BiH Media Round-up, 19/9/2001

BiH State-related Issues

- **Council of Ministers: Osama bin Laden associates are not in BiH!**
- **Bosnia to side with anti-terrorist alliance**
- **BIH Ambassador to Croatia: Why Croatia does not participate in the privatization in BiH**

Federation

- **SDA, Party for BiH: Zepce decision is a prelude for new ethnic divisions**
- ***Jutarnje Novine*: End of the trade with Zepce and Maglaj?**
- **Federation Prime Minister: Real situation in Aluminij to be determined in ten days**
- **Federation House of Peoples appoints new judges to the Entity Supreme Court**

Republika Srpska

- **After DNS Leaving the RS Ruling Coalition – Personnel As a Collateral Damage**
- **RS Political Parties Request Resignation of RS Education Minister Savanovic – The End of Savanovic's "Field Trip" to RS Government**

International Community

- **ICTY Spokesman Says Evidence Take Time**
- **High Representative meets with Cardinal Vinko Puljic; discusses Croat situation in BiH**
- **NATO Experts Visit BiH**

Editorials / comments on terrorist attacks on the US and effects on BiH

- ***Slobodna Dalmacija*: The business empire of Jadranko**

Prlic and partners is worth three billion Marks

- ***Slobodna Dalmacija*: BiH is under pressure because of Mujahedeen who were fighting against aggressors in this country**
- ***Vjesnik*: CIA claims that in BiH there are terrorist training camps**
- **BBC: Rohan Gunaratna – Terrorism Expert – Says Al-Khaida is the Most Active in BiH**

BiH state-related issues

Council of Ministers: Osama bin Laden associates are not in BiH!

At Tuesday's session, the **BiH Council of Ministers** strongly denied the speculations that some of Osama bin Laden's associates are residing in BiH. The Minister of Civil Affairs and Communications, Svetozar Mihajlovic, said that there is "no basis for such statements." "There are some 11,000 persons who hold BiH passports which were obtained before the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The Commission for analysis of naturalised persons from 1992 to 1995 has already reviewed 95%," said Mihajlovic, adding that there are 420 Arabs citizens in this group. However, he stressed that most of those got the BiH citizenship before the war.

Despite strong statements coming from the Council of Ministers, both local and international media continue speculating about the presence of the alleged associates and followers of Bin Laden in BiH. German ***Der Spiegel*** reported yesterday that one of its long time reporters, Renata Flottau, actually met Osama bin Laden in Sarajevo in 1993. "He politely introduced himself to me…he had a BiH passport which was issued in Vienna and he was bragging about smuggling international fighters into this crisis zone," Flottau said.

Belgrade Radio's corresponds from BiH, Mahir Zisko, also

claims that there is a number of Mujahedeen from Arab countries presently residing in BiH. He notes that one of the arrested terrorist suspects Imad Al- Misri had numerous *medressas* (Muslim religious schools) throughout BiH and frequently conducted religious training during the war in BiH. The correspondent also quotes OHR's Alexandra Stiglmayer as saying that the OHR assumes that there is a number of people who obtained BiH passports bypassing the standard procedure. However, local officials from both the RS and the Federation reject these speculations, concludes Radio Belgrade.

BBC Radio also noted yesterday that the association of Bin Laden's followers is most active in BiH. One of the BBC commentators said this association is comprised mostly of local population trained in Afganistan.

Meanwhile, ***BiH Television*** reports that US officials from Washington D.C. have submitted to BiH authorities a list of 18 suspected terrorists allegedly involved into last Tuesday's attacks in the US. The same source says the list is to be thoroughly audited by responsible institutions in BiH upon the request from Washington. A spokesperson for BiH Foreign Ministry denied receiving any such document. (see also items in the last section)

Bosnia to side with anti-terrorist alliance

Bosnia and Hercegovina will absolutely side with an international anti-terrorist coalition, which is being urged by the USA as a response to the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, BiH Presidency member Beriz Belkic told SRNA on Tuesday. "Regardless of its modest resources, BiH will act on the principle of providing security for all its citizens and on the need to join all future international actions," Belkic said. He stressed that BiH would have communication and cooperation with this international coalition via Interpol and other relevant institutions, adding that "our country has a handicap because it does not have relevant structures at the

level of state".

