

International Task Forces to Monitor ORAO Investigation

The International Community is setting up a Task Force to monitor the investigation into the ORAO affair by the RS authorities. The Task Force will be led by SFOR, with the participation of OHR, OSCE and other relevant international authorities. It will have complete access to all relevant documentation and officials and will pursue related incidents and concerns that may occur elsewhere in BiH.

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, the Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH Robert Beecroft, and SFOR Commander William Ward on Wednesday sent a letter to RS President Dragan Cavic, laying out the response of the International Community to the RS Supreme Defence Council's preliminary report on the ORAO affair and informing the RS president that the Task Force will be set up.

The letter expresses "the coordinated views, not just of our organizations, but of the wider international community" and criticizes the preliminary report for not addressing the key issues, including the issue of where individual responsibility, both military and political, for this affair lies. The fact that these issues have not been addressed is "a matter of grave concern, given worldwide attention to this matter and the damage already done to BiH's international reputation," the letter states.

It goes on to say that "in order for BiH's international friends who monitor UN Security Council Resolutions to be satisfied that no further action, such as sanctions, are required, the final report must elaborate on what went wrong, where accountability lies, and what will be changed to ensure that the RS Army and the military industry are firmly under

civilian and democratic control.”

The letter criticizes the RS authorities for politicizing the preliminary report by taking a position on the General Staff and Ministry of Defence of BiH, which has no place in a factual report of this nature. It notes that responsibility for this investigation and the necessary reforms lies solely with the RS authorities; at the same time, it sets out the steps necessary to ensure that the final report addresses the key issues and prevents further damage to BiH. First, the IC will establish the Task Force, to monitor the investigation and ensure it is serious, comprehensive and transparent; second, the final report should be completed promptly, and no later than 3 January 2003; third, the final report should follow guidelines that reflect best practice, and answer the key questions.

The key questions are:

- Who authorized the transactions that violated UN Sanctions, and who carried them out?
- Who authorized the travel to Iraq, and who went to Iraq?
- Who authorized the entry of Iraqi citizens into BiH? Who were they, how long were they here, and why?
- Who authorized the travel by the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the RS General Staff to Myanmar?
- Who was formally responsible for oversight of Orao?
- Who is responsible for the failure in this oversight?
- Why did the September 2002 report on Orao fail to identify any violations, and who is responsible for that?
- What actions have been taken against those responsible for the violations of UN Sanctions?