government distributes the CAFAO report on embezzlement in the RS Customs Administration to all deputies of the RS National Assembly, Glas srpski reports. SNS also requests that the CAFAO report be included as a special item in the RS NA agenda so that the RS NA be able to take some steps regarding this case.

DNS filed criminal charges against RS National Assembly Speaker

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Glas srpski quotes President of the Democratic People's Alliance (DNS), Dragan Kostic, as saying that the DNS filed criminal charges with the Banja Luka Basic Prosecutor's Office against the RS National Assembly Speaker, Dragan Kalinic. Kostic said that Kalinic had misused the office by putting the RS NA official stamp on a document that was never discussed by the RS NA.

International Community

The High Representative's farewell message to the BiH citizens: BiH's future is in Europe

Oslobodjenje, Dnevni Avaz and Slobodna Dalmacija report that the outgoing High Representative of the international community in BiH, Wolfgang Petritsch, organized in Sarajevo on Thursday a farewell reception for BiH and international officials. "The three years I have spent here as High Representative have for me been the greatest challenge and the most special and fascinating period of my life. For me, Bosnia and Herzegovina stands for the failures as well as the hopes of modern humanity – failures because we, the International Community, did not stop the war in time. And hopes because I believe we did the right thing when we intervened in the end, and have since then contributed to putting Bosnia and Herzegovina back on its feet," said Petritsch in a message to the BiH citizens delivered on the occasion. Click here for the [HR's speech](#).

The High Representative and political leaders agree on implementation of constitutional amendments

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, today met with the chair and members of the Council of Ministers, as well as the prime ministers and representatives of the two Entity governments who agreed to undertake all activities necessary to ensure the Mrakovica-Sarajevo Agreement is fully and consistently implemented in both Entities. This will require that necessary laws, rules and regulations at all levels be brought in line with these constitutional amendments. (Oslobodjenje, Dnevni Avaz and Slobodna Dalmacija carried the [Press Release](#))

The High Representative issues Decisions strengthening judicial reform across BiH

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, on Thursday imposed a package of Decisions establishing the institutional framework necessary to reform the judiciary in the coming months. These Decisions will strengthen the judicial reform process at the State and Entity level in BiH, establishing the basis for a truly independent judiciary as the third branch of democratic government. The package sets up High Judicial and Prosecutorial Councils at the State level and in each Entity, establishes Judicial Training Institutes and Bar Associations in each Entity, and promulgates a State law on inter-Entity co-operation in judicial matters. It also includes the removal of the Canton 7 Deputy Minister of Justice from his post and suspends eleven other judges. (Dnevni Avaz and Oslobodjenje carried the [Press Release](#))

The High Representative imposes a package of Decisions to

strengthen democracy and the rule of law

The High Representative on Thursday issued a package of Decisions in order to strengthen democracy and the rule of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Decisions include the promulgation of the Civil Service Law and the establishment of an independent Civil Service Agency, the promulgation of the Law on Conflict of Interest and the establishing of independent police commissioners in the Cantons of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These Decisions will provide for a further deepening of the separation of powers, as well as for making public service more professional and citizen-friendly. These principles are at the core of every democratic society, the High Representative stated. (Oslobodjenje and Dnevni Avaz carried the [Press Release](#))

Paddy Ashdown to officially assume the duties of the High Representative on Monday

Oslobodjenje, ONASA and Dnevni Avaz report that, on Monday, a British diplomat, Lord Paddy Ashdown, will officially assume the duties of the High Representative taking over from Wolfgang Petritsch. The Head of the OHR Press Office, Alexandra Stiglmayer, told journalists in Sarajevo on Thursday that, on Monday, Ashdown was expected to address the deputies to the BiH Parliament. Dnevni Avaz published a pretty long article presenting Ashdown's professional experience as well as some of his biographical data.

The US Embassy to BiH urges BiH parliamentarians to without any delay adopt the State Budget for 2002

Oslobodjenje reports that the US Embassy to BiH on Thursday issued a press release urging the deputies in the BiH Parliamentary Assembly to without any further delay adopt the State Budget for this year. "If the law-makers fail to reach the necessary compromise on the issue, the budgets at all levels of government will be jeopardized," the release reads adding that millions of donor funds depend on the adoption of the document in the next seven or days.