Despite this, Belikic said he believed that BiH could play a role in tightening measures of relevant institutions such as the state border service, the customs service, as well as in organizing interior ministries at various levels, the BiH Council of Ministers, the Presidency and the like, which were "under way".

BIH Ambassador to Croatia: Why Croatia does not participate in the privatization in BiH

"We expect a more intensive overall economic cooperation between BiH andCroatia, not only furthering of trade relations", Hasan Muratovic, the BiH Ambassador to Croatia said on a press conference on Tuesday. He mentioned the cooperation between the two countries in infrastructure facilities and in direct investments, emphasizing that Croatia has so far participated in the privatization in BiH to a very small extent: "We would like to encourage Croatian businessmen and the state to help entrepreneurs in order to engage in the privatization in our country to a higher extent and in a more efficient way".

Federation

SDA, Party for BiH: Zepce decision is a prelude for new ethnic divisions

Commenting on the High Representative's announcement making his decision on the integration of Zepce municipality into Zenica-Doboj Canton final and biding, the cantonal boards of the SDA and the Party for BiH said the decision is "unacceptable for them." "Instead of annulling his provisional decision from October 6th and ordering an integration of Zepce into Zenica-Doboj Canton in accordance with the Constitution, the High Representative chose this incomprehensible

precedent," SDA said in a statement, adding that this decision "simply rewards those who expelled Bosniaks from Zepce during the war." Party for BiH, on its part, said redrawing borders in Zepce municipality will just create new ethnic divisions.

Jutarnje Novine: End of the trade with Zepce and Maglaj?

Jutarnje Novine notes that after the final decision on Zepce was announced by the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, dissatisfaction is spreading among both Bosniaks and Croats, as well as among the Serbs increasingly returning to this municipality. The chairman of the Zepce Interim Board, Nedzad Hodzic, said that Bosniaks are "genuine losers in this deal." The daily notes the Party for BiH is of similar opinion. However, Jutarnje also quote Ivica Ramljak, the Board's vice chairman as saying that he is satisfied with the decision and that "it will have to be implemented jointly." Dzevad Galijasevic, the chairman of the Municipal Council, said that Petritsch's decision is certainly "well-intentioned and that is marks a new period of stabilization and the creation of quality human and inter-ethnic relations."

Federation Prime Minister: Real situation in Aluminij to be determined in ten days

In an interview with Dnevni Avaz, the Federation Prime Ministers, Alija Behmen, said that the Federation government decided that all conditions are met for a comprehensive financial audit of the Aluminij Factory in Mostar. "Financial audit will have three goals," notes Behmen, " first is to determine the book value of the company, then the level of war damage and finally, the legality of the privatization." Although Behmen refused to disclose who will conduct the audit, Avaz sources say that this job will be entrusted to the Federation Financial Police.

Federation House of Peoples appoints new judges to the Entity Supreme Court

The Federation Parliament's House of Peoples appointed on Tuesday seven out of proposed 15 candidates for judges in the Federation Supreme Court. The House gave its support to Sadudin Kratovic, Hatidza Hadziosmanovic-Mahic, Malik Hadziomeragic, Hajrudin Hajdarevic and Emina Bahtijarevic (Bosniaks) and Tadija Bubalovic and Lada Simic-Lukovic (Croats), while it denied support to Suada Selimovic and Nazif Salman (Bosniaks), Venceslav Ilic, Pero Zelic and Silvija Cupka (Croats), Dusan Obradovic and Miomir Jocic (Serbs) and Milorad Potparic (others). The Chairman of the Hose, Ivo Komsic, refused to comment on the reasons for rejecting the apointment of 8 candidates.

