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BiH State-related Issues

BiH Delegation visits Germany: German credit to foster return of experts to BiH

During Thursday's visit of BiH Delegation to Germany, the BiH Foreign Minister, Zlatko Lagumdzija, signed, together with his German counterpart, Jurgen Kruborg (sp!) three agreements which are to strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries: the Agreement on financial aid for the establishment of companies which would employ qualified returnees, the Agreement on encouraging and mutual protection of investments, and the Agreement on the international road transport of passengers and cargo.

During yesterday's visit, Lagumdzija also met with the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, and the country's Defense Minister, Rudoph Scharping (sp!).

Situation in Kostajnica calm, Croatian, BiH authorites work to resolve the crisis

All media in BiH report that the situation in the disputed area between BiH and Croatia, in Kostajnica, is calm. Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers and Foreign Minister Zlatko Lagumdzija and Croatian Foreign Minister Tonino Picula agreed on Thursday that politicizing the issue of Kostajnica must by avoided and stressed that it is necessary to take all appropriate measures on both sides to ensure the situation does not get out of control. Prompted by the newly created situation in this border-town, Lagumdzija, who was still in an official visit to Germany, made a telephone call to Picula in order o discuss the issue, the BiH Foreign Ministry (MVPBiH) announced on Thursday.

RTV BiH reports that a two-day meeting of the Joint Commission for the implementation of the agreement on border crossings between BiH and Croatia started on Thursday in Mostar, during which participants will discuss the arrangement of the border crossings between the two countries. Before the meeting, which is closed to the public, BiH State Border Service (SBS) Director Tomislav Mihalj said the officials will also discuss the opening of the border crossing between Bosnian and Croatian Kostajnica, following the opening of the bridge over the Una river.

Croatian Embassy in Sarajevo: Situation in Kostajnica must not slip out of control

Croatian Ambassador to BiH, Josip Vrbosic, delivered a note of protest to the BiH Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ivica Misic, which reads that the decision to deploy the RS Police in the area is absolutely unacceptable. The Ministry informed the members of the BiH Presidency and senior officials of the RS about it, reads Slobodna Dalmacija.

Presidency member plays down border dispute

Serb member of the Bosnia-Hercegovina Presidency Zivko Radisic today rejected the possibility of the situation in Srpska Kostajnica "taking an undesirable course".

In a statement to SRNA, Radisic warned that the issue of borders between Bosnia-Hercegovina and Croatia in the area of Kostajnica was an open one that had been present from before in the inter-state relations between BiH and Croatia.

"The current tensions should not be allowed to disrupt the otherwise good relations between Bosnia-Hercegovina and the Republic of Croatia," Radisic said, adding that it was of common interest to resolve the issue of the border near Kostajnica to the satisfaction of both sides.

Noting that the issue of the border is within the purview of the Inter-state Council for Cooperation between Bosnia-Hercegovina and Croatia, he said that the problem would be discussed in greater detail at the council's next session, scheduled for the beginning of November in Zagreb.

Radisic said he hoped that the current tensions along the Kostajnica section of the border would be fully controlled.

"I think that the inter-state border treaty and especially the agreement to tackle open issues as a priority provides a firm basis for cooperation," Radisic said.

Speaker of the BIH House of Peoples urges SFOR to arrest Karadzic and Mladic

The speaker of BiH Parliament's House of Peoples, Sejfudin Tokic, said on Thursday NATO should urgently arrest Bosnian Serb wartime leader Radovan Karadzic and his army commander Ratko Mladic, to offset accusations that the US anti-terrorist campaign is aimed against Muslims. "I expect you to urgently take action aimed at arresting Karadzic and Mladic," Tokic

wrote in an open letter to international representatives in BiH. AFP notes that letter was sent to the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, Lieutenant General John Silvestre, SFOR commander, and leading officials in RS.

Note of protest addressed to the Saudi Arabian Embassy in BiH – Croats in Bugojno and across BiH alarmed

BiH Foreign Ministry announced on Thursday that it addressed a note of protest to the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in BiH over the text produced by the High Saudi Committee in Sarajevo and published in the form of brochure in Dnevni Avaz last month.

A part of the text reads that Bugojno is "one of the few cities in BiH where there are almost no Croats, although it gravitates to Croat-inhabited territories."

The Foreign Ministry says this allegation "alarmed the Croats in BiH and caused anxiousness and disagreement in Croats across BiH and other benevolent citizens."