Julian Braithwaite to succeed Head of the OHR Press Office Alexandra Stiglmayer

Jutarnje Novine reports that the Head of the OHR Press Office, Alexandra Stiglmayer, is leaving OHR next week and will be succeeded in the office by Julian Braithwaite.

Reuters: Bosnia post-war normalization incomplete-Petritsch

BiH's post war normalization will not be complete until all refugees are able to return in peace to their homes and war criminals are brought to justice, the international community's High Representative said on Thursday. "There will not be a normal Bosnia-Herzegovina unless two issues have been resolved, and that is of course refugee returns and war criminals," Wolfgang Petritsch told Western reporters. [Reuters article.](#)

Slobodna Dalmacija and Vecernji List on a "disputed" SFOR action in Mostar

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Slobodna Dalmacija carries another piece about the deployment of SFOR and MSU troops in Mostar two days ago. The daily says that the true reason behind the deployment remains a mystery even after the daily contacted an OHR spokesperson in Sarajevo, Mario Brkic, and Nicolas Rambaud, the SFOR MND SE spokesperson in Mostar, who

did not reveal anything new compared to yesterday's reports. Mr. Brkic denied that the deployment was ordered by the OHR and ruled out the possibility that the Provisional Administrator Toby Robinson arrives in Mostar with such a military escort. On the other hand, Lt-Col Rambaud did not comment as to who ordered the deployment.

On the same issue, Vecernji List reports SFOR spokesperson in Sarajevo Major Scott Lundy as saying that it was not a case of seizing arms, and aforementioned Lt-Col Rambaud told the daily that the action had nothing to do with the possible arrests of war criminals. VL goes on to say that it is the OHR in Sarajevo who ordered the "demonstration of force in Mostar" and carries an anonymous source from OHR Sarajevo who told the daily that it was a big misunderstanding. The source refused to reveal what the possible aim of the operation was, claiming that SFOR assessments, which expected riots in west Mostar, were wrong.

OHR campaign: Economic prosperity makes sense

According to Dnevni Avaz, at a press conference in Sarajevo on Thursday, the Head of the OHR Press Office, Alexandra Stiglmyer, presented to the journalists some materials of the latest campaign that the Office of the High Representative is running, entitled "Ima smisla" (It makes sense). "The message of this campaign is that economic prosperity and European integration require reform, co-operation and functioning State institutions. So, it makes sense, ima smisla, to have a single economic space because the Bosnia and Herzegovina market is small anyway, and if it is fragmented, it is not worth while doing business and investing here. If there is no economic activity, there will never be new jobs and economic recovery. So it makes sense for the Entities to co-operate and pass laws that will attract investment. It makes sense to strive for European integration by adjusting Bosnia and Herzegovina laws and standards to European legislation and norms," Stiglmyer emphasized.

BiH, Yugoslavia harmonize agreement on dual citizenship

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Teams of experts from BiH and FRY, engaged to draft an agreement on dual citizenship, harmonized the text of the agreement in Belgrade yesterday, Glas srpski reports. According to this agreement, citizens would enjoy all citizens rights, including the right to vote. The agreement on dual citizenship is expected to be signed in June this year.

Headlines

Oslobodjenje

- Ferid Buljubasic, the Deputy Federation Defense Minister: Former Defense Ministry structures were selling military equipment to Yugoslavia!

Dnevni Avaz

- Sahbaz Dzihanovic for Dnevni Avaz: 2.500 administrative workers to be fired

Jutarnje Novine

- Weapons from Israel with consent of Minister Maslesa

Dnevni List

- Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Local power-wielders were planning to privatize Eronet 6 years ago?
- According to HR's decision: Davor Silic, Deputy Minister of Judiciary of HNC was removed

Vecernji List

- International forces confiscated suspicious equipment and documents: Serb Army was wiretapping SFOR?

- Corruption scandal in the RS: Customs officers earned millions by deceit

Glas Srpski

- RS Supreme Defense Council rejects state Presidency's defense strategy
- 26 customs officers suspended