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Headlines

BiH State-related Issues

Council of Ministers comes out with counter-measure: BiH declares an ‘oil war’ on Croatia

At a session held on Thursday, the BiH Council of Ministers has adopted a set of measures by which the country will respond to Croatia’s ban on the road transport of crude oil. The Council decided to put a temporary ban on the import of oil and oil derivatives from Croatia and which are transported by roads. The ban is to take effect in seven days – on January 20, after which time, the oil from Croatia could only be imported by train or directly from the port of Ploce. For all practical purposes, this means that BiH has given a seven day deadline to Croatia to annul its original decision or it will be severely hit by the BiH countermeasure. Representatives of the two country’s foreign ministers agreed to meet in Sarajevo on January 21 to discuss this issue.

“Algerian Group” Case

US to seize terrorism suspects in BiH and deport them to Cuba?

The developments in the trial of the so-called “Algerian group” of suspects who were charged with conspiracy against

the US embassy in Sarajevo shortly after September 11 have taken, for some, an unexpected turn. All media in the Federation report this morning that the group of six (local media say 8) Algerian citizens will be deported to Cuba in the course of the day. Reuters reports that the United States has vowed its troops will take control of the six whose release was ordered by a court on Thursday. “We intend to take custody as they are released individually,” a U.S. defence official, who asked not to be identified, told Reuters in Washington.

A local court on Thursday ordered the release of the six, five Algerians and a Yemeni, detained by local police in October on suspicion of involvement in international terrorism and links to the al Qaeda network of fugitive Osama bin Laden. Five of them were also naturalized BiH citizens.

More than 100 protesters angry at the U.S. decision to detain the men in spite of the court ruling gathered outside Sarajevo’s central prison in snow and freezing temperatures.

The protesters, some of whom wore traditional Islamic attire such as veils and headdresses, sat in the road to block vehicles driven by special police which left the prison in the early hours of Friday and were presumed to hold the suspects. After several hours of scuffles and standoffs, Reuters reports, the police appeared to have got all three vehicles out of the area around the prison. There was no immediate word from U.S. forces on whether the suspects were now in their custody.

Fahrija Karkin, head of a team of lawyers representing the six, said outside the prison he had been told the men would be given over to the United States and held at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. “We received information that these people will be extradited to a third country. And what I was hearing (is that) it is America, Cuba,” he said.

However, an anonymous official in the Council of Ministers

told Oslobodjenje that the allegations about a deportation to Cuba are a “mere nonsense”. He said that BiH was ready to deport the six back to Algeria, but the country’s authorities refused to take the suspects back.

Meanwhile, the BiH branch of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights and the Amnesty International warned that basic human rights of these people have been violated as they are still being kept in a prison, despite the fact that the court found no hard evidence which point to their involvement in any terrorist activities.

Federation

Federation Pension Fund Director: 100,000 pensions will receive higher pensions

In an interview with Dnevni Avaz, the provisional head of the Federation Pension Fund, Bozo Misura, said that the minimal pension in the entity could be somewhat higher in this year (i.e., after the integration of the two funds) and could amount to 140 KM. He also said that the Federation Pension Fund asked the High Representative and the Provisional Administrator in Hercegovacka Banka to de-block the PIO funds – 14 million KM – which were frozen in the Bank on April 6, 2001. “However, we have still not received a response from the two,” Misura said.