(See also item 7 in the section Fight against terrorism)

Fight against Terrorism

BIH authorities form an expert team for dealing with biological weapon attack

AFP news agency reports that an expert team tasked with preparing for possible biological or chemical weapons attack was set up in BiH on Friday as the number of anthrax cases grew in the United States, an official said. "The team is tasked with estimating the risk and preparing a reaction program in case of possible use of bacteriological, biological and chemical weapons in Bosnia," foreign ministry spokesman

Amer Kapetanovic said. The team comprises experts from the Federation and the Republika Srpska.

Presidency member, US Charge d'Affaires discuss the role of BiH in the fight against terrorism

RTV BiH report that the member of the BiH Presidency, Zivko Radisic, met on Thursday in Sarajevo with the US Embassy Charge d'Affaires, Christopher Hoh, and confirmed the readiness of BiH to become more involved in the fight against terrorism. Radisic and Hoh also discussed the present political situation and the participation of BiH in the global fight against the international terrorism and the situation created following the closure of US and British embassies in BiH.

World Bank offices close in Sarajevo because of security threat

Habena reports that the offices of the World Bank in Sarajevo were also closed on Thursday due to security threat. This was confirmed by the Bank's spokesperson, Srecko Latal. Latal said that WB offices will remain closed until Monday.

SFOR special forces detected terrorists – sleepers

Slobodna Dalmacija carries an article about the current situation in BiH regarding the closure of the American and British Embassies in Sarajevo. The daily learns from sources close to the International Community that the Americans in BiH did not protest over the removal of Minister Besic just for the sake of protecting him, but because of the situation facing the Federation Ministry of Interior. In other words, a good deal of information that the Ministry has collected in the past eight years will go away together with Mr. Besic, and apparently the Americans had the right key for getting the information from the former Minister. The new Minister will

probably have no information. Slobodna Dalmacija also reads that SFOR troops are conducting inspections in every Bosnian village and that they found certain communities and groups of people where SFOR troops have marked potential terrorists, the sleepers. The paper's source close to SFOR did not specify the areas where these people have been detected, but said that there are people in BiH who are fond of bin Laden's way of fighting the West and American domination. American Charge d' Affaires in BiH, Christopher Hoh, told journalists that the US Embassy will remain closed until the security threat has been eliminated and confirmed that the staff in the Embassy would continue performing their duties, reads Slobodna Dalmacija.

Imams condemn US military strikes on Afghanistan – HINA

HINA news agency and Oslobodjenje reported that the leadership of the Islamic community (**note!**: Leadership – Mustafa Ceric distanced himself from this view – see below, Ilmije is not the leadership of the IC – just a social association of imams) in BiH and imams gathered in an association called "Udruzenje Ilmije" have condemned the US military operation in Afghanistan and criticized Bosnia's authorities for supporting the spreading of an "anti-Muslim and anti-Bosniak campaign".

The Islamic community's leadership, which held a two-day session behind the closed doors in Sarajevo, on Wednesday [17 October] forwarded a statement saying senior Muslim dignitaries in Bosnia condemn terrorism, but they also believe the American military strikes on Afghanistan present an act of revenge which primarily affects the innocent Muslim population of the Asian country.

The leadership expressed sadness over the anti-terrorist activities the was taking against the High Saudi Assistance Committee. Thus, the Islamic community practically accused the SFOR of illegal actions, notes HINA.

A day after the announcement of this statement, the Muslim clergy's association issued a statement reading that imams in Bosnia do not approve of the attacks the United States and its allies are launching against Afghanistan, "as innocent citizens are the victims of the American bombs".

"We fear that the military operation of the United States and its allies is directed against Islam and Muslims," read the imams' statement.

They also expressed their concern at the fact that Bosnian authorities "are directly contributing to an anti-Muslim, anti- Bosniak and anti-Bosnian campaign".

Imams believe that Bosnia's Muslims are arrested and taken to police stations only because of their religion.

Reis-ul-Ulema Mustafa Efendi Ceric, the head of the Bosnian Islamic community, has tried to alleviate such strong-worded statements, asking imams to restrain themselves from commenting publicly on events in relation to the terrorist attacks on the United States.

Ceric has added that it is beyond dispute that Usamah Bin-Ladin had no right to abuse Islam for his goals.

The Islamic community has also asked imams not to allow the use of mosques for political purposes, particularly by some foreign Islamic organizations.

