

BiH Media Round-up, 26/7/2001

BiH State-related Issues

- Sarajevo Police arrests three naturalized BiH citizens allegedly associated with infamous Oссama bin Laden?
- CRA's Jereker Torngren: Decision about the third GSM operator will not be made on July 31
- Puljic and Peric in Washington D.C. recommend cantonization of BiH

Federation

- Slavo Kukic, the chairman of the Federation TV Council: Local people are main culprits for the present state in the TV BiH, not John Shearer
- Federation Minister of Urban Planning proposes privatization of apartments for cash

Republika Srpska

- RS National Assembly gives initial nod to Draft Law on Cooperation with the ICTY
- Suspicious Posters turn up in Banja Luka
- SDA protests the withdrawal of Daniel Ruiz from Trebinje

International Community

- Dnevni Avaz: Interview with the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch – I advocate the withering of the OHR
- PDHR Donald Hays Meets Zivko Radisic and Karlo Filipovic
- Stability Pact Coordinator Bodo Hombach visits Mostar

Brcko District

- Brcko Supervisor welcomes the decision of high school teachers to accept the new curriculum for District schools

Editorials

- Vecernji List: Without House of Peoples, BiH has no prospects

BiH State-related Issues

Sarajevo Police arrests three naturalized BiH citizens allegedly associated with infamous Oссama bin Laden?

Nearly all Sarajevo media report that the City Police arrested last week three naturalized BiH citizens under suspicion that they are associates of the world renown terrorist Oссama bin Laden. An anonymous police source told Oslobodjenje, who originally broke the story, that the three were arrested following a strong insistence of the United States, and added that the US President George W. Bush had been personally notified about this action. The same source said that one of the suspected terrorists will be handed over to the CIA, while the other two will be extradited to French and Egyptian authorities.

CRA's Jerker Torngren: Decision about the third GSM operator will not be made on July 31

Jerker Torngren, the director of the CRA told Dnevni Avaz that the Communication Regulatory Agency (CRA) will not close tender for the third GSM operator by July 31, nor will it announce the name of the company which will get the license.

"At the beginning we said that our ambition is to select the third GSM operator by July 31. However and obviously, the decision could not be made until all the work is completed. Thus, there is and there has not been any deadline – that was only our ambition," said Torngren.

He added that the CRA has not yet made a decision as whether the tender for the third GSM operator will be reopened for the possible new bids.

The Council of Ministers earlier asked the CRA director to reopen the tender for new bids and to designate the price of 2

million KM as the starting price on the tender.

"We wanted to discuss this and all other issues with the Council of Ministers, however, except for the initial meeting, there have been no other discussions, unfortunately," explains Torngren. He also expressed hope that the next meeting will take place some time this week.

Puljic and Peric in Washington D.C. recommend cantonization of BiH

Cardinal Vinko Puljic and Bishop Ratko Peric testified on Tuesday before the US Congress International Relations Committee about violations of civil and religious rights of Croat Catholics in BiH. According to Vecernji List, the two of them recommended the most acceptable solution for internal organization of BiH is cantonization and the abolishment of the existing entities that they called discriminatory.

The Committee members asked them about the extent of democracy and economic and social progress that the Dayton Agreement brought about, and wanted to know when and how the peace would become self-sustainable in BiH. Cardinal Puljic and Bishop Peric commented on possible solutions and the extensive powers of Wolfgang Petritsch in the period of relative peace and stability, reads the paper.

They pointed to the termination of newspapers, electronic media and the major bank in BiH, which was accused of money laundering. Puljic said out of 832,000 Croats that lived in BiH at the beginning of the war, in 2001 only 400,000 are still in BiH. Since he shares the concerns of BiH Croats, he asked for support in providing for an ethnically co-ordinated democracy and sustainable returns of DPs in the whole of BiH, and particularly in the RS.

"Croats are disappointed because the international administration in BiH is refusing to respect the results of the last elections and to exert pressure on the RS civil authorities in order to protect the returnees and allow a safe return for over 220,000 Croats who want to return," Cardinal Puljic told the Committee.

He stated that the new rule for the 2000 Elections provided that Croat representatives are elected to the institutions by Bosniaks and Serbs from the SDP lists whom most Croats do not trust. He said 95% of Croats gave their confidence to the HDZ. Puljic pointed to the trend of Croats establishing a third entity and stressed that most of them trust the HNS and the HDZ rather than the few Croats in the Sarajevo authorities.

"Herzegovina, as a part of the disappointed Croat community, could turn to extremism, and Croats in Central Bosnia and Banja Luka could move out forever unless they have the institutions to guarantee that BiH is their country, too," said Puljic.

He asserted that all citizens and peoples need a strong presence of the USA in order to build democracy, economic progress and tolerant society. Conveying the opinion of BiH Croats, Puljic said that most Croats think that either a legal Croat entity should be established or the two entities should be abolished and the country cantonized. He said that the raids into the banks and other offices in BiH made Croats profoundly distrustful of the Federation structures and their international protectors.