Republika Srpska

After DNS Leaving the RS Ruling Coalition – Personnel As a Collateral Damage

Today's edition of "Nezavisne novine" learns from sources close to the RS Government that the decision of the Democratic National Alliance (DNS) to quit further support to the RS Government could lead to dismissals of the high-positioned DNS officials in the RS Government. According to DNS top officials, Dragan Veselinovic and Ostoja Kremenovic it remains to be seen whether and how the DNS decision will affect the RS Government. "RS Government appointed me to my current post, but if the DNS request me to resign I will do it. If the DNS does not request me to do so I will wait for further developments", says the Chief of the RS Revenue Office, Veselinovic. Veselinovic did not want to comment on the work of the RS Government. "I would not be fair if I commented on the work of the RS Government as long as I am on this position. If I am relieved from duty, in any case, I will be a collateral damage", says Veselinovic.

RS Political Parties Request Resignation of RS Education

Minister Savanovic – The End of Savanovic's "Field Trip" to RS Government

Today's edition of "Nezavisne novine" quotes president of the SPRS (Socialist Party of the RS) Regional Board from Bijeljina, Tomo Lazarevic, as saying that the RS Education Minister Gojko Savanovic should resign after the accident in which 4 students and their teacher died. Lazarevic says that the SPRS condemns Savanovic's behavior during the press conference because Savanovic talked more about the reform of education system than about the students. Member of the SDS Executive Board (Serb Democratic Party), Mirko Banjac says that neither this nor the former RS Government let professionals to be appointed to ministerial posts. "I have been saying for three years that it was only a matter of time when tragedy will happen because none of RS governments or ministries has done anything about students' field trips. Savanovic himself has to decide whether he is going to resign or not since I am not his moral conscience", says Banjac. Spokesman of the Party of Democratic Progress (PDP), Igor Crnadak says that the party has not discussed request for Savanovic's resignation yet. DNS President, Dragan Kostic also requested resignation of the RS Education Minister Savanovic. Secretary general of the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), Igor Radojicic says that this issue should not be requested in this way and in this context. "The tragedy that happened to the students from Banja Luka should not be politicized. And Savanovic should have been removed even before this tragedy happened", says Radojicic.

International Community

ICTY Spokesman Says Evidence Take Time

Today's edition of "Glas srpski" quotes ICTY Spokeswoman, Florence Hartman, as saying that the ICTY does not expect

anything from the RS Law on Cooperation with the ICTY that the RS NA deputy will discuss at the session and called for the RS authorities to cooperate. “The Prosecutor’s Office does not expect anything from the Law but we expect the RS authorities to start cooperating. Hartman confirmed that the RS authorities sent documentation about crimes committed by some Bosniaks to the ICTY and stressed that the ICTY cannot issue indictments so soon. She says that indictment can be issued only if there is enough evidence,” which takes time.

High Representative meets with Cardinal Vinko Puljic; discusses Croat situation in BiH

Catholic Cardinal Vinko Puljic met on Tuesday with the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, and discussed the necessity for

realization of the rule of law and protection of all peoples in BiH, the Catholic News Agency (KTA) reported. The two officials agreed that Croats in BiH and its representatives can practice their rights exclusively through state institutions. They also discussed the issue of return and economic development which would lead toward better co-existence.

NATO Experts Visit BiH

Both Banja Luka dailies quote SFOR Spokesman, Daryl Morell, as saying that the team of NATO experts, led by Acting Head of NATO’s Defense Partnership and Cooperation Directorate, George Katsirdakis, will visit BiH from 18 September to 20 September where they will meet with BiH officials to discuss issues related to the Partnership for Peace Program. “The NATO Team will explain in more detail the measures NATO’s Secretary General, Lord Robertson, recommended during his last visit in order for BiH to prepare itself for the Partnership for Peace Program. These include political and military measures required to ensure BiH could fulfil its obligations to Partner

nations, and to ensure the armed forces in BiH can work effectively together to carry out the responsibility to the state", says Morell. "Nezavisne novine" quotes Commander of the Multinational Division South West, Major General Rick Hillier as saying that BiH authorities must decide whether they want one or three armies, because the number of troops, armament and military infrastructure has to be decreased given that BiH spends a third of billion DM for military needs.