High Representative’s decision completely unfounded

The HDZ BiH Presidency sent a letter to the High Representative with regard to the removal of Ivan Mandic, the Head of the Mostar Municipality Southwest. The letter reads: “It would be easiest for us to believe that the things that you stated as the reasons for the removal of Ivan Mandic, the Head of the Mostar Municipality Southwest, were wrongly

presented to you and you signed them without checking, because, how can one believe that you, even from the position you are at, can pass the decision that has not been grounded on the facts or true evidence. We are well aware, and we believe that you are aware too, that there are documents about each repossession claim, as well as, about the property that has been repossessed by its pre-war owners. We are also aware that the situation with regard to this issue is not worst in the Mostar's Municipality Southwest and Mr. Mandic did not deserve qualifications you ascribed to him. Your decisions do not only determine future professions for people that you sanction but their lives too. Is it possible that one person, even if it is the HR, can take upon himself such a moral and material responsibility? On the other hand, if you stand behind your decision unconditionally, and we are sure that your arguments are not valid, do not expect from us to take you seriously. However, accusations usually do not take us anywhere. We hope that you will reconsider your decision and that you will reinstate Mr. Mandic, first of all, as a human being. If that's not the case, we cannot escape an impression that whenever representatives of the Croat people, especially if they are HDZ members, try to do something constructively there is an attempt to obstruct it by any level or side", reads Dnevni List.

HPT Spokesperson Radoslav Dodig talk about division of HPT into Postal services and Telecommunications: Redundancies of surplus labor start in April

Dnevni List learns from unofficial sources that the HPT Mostar Company has been divided into two separate companies: Croat Telecommunications and Croat Posts. The HPT Mostar's Spokesperson, Radoslav Dodig, confirmed that information saying that the two companies would work separately from now on. Speaking about redundancies that might occur in the process, Dodig said that such possibility exists but the

Company would do its best to make the transition as smooth as possible. “Come April, we will now how many employees the two companies would need”, said Dodig adding that some employees would be re-trained for other tasks, some would be offered severance pays and that none of them would end up on the street. Talking about the future of the Croat Posts, Dodig said that it would not be able to independently fund itself adding that the Draft of the Division envisages that the Croat Telecommunications would cover up a part of the costs in the next three years or so. When questioned if the division was legal and whether the Steering Board could take such a decision, Dodig said that there should not be problems with that because it was the Federation Government which appointed the Steering Board, which was in charge of the division adding that the decision has already been submitted to the Federation Government and Federation Ministry of Traffic and Communication. “We expect minor resistance with regards to some issues but it will not affect the already passed decision on the division”, says the HPT Spokesperson, Radoslav Dodig, reads Dnevni List.

Obligations in “Aluminij” transformed into ownership capital

Dnevni List carries an article about the “Aluminij” case saying that the Federation Government forgets that the “Aluminij” workers (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) were working, during the post-war period, without receiving salaries and that the “ace card” of the Federation in appointing of its Steering Board (in the “Aluminij”) is that the salaries cannot be transformed into stocks. But the Law on Account-keeping of the Federation BiH, namely, the Article 11 of the law, denies them. It clearly stipulates that “the legal entity is obliged to run its business books in accordance to the law, code and standards”, whilst the Code of account-keeping principles and standards of the Federation BiH reads: “Honouring of obligations could be carried out in various ways, for example:

by money, by transfer of other means, by carrying out services to replace the obligation, and the most important bit, reads the daily, “transfer of obligation into ownership capital”. The latter was done in the “Aluminij”. What does it mean?, questions the daily. The “Aluminij” could not pay its employees immediately after the war had been stopped, because it did not have the funds, therefore the money was transformed into the stocks which is envisaged in the aforementioned Law and Code (…), reads Dnevni List.

HNZ President Milenko Brkic writes letter to Wolfgang Petritsch – Never have Croats been a national minority in BiH

The President of the Croat People’s Community (HNZ), Dr. Milenko Brkic, addressed a letter to the High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch. Brkic says it is impermissible to accept the situation brought about by those who used the pending national issues as their only political platform, and believes that the implementation of the Constitutional Court Decision on the constituency of peoples, through new constitutional solutions, will bring prosperity to all. In the opinion of the HNZ, the minimum of acceptable mechanisms for the protection of national interests would be establishing of appropriate bodies in the legislative, executive and judicial authorities.