Federation Police arrest two Algerians connected with threats to US, British embassies

The Federation police arrested on Thursday in Sarajevo two Algerians believed to have made threatening telephone calls which provoked the closure of the US and British Embassies in BiH, Habena learned from sources close to the Federation Ministry of Interior. The agency also claims that one of the arrested individuals has BiH citizenship. The Ministry of

Interior confirmed the arrests, but refused to provide any further details about the suspects.

Dnevni List: What will happen in Sarajevo after the noon service next Friday?

Dnevni List says that presence of strong police forces was noticed ed in front of the King Fahd's Mosque in Sarajevo last Friday. The paper's sources claim that Muslim believers were intending to walk through the city after the noon prayer and stop in front of the US Embassy building to demonstrate their disagreement with the US attacks on Afghanistan. The plan leaked, the US security staff were informed and they persuaded the then Federation Minister of Interior Muhamed Besic to react, and he did. The same scenario is allegedly being planned for this Friday, today. As the new Minister of Interior will not be appointed by October 24, by some estimates, there would be no person with enough responsibility to take the risk of commanding elite police units with the aim of preventing possible incidents. The paper says it will soon turn out as to whether or not this "ministerial vacuum" has been created deliberately.

The daily says the Minister of Interior in the Sarajevo Canton, Nermin Pecanac, also turned a deaf ear to the signals of the international community who requested more active engagement from him personally in making Sarajevo a safe city. However, he went to the Netherlands for a football tournament and has returned only recently.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Islamic terrorists are protected by a part of the authorities

Saleh N. Nedal from Bugojno, born on March 26, 1972 in Taize, Yemen, was issued a new BiH passport, serial number 35456836, in Bugojno, on September 26, 2001, because his previous passport expired. Saleh N. Nedal became a BiH citizen on

December 18, 1995, which can be confirmed in the Sarajevo's Municipality of Centar, where he was registered.

The most important thing about this story is the fact that he was in custody between April 12, 1999 and September 12, 1999 by a ruling of the Travnik Cantonal Court.

Namely, the Interpol in Rome issued an arrest warrant for him and the Central-Bosnia Canton MoI arrested him on April 12, 1999. The Court in Bologna, Italy, demanded extradition on charges of conspiracy and terrorism and other crimes, and there is a reasonable suspicion that he is linked to bin Laden's terrorist organization. The Travnik Prosecutor's Office suggested the Travnik Cantonal Court, on September 12, 1999, to comply with the Italian request because all the legal pre-requisites were met, but the Travnik Court, with Senad Begovic presiding, dismissed the suggestion from the Prosecutor's Office with an explanation that Saleh N. Nedal is a BiH citizen, and that according to the effective laws he could not be extradited. The same Court Chamber released Nedal from custody, and the Federation of BiH Supreme Court confirmed the ruling of the Travnik Court on August 19, 1999. Saleh N. Nedal now lives in Bugojno, together with his Bosniak wife and children where he is respected by the Bugojno Muslims. It is worth mentioning that the Interpol arrest warrant included 13 other Arabs and Nihad Kurtic aka Jaffar, born in Travnik in 1970. Among them were Lionel Dumont Khalil Jaraya and Merhez Amdouni who are also holders of BiH documents. They are known to the BiH public for committing various crimes and terrorist acts, reads Slobodna Dalmacija.

Increased security measures introduced in Sarajevo's main Post Office

In a statement for the press, the management of the main Sarajeov Post Office located within the city's Railway Station introduced additional security and precautionary measures for

all of its employees who are handling the incoming and outgoing mail. In order to protect themselves from possible anthrax contamination, workers will wear surgical gloves and hospital masks while at their workplace.

Federation

Aluminij Trade Union: Company's accounts have not been frozen

"The account of the Mostar company 'Aluminij' has not been frozen, as the 'Dnevni List' daily claimed in Thursday's issue", Miroslav Zelenika, the vice-president of the

Trade Unions of this company, told HABENA news agency. Commenting on the order of the Federation government that the Financial Police conducts a financial audit in this company, Zelenika said that this was "not a matter of audit but rather of an assigned mission." "If the federal minister for energy, industry and mining, Hasan Becirevic, in spite of the findings of all conducted audits thus far, declares that a plunder of the state capital has been committed in Aluminij, and then sends the financial police, we consider the mission of such police as assigned in advance", Zelenika pointed out.

"We respect the findings of the OHR Commission and the former government, and that of the independent international group, although the Management has filed some objections on these findings, too", Zelenika concluded.