Editorials / comments on terrorist attacks on the US and effects on BiH

***Slobodna Dalmacija*: The business empire of Jadranko Prlic and partners is worth three billion Marks** (translation provided by OHR Mostar)

Written by Marijan Puntaric

Together with Neven Tomic and his business associates, Jadranko Prlic has created the biggest business empire in BiH. Dr. Jadranko Prlic was a strategist, while Neven Tomic, a former Minister of Finances in Prlic's Herzeg Bosnia Government was 'the mastermind' of the operations in which they earned millions Marks during the hard, war times, which were for the most people in Croatia and BiH the times of poverty, exile and sufferings. The property of Prlic's business empire is worth about unbelievable three billion Marks. Niko Dodig, Marijan Primorac, Dinko Slezak, Dr. Marko Tadic, Davor Simic, Anka Musa, Ivica Galic and the others had lived modestly of their monthly salary before the war. Now, together with Prlic and Tomic they are owners of Oil Companies, they are tobacco-magnates, exclusive suppliers and shareholders of the Tobacco Factory Rovinj, owners of Banks and Insurance Companies, Constructing and Computer Companies, bet shops and gambling houses, warehouses, factories, filling stations, hotels, camps, big farms, sport complexes, football

stadiums, swimming pools, apartments and family houses in Mostar, Zagreb and naturally in Makarska, on the attractive Makarska Riviera.

All this makes Prlic's empire the strongest financial center and the most integral business system of the BiH Croats.

The other two groups seem to have more political influence but they are far less financially powerful. Brothers Ivo, Zdenko and Milan Lucic, Bruno Stojic are the members of the first group, while their political patrons are Kreso Zubak and before the death of Franjo Tudjman, it was Miroslav Tudjman, who is the leader of the True Croatian Revival (HIP) at the moment.

The second group is gathered around Ante Jelavic and Dragan Covic. They still draw strength from the HVO Logistics Center in Grude and from the cooperation with Ljubo Cesic Rojs and famous 'Monitor'. However, the backbone of this system is Hercegovacka Bank. The whole line of companies, such as 'Soko', 'Primus', the oil importer 'Croherc', 'Hercegovina Osiguranje', 'Eurobeam' and the people who are connected with Jelavic and Covic, rely on it. Although none succeeded to prove that they exist, very often the companies controlled by Jelavic and Covic's group are called 'Hercegovina Holding'. They are also believed to have a great influence on the work of Public Companies, first of all on the work of the HPT and 'Elektroprivreda' and the control of 'Eronet'. However, in terms of their capital this group is the weakest one and it has been assessed that their property is worth between 700 and 800 million Marks.

For the first time 'Slobodna Dalmacija' will investigate and publish in the next few editions the ways by which the Prlic's tycoon group has gained so much power, first of all because its acting considerably influenced the Croatian and especially Dalmatian economy.

***Slobodna Dalmacija*: BiH is under pressure because of Mujahedeen who were fighting against aggressors in this country** (translation provided by OHR Mostar)

Written by Nijaz Durakovic

First of all, it has not been revealed yet who is the mastermind of an unprecedented terrorist attack against the USA. Secondly, the most important thing with regard to this issue is that the real cause of this ruthless terrorist act is unknown… Bosnian Muslims are confused and concerned about their European and civilization destiny. They truly sympathize with the tragedy of the American people, they truly condemn terrorism and the crime that was committed, because they know the best what it means… The most ruthless and bestial act of genocide and terrorism, in all its forms, took place in the heart of Europe and Europe and the USA did not react against it for a long time. Now, Bosniaks-Muslims are afraid with good reason that they might be identified with Talibans, Vehebinas and some other terrorist groups. They are afraid that they might be criticized because of a few mujahedeens who came to BiH for different reasons to fight against the aggressors. If they committed some crimes, and they did, still it is a different situation because they were fighting on the side of the victim and against the terrorists and aggressors.