Brkic points to the fact that the RS does not have a House of Peoples and appeals to the High Representative not to yield and let those who are using constitutional reforms as an area for their political maneuvers intended for reinforcing their own positions, but instead to have legal, political and all other frameworks created to guarantee the constituency of Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats and all other citizens of BiH.

Brkic also says that Croats are not a national minority in BiH, nor have they ever been one, but that Serbs in Croatia are a national minority and their status is not equal to that of Croats in BiH. He adds that solutions established in BiH

must not be associated with constitutional and legal solutions in other countries.

Republika Srpska

Rumors of Karadzic's and Mladic's arrest denied

BiH public was shaken on Thursday by unconfirmed media reports that the two most wanted war crimes suspects, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, were arrested. The initial report, which came from the Russian ITAR-TASS agency, said that the FRY President, Vojislav Kostunica, told a Kosovo news agency that the two had been arrested by the US special forces. However, FRY authorities soon denied that Kostunica ever made such a statement, adding that there is no indication "of something like this happening at the time."

RS National Assembly adopts draft law for the payment of damages to families of war victims

The RS National Assembly adopted on Thursday a draft law for the payment of damages to relatives of those who were killed during the war in BiH between 1992-95. AFP reports that under the bill, which is expected to go for a final reading within the next few months, the RS will pay war damages for the suffering inflicted by its forces during the war. Damages are to be paid for the suffering caused by the death of a family member, physical pain, fear, mental anguish, as well as material damage. It is estimated that more than 950 million marks will be needed to pay all war damages, a sum greater than the RS 2001 budget of 824 million marks, Justice Minister Biljana Maric said.

RS National Assembly passes draft RS election law

Both Banja Luka dailies report that, at yesterday's session, the RS National Assembly passed the draft RS election law. The

RS NA tasked the RS Government with harmonising the RS election law with the BiH election law and with the BiH Constitutional Court ruling on constituent status of all three peoples in BiH. The papers quote Deputy RS Prime Minister, Petar Kunic, as saying that the BiH Election Commission objected that some provisions of the RS election law are not in accordance with the BiH election law. The RS Government agreed with the BiH Election Commission that the draft RS election law be forwarded to the parliamentary procedure and that disputable provisions be harmonised in the meantime.

The papers also quote RS Finance Minister, Milenko Vracar, as saying that the RS NA will discuss the draft RS budget for this year if the OHR responds to the veto filed by Bosniaks. According to him, the OHR yesterday requested again the information about funds earmarked for return during the year of 2000 as well as the information about funds allocated directly to members of the RS NA at the time.

Human Rights Watch Annual Report – RS harbouring ICTY indictees

Nezavisne Novine carries on its second page an excerpt from the Human Rights Watch annual report, which, among other things, states that “after Slobodan Milosevic had been ousted, the RS became the biggest sanctuary for indicted war criminals, in which Radovan Karadzic along with other ICTY indictees remains still at large. Regrouping of the NATO troops deserves to be condemned because they did not fulfil their obligations and arrested war crime indictees, which undermines the ICTY and the 6-year long Dayton peace process”, states the report.

RS Defense minister says international stance on joint army changed

Nezavisne Novine quotes the RS Defense Minister, Slobodan Bilic, as saying that changes in attitude towards a joint army

of BiH has recently taken place in a large section of the international community. “The international community has finally recognised our arguments as to why having a joint BiH army is not possible. There will be no joint army in BiH either currently or in the future,” Bilic said during a visit to Derventa. He noted that a joint army is demanded both by a section of the international community and a section of the political factor in the BiH Federation that “want to alter the Dayton Agreement under pressure to set up a joint army”. “Pressures from the BiH Federation to set up a joint army will also be present in the period to come,” Bilic warned, adding that the existence of two armies was not an obstacle to BiH joining the Partnership for Peace. He said that cooperation of the RS Army (VRS)and Yugoslav Army was defined by the agreement on parallel ties between the RS and FRY, adding that this was reflected in the education of VRS members in Yugoslavia, while financial help from Yugoslavia to the RS was also envisioned. Bilic noted that the RS Ministry of Defense was not acquainted with the activities of US rangers on the territory of the RS who were tasked with hunting down Radovan Karadzic.