Dnevni List also reported that the announced blockade of the "Aluminij's" account did not occur after all. The daily claims the International Community intervened and stopped the blockade at the last moment because it determined the existence of "shady deals" in the "Aluminij".

Hercegovina-Neretva Canton authorities warns that destruction of Aluminij would destroy the BiH state

Prime Minister of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Josip Merdzo sent a letter to Federation President Alija Behmen and his Deputy Nikola Grabovac, saying that the attitude of the state and entity institutions towards the Mostar's Aluminij company is "irresponsible." Merdzo asked how "can someone accept the blocking of the biggest exporter in the Federation," adding that he thinks that the actions against Aluminij are the actions against the Croats in general. The latest audit in Aluminij, carried out by a professional team of OHR auditors, showed no irregularities in the company, Habena noted.

Merdzo asked that the two officials before taking any actions, think about all the values, their own responsibility and the motives of individuals who never mention construction, but only destruction. The dispute between the Aluminij and the Federation Government lasts for several months and the reason is amount of the state capital in the company. The Federation Government claims the capital has been illegally reduced, while the Aluminij official say the ownership structure was legally changed.

Federation government appoints the head of the joint Federation Pension Fund

At yesterday's press conference, the Federation Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Nikola Grabovac, said that the Federation government agreed that the joint Federation Pension Fund (PIO) would become operational on January 1, 2002. He also informed the press that the government named Bozo Misur a provisional director of the new Fund and elected members of the new Board of Directors. Grabovac explained that the reform of the pensions insurance system in the Federation would trigger numerous other changes, including the

abolishment of the existing health and pension bureaus.

OHR to continue overseeing the transformation process of RTV BiH

At yesterday's press conference, OHR spokesperson Alexandra Stiglmayer said that the OHR welcomes the recent statement of the Federation Deputy Minister of Culture and Education, Dubravko Lovrenovic, that mutual responsibility of those involved in the process of transformation of the RTV BiH needs to be determined. "OHR will continue working this job in the name of donors who have granted over 10 million euros for badly needed equipment which would make this project successful," said Stiglmayer. She explained that the, in accordance with the mandate granted by the Peace Implementation Council, OHR will continue overseeing and undertkain all necessary actions in order to ensure the integrity of this project.

Radovan Ortinsky pays a secret visit to Sarajevo – Croatian Prosecutor's Office interested in Prlic

Radovan Ortinsky, the Croatian State Attorney, left Sarajevo on Wednesday following a secret three-day visit to the BiH capital, reports Dnevni List.

The paper found out unofficially that Ortinsky talked to the judicial officials in BiH and that the Croatian Prosecutor's Office may be interested in certain high-ranking Croat politicians in BiH.

This particularly refers to the so called 'Makarska Group. It is about some BiH politicians who laundered a part of their money, gained illegally during and after the war, by purchasing real estate (apartments, houses, cafes and hotels) in Makarska. The case also includes persons with double permanent residence addresses, which is illegal in Croatia.

According to a well-informed source of Dnevni List, the names mentioned in this context are Jadranko Prlic, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Relations with the BiH Council of Ministers, Vlado Raguz, the Deputy Governor of the Sarajevo Canton, one Primorac and others.

International Community

Wolfgang Petritsch and Robert Beecroft address the OSCE Permanent Council

During their addresses to the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, and the Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH, Robert Beecroft, said that in the past six years, the International Community, together with local authorities, has accomplished a good deal and brought the country a bit closer to Europe. They both stressed, however, that now is the time when BiH authorities need to take things into their own hands. (While Oslobodjenje carried a SENSE agency report on the address – page 2 – all other media in the Federation and the RS quote the OHR press release. This was the second item in most news programs in electronic media, immediately after Lagumdzija's visit to Germany)

Editorials

Dnevni List: Dangerous living

Written by Ivan Bakovic

The article carries a comment on the closure of the US and British Embassies in BiH and reads that in spite of all wishes and aspirations to join the society of European nations and

states, BiH is still assigned to the category of suspicious states security-wise, which largely affects the future of the country.

“The American and the British have closed their embassies, intensified security measures, expressed concern over the security of BiH citizens and their own, relocated their staff to a safe place and there is no staff evacuation for the time being. However, if the things become critical, they will leave and all we shall have left is their concern over our safety and a possible repetition of the (already experienced) car bombs. Meanwhile, BiH officials have given some comforting statements, Ministers in charge of security have resigned and BiH is becoming a country of dangerous living,” reads the editorial.