Reis Dr. Mustafa Ceric was right when he said: 'It is good that the American Congress condemned the anti-Muslim hysteria but I am afraid that they did it too late, because the media had already done an ugly part of the job of identifying and generalizing the attacks against the USA with Islam and Muslims…'

Truly, this is a correct diagnosis and many Islamic countries have already been apostrophizing it, warning of the fact that more than a billion people cannot be identified with a few fanatics and dazzled terrorists.

***Vjesnik*: CIA claims that in BiH there are terrorist training camps** (provided by OHR Mostar)

The OHR believes that the question who are the people who posses BiH passports should be "opened" after everything that happened in the USA. Alexandra Stiglmayer, Petritsch's Spokeswoman, says that the Parliamentary Assembly could think about the mechanisms by which they would check who of the foreigners became the BiH citizens. She especially pointed the attention to the Decree from 1993, which allowed every member of the BiH Army (so also counting in those that came from the Islamic countries) to get the BiH citizenship without fulfilling some usual requirements. "We presume that there are many people who got their BiH passports without the implementation of a rigorous procedure," concluded Stiglmayer.

Petritsch's Spokeswoman thus actually confirmed the public secret of the existence of a great number of passports issued to mujahedeens. The other questions is why she failed to do it now, at the moment when BiH is on the list of 34 countries brought into connection with Osama bin Laden and when the CIA has information on the existence of several camps in BiH for the training of terrorists, as well as to answer to the question of what the OHR did to sanction the Sarajevo Authorities which "elegantly" escaped to implement the decision from the BiH Peace Agreement – the decision on deportation of mujahedeens from BiH, by awarding them houses and land, enabling them to get married and handing them BiH passports.

BBC: Rohan Gunaratna – Terrorism Expert – Says Al-Khaida is the Most Active in BiH

Today's edition of "Nezavisne novine" reports that in the report, prepared before the attacks on the USA and published few days ago, Kenneth Katzmann, terrorism expert of the US Congress Documentation Service, warns that Bin Laden has a widespread network of his supporters organised in cells that

exist in 34 countries in the Middle East, Africa, Asian countries such as Malaysia and the Philippines, UK, Canada and USA but also in BiH, Kosovo and Albania. Rohan Gunaratna, expert for Al-Khaida (the base – Bin Laden's organisation) said for BBC that this information is correct and that Bin Laden's organisation has active operational and logistic cells tasked with generating support for Al-Khaida and conducting operations. "All Al-Khaid cells are capable of attacking diplomatic and even military targets of western nations that a large number of which exist in the Balkans ranging from UN forces in BiH through NATO forces in Kosovo to diplomatic and humanitarian missions of western nations and organizations. Of all Balkan countries Al-Khaida is the most active in BiH", says Gunaratna. "Al-Khaida trains BiH Muslims and has been helping them at least since the 90's. This is not only about mujahedins from other countries, this is primarily about domicile population trained in Afghanistan and BiH itself. Bin Laden has significant presence in BiH". Terrorism expert of the St. Andrews University, Rohan Gunaratna also thinks that all denials coming from Sarajevo regarding this issue should be taken with scepticism and adds that the presence of Al-Khaida in Kosovo and Albania is more limited than in BiH. According to him these cells represent a significant threat for western targets especially in the countries where they operate.

Richard Holbrooke: "How Can We Catch Bin Laden If We Can Not Arrest Karadzic"

Today's edition of "Nezavisne novine" quotes former US peace negotiator on the Balkans, Richard Holbrooke, as saying that eventual arrest of Osama bin Laden will not be an easy job given that the US troops within SFOR cannot even arrest Radovan Karadzic. "We cannot even arrest Radoavn Karadzic in BiH where NATO has had its troops for a long time. What will happen with arrest that has to be carried out in the most difficult terrain on the planet", said Holbrooke for CNN.