SPRS spokeswoman comments on BiH law-suit against FRY – Radisic will veto draft budget of BiH institutions

Both Banja Luka dailies quote SPRS (RS Socialist Party) Vice-president, Biljana Rodic-Obradovic, as saying that the SPRS will not support Svetozar Mihajlovic’s candidacy for post of the Council of Ministers’ Chair. She also condemned the demand of the CoM to include finances for BiH agent who represents BiH in the law-suit against the FRY before the International Court of Justice in The Hague. “This issue will be discussed at the BiH Presidency session today and Zivko Radisic will veto it”, said Rodic-Obradovic.

International Community

OHR: That what Croatian wants for BiH, it can implement at home as well

Asked to comment on the recent tirade coming from Croatian officials provoked by the statement of the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, about the introduction of a House of Peoples in this country, OHR spokesman, Kevin Sullivan, said that it is expected that a country suggesting solutions in another country is ready to consider the same solutions at home. "In the last few days there has been considerable comment from outside of BiH, and the High Representative welcomes constructive debate on this issue and understands that neighboring countries may express views that would effect the interests of certain segments of society in BiH. What we would stress is the principle that if you are advocating solutions for BiH, you would presumably be open to similar solutions being advocated in your own country. That would seem to be a normal *quid pro quo,*" said Sullivan.

The High Representative welcomes the adoption of the Law on Associations and Foundations

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, welcomes the entry into force of the Law on Associations and Foundations, enacted by the BiH Parliament in late December 2001. This Law will make a decisive contribution to the consolidation of civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dnevni Avaz carries the press release on page 2)

Israeli MP warns Croatia: "Islamic terrorism from BiH is a threat to you"

In an interview with Rijeka's Novi List, a distinguished member of the Israeli Knesset's Council for Foreign Relations and Defence Policy, Joseph Lapid, said that Israel and the Republic of Croatia are connected with a "common problem of Islamic terrorism which is a threat to the entire Western

world." Lapid warned Croatia against the "Islamic terrorism" from BiH which, as he argued, presents a genuine threat. "We have information that the Mujahedeen from BiH are preparing to become a root of the east-European Muslim Jihad. They are still very weak, but they certainly attempt to cross you border," he said, adding that Croatia will be "endangered by the very kid of Muslim fanaticism which endangers our lives in Israel." Lapid also said that Israel and Croatia co-operate and exchange intelligence information about the situation in BiH and the Mujahedeen living there.

Dnevni Avaz quotes Amir Kapetanovic, a spokesman for the BiH Foreign Ministry, as saying that BIH will demand an official apology from the Mr. Lapid. "Such statements, especially when coming from a member of the Israeli Knesset have to be corroborated," said Kapetanovic.

Editorials

Oslobodjenje: Ban Kulin, Raise from the Dead! (ban Kulin is a medieval Bosnian ruler during whom the country lived in a relative peace and prosperity)

By Hamza Baksic

The latest round of a dialogue between OHR and Banja Luka was opened with an unusually direct conclusions expressed by Wolfgang Petritsch in the New Year's issue of "Reporter".

"It is clear that, in the seventh year of the Dayton, the RS still represents a nationalist, one-national structure, that is, an abnormal model of exclusivity without the rooted rule of law. Such a community does not have a place in Europe in the 21st century," said the High Representative. Addressing the readership in the RS, Petritsch indirectly responds to the farce that the International Community – or someone from the

Federation – endangers the RS:

“The RS is threatened from the inside because it does not live up to European standards, because it does not treat all its citizens with the evenhandedness they are entitled to expect in a multiethnic Entity, because it does not guarantee all its citizens human rights, because it does not welcome back returnees – this is what delegitimises and weakens the RS. But it can prove otherwise. I would also say that this is also a unique opportunity for the RS authorities to demonstrate the essence of ownership, and show that they have the capacity to forge the sort of compromises which are crucial in a multiethnic society such as BiH.

At my meetings in Banja Luka this week I heard encouraging expressions of intent regarding many of these issues. However, I have heard many such expressions in the past. Now I want to see actions. The process must move forward. The Constitutional Commissions must submit their recommendations to the parliaments, and the political parties, the elected representatives of the citizens of the two Entities, must start to discuss them. I fully support Prime Minister Ivanic’s suggestion to organise a round table at which the political party leaders would hold such a discussion and try to find the right solutions. This will not be easy – but Bosnia and Herzegovina is a multiethnic country, which means that its political leaders must be able to find common ground and consensus and make compromises. This is the only way for Bosnia and Herzegovina to function and move forward. It can only do so by inclusion, not by exclusion.

RS citizens, regardless of their ethnic background, want a normal life. They want living standards that correspond to 21st-century Europe. At the moment, economic prospects in the RS are still bleak. Urgently needed laws and measures aimed at reforming and improving the economy have been held up because of political – not economic – calculations. The fight against corruption has only just begun. A large part of the problem is

also the obstructionist behavior of Serb representatives in the State Parliament. Their delaying tactics and time-wasting have prevented the passage of important laws which will improve economic conditions across BiH and increase the efficiency of State institutions. This can no longer be tolerated…"

Petritsch then talks about the obstructions in the return process, noting that the earmarked budget funds are not sufficient. He also points out to the "scandalous procrastination" of the RS in the case of the Captain Avdo Palic, dismissing the "excuse" of the RS Ministry of Defense that they do no know the whereabouts of the captain who last saw Palic as ….. [layout error – sentence does not end].

Commenting on the key points in which the RS authorities do not comply with certain political standards which they only verbally adhere to, Wolfgang Petritsch mentions the cooperation with The Hague Tribunal – nothing concrete is happening – and the changes in entity constitutions.

"The RS authorities have placed the very existence of their Entity in jeopardy by not living up to European standards of practice and not guaranteeing the basic rights of all their citizens. Let me make it perfectly clear. Without a serious commitment to constitutional, social, economic, return and human-rights reforms, the RS may face disappearance – the behavior of its leaders will have rendered the Entity economically and politically unsustainable."

That is the context of the later statement of the RS President, Mirko Sarovic, that the RS has nothing to be ashamed of, that it has been on the right path and that its people would do the same if they had another chance. This statement is of purely program nature, just as is Petritsch's article. The fact that he speaks about the need to control the "forces of aggressive patriotism" is not a fence behind which one could hide the other fact – that the RS has entered the

new year without a concrete dialogue with either the International Community or with itself.

The danger of such an attitude is twofold. First, because one BiH entity is experiencing what it is. Secondly, because the situation in the RS serves as an excuse for the lack of concrete action in the Federation, so Sarajevo is lagging behind in addressing certain outstanding issues. The fact that the RS is late in adopting constitutional changes should not be a reason for the same delay in the Federation.

Changes in the entity constitutions in the Federation will also bring a change in relationships. The change will practically mean the death of the Washington Agreement and the Federation will also have to count on engaging the thus far marginalized Serbs, which will have a profound effect on the everyday political life. For example, will the Serbs on the next elections be in the same position as Croats and Bosniaks? How will the provision about division of power according to 1991 population census be received here? Who in Sarajevo is ready to see perhaps SDS deputies in the Cantonal Assembly? Deeply *entitesized* consciousness and the Federation citizens will have a difficult time adjusting to the fact that the BiH state will become a somewhat single political space. The fear of open space is evident in the RS, because the process of discussion about stereotypes with which they entered the war has been opened, and Sarovic defends those stereotypes – we would do the same if we had another chance. And here?

Well, the paper you are holding in your hands was printed in both Cyrillic and Latin script in 1992. One poll indicated that a great number of our readers was not even aware of that fact, and that others did not mind it. At this time, such an attempt would be risky and the strongest critics would likely be those who still stand behind the “Bosnian tradition” and like to talk about Kulin ban: in which script was his Covenant written? However, that is a story for “Kulina bana i dobrijeh dana.” (commonly used BiH proverb saying that the time of the

Kulin ban was one of the most prosperous)

Vecernji List: Once upon a time, there was a people

By Zdenko Cosic

It would be an illusion to think the powers of an international community employee, the High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch, are so wide that they could not be any wider! This protector has made an effort to show that the borders of BiH are too narrow for his ambitions. His recent statement, telling the Croatian authorities not to ask for Croats in BiH what they are not prepared to give Serbs in Croatia, opens up two rings of hell, as noted by Croatian politicians, unfortunately only a few of them.

On the one hand, he denies in a most flagrant way the equality of peoples in BiH, while, at the same time, he opens the old Greater-Serbian political thesis about Serb constituency in the Republic of Croatia. All illusions about the future of BiH as a state of three equal and constituent peoples fall through, and we are comforted with the hope that the future of this country will not be depending on the good intentions of Petritsch's administration after all. However hard the OHR may be trying to illustrate the fears of Croats as means to achieving the narrow interests of extremists from the lines of one people, this statement contributes to radicalization of the political scene, and all fears of losing the national sovereignty and of being reduced from a constituent people to a national minority, become justified. Petritsch, in fact, sent out a clear message that Croat rights in BiH will be weighed by the rights of Serbs in Croatia.

Therefore, either Serbs in Croatia, as a national minority, have their House of Peoples and become a constituent people, or Croats in BiH, as a constituent people, lose this right and become a national minority! In the context of constitutional

reforms and the implementation of the Constituency Court Decision, this statement is a hint of political goals of those reforms.

It is not so likely that pressures will be directed at establishing House of Peoples in the RS as much it is likely that the Federation will lose this instrument of national interest protection. The symmetry created in that way will only be ostensible. The truth is that the two entities would have harmonized constitutions, but it is also true that one entity would be (remain) Serb and the other non-Croat and somewhat less non-Bosniak, and the difference is still big! It is clear that Petritsch is trying to prepare the ground for abolishing the only formal mechanism for national rights protection that has left, the House of Peoples in the Federation, in order to replace it with some sort of commission for protection of vital national interests (as his Office proposed) which would be protecting the folklore of this country by pointing out that once there were native tribes here with different habits, languages and cultures. It is incomprehensible that this is not enough for the Croat representatives in the authorities to realize what is the course of the ship that they should be steering! We cannot expect much from the Croatian Government, just as we could not in similar situations before, reads Dnevni List.

Headlines

Glas srpski

- Itar-tas makes up the arrest of Karadzic and Mladic – Imagination can do anything;
- Roads in the RS – Avalanches stop traffic;
- Glas srpski supplement – Amendments to the RS Constitution – We invite all RS citizens to send their opinions and views on the amendments to the RS

Constitution;

Nezavisne novine

- US State Secretary in Kabul for the first time – US helping Afghanistan
- Vojislav Kostunica – Karadzic and Mladic are not arrested;
- Milan Ninkovic – Kalinic can not ruin my popularity;

Oslobodjenje

- Preparations for deporting the “Algerian Group” to Cuba?
- Snowsotsm across the country

Dnevni Avaz

- “Algerian Group to be deported to the US base in Cuba?

Jutarnje Novine

- Slovians offer BiH a transport of oil products
- Alliance divides “posts” among itself

Dnevni List

- BiH announces counter-measures after the decision of the Croatian Government on transport of oil: We will strike back at Croatia with the same measure
- Search after most wanted war criminal, general Ratko Mladic: 300 US special troops hunting Mladic down

Vecernji List

- Josip Merdzo, President of HDZ Caucus in Federation Parliament: Grabovac does not want to give a single mark for the University of Mostar