Bishop Peric warned the Committee members that the current authority institutions favour Serbs and Muslims. He pointed to what he called improper protectorate of the International Community, electoral manipulations, the unjust Hague Tribunal and symbolic returns of Croats, and added that the legal Croat representatives are gathered in the HNS. As a possible solution, Peric sees a change of the Dayton agreement in the way that it be cantonized with extensive powers and protection mechanisms. He said there is no alternative to the principle of Croats electing their own representatives. He called the international administration in BiH to have a dialogue with the HNS representatives. Peric asked for assistance in establishing of the freedom of press, pointing to the terminating of Croat electronic media and Croats not being represented in the state media. He said he fears a possible isolation of Croats and asked the US to continue their

engagement in BiH, especially for the sake of securing equal rights for the Croat people that is small in number.

Federation

Slavo Kukic, the chairman of the Federation TV Council: Local people are main culprits for the present state in the TV BiH, not John Shearer

In a lengthy article, *Oslobodjenje* comments on the present situation of the RTV BiH and the ongoing transformation process of the public service in BiH. According to the daily, the entire process should come to an end by September 15, when both the Federation TV and the PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) should be established. The chairman of the Fed TV Council, Slavo Kukic, told the newspaper that this body will hold a joint meeting with representatives of the Founding Board of the PBS and the RTV Trade Union in the near future in order to find the best possible solution for the employees of the enterprise.

"It is important to lower the tensions now. The clumsy application situation was hijacked for political purposes in order to create a fear among people working at the RTV BiH," said Kukic. He, however, could not confirm, or deny for that matter, the information that a number of employees will be laid off in the process. "The present RTV BiH has 12,000 employees. It is too soon to say what number of employees will be needed in the new TV houses. All that depends on the program which will be made by the Fed TV and the PBS," said Kukic, and explained that if these media retain a high quality level of programming, the present level of employees could remain. "And the other way around, if there is no quality program, it will be necessary to reduce the number of employees," explained Kukic.

Kukic also said that the plan of the Fed TV Council is to build a media house which will be representative of all peoples living on the territory of BiH, including the Serbs,

despite the fact that the RTRS is still operating.

He further explained that it was necessary to start the application process for the future employees at the Federation Television. "We must offer applications to all people," said Kukic and stressed that qualified workers should not be concerned about their fate.

He also emphasized that one should not blame the HR's Broadcasting Agent John Shearer for the present situation in the RTV BiH. "Local people are the main culprits for the present situation, not the foreigners," stressed Kukic, and explained that the politics is the main obstacle for a successful and efficient transformation. "There is a dirty political war in the background of all of this. That is confirmed by the constant interference of Mirza Hajric, an aide to the Bosniak member of the Presidency, in the business at the TV BiH.

Kukic also expressed his personal dissatisfaction with the dynamics of the transformation process which is detrimental not only for employees but also for the viewers. "The present situation on the RTV BiH is the worst possible."

Federation Minister of Urban Planning proposes privatization of apartments for cash

The BiH Federation will sell 102,000 still not privatized apartments for cash. This is for now, according to Oslobodjenje, only a proposal made by Ramiz Mehmedagic, the Federation Minister of Urban Planning and Environment, which is expected to be discussed at today's session of the entity's Government. The sale of the rest of the apartments, which have still not been privatized, is at the same time a response to a recent decision made by High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch. The decision has annulled the two-year ban on purchase the socially-owned apartments in the Federation, and secured a 75-percent discount for the purchase of apartments in the Republika Srpska. "The privatization for cash in the BiH Federation will apply only for the citizens who have not signed the contract on purchase of the apartments. At this

moment, there are 102,000 apartments in the Federation which have not been privatized, and a total of 86,562 apartments sold for vouchers. The unsold apartments include the abandoned ones and those claimed by a total of 79, 918 families. The totally devastated apartments and those to be subjects of the restitution, as well as the official apartments are also included in this group. "In such way (privatization for cash) we could earn approximately 14 million KM," Mehmedagic said in an interview with Oslobodjenje. He added that the Law on the Purchase of the Socially-owned apartments is not being changed. This means that the citizens will still have a 25-percent discount for cash purchasing (and they will have to pay in cash – note of the journalist Asaf Becirevic), as well as a possibility to buy the apartment on 20-year credit. Mehmedagic also intends to propose another amendment to the law. According to this amendment, the Federation will pay back 75% of the money invested in the privatization of the apartment to the citizens who decide to live in the privatized apartment next five years. Asked how the Government would react to the proposal, Mehmedagic said he expected the Government's support. "Otherwise these 102,000 apartments will also be purchased for vouchers, and the new owners will then sell them for cash bringing the money away from the Federation," Mehmedagic said. And what will OHR say regarding Mehmedagic's proposal, and will it suspend such the decision if made by the Government today? The Minister believes that, if OHR does not agree with the decision, it makes it clear that it has double standards: it allows everything to one entity, and nothing to the other. "We have already discussed the issue with the OHR representatives, who said they did not like the proposal saying it would cause inequality among the citizens. Then we have requested that the RS Law allows the purchase of the apartments for vouchers. Given that the OHR did not accept our position, I think that it tacitly approved what we intend to do. If OHR is going to deny the proposal, it will show that they have their own concept of the BiH's internal structure and that they have given up

supporting the Alliance for Changes. And, what is about a "failure" of the Petritsch's decision, according to which a returnee to the Federation, who lives in his own house in the RS built on someone else's land, can buy and sell his apartment. Nothing! I have twice written to OHR warning that the decision on using state-owned land is not being implemented in the RS. I have written that the land in Kotorsko, Bijeljina, Herzegovina is being allocated in spite of the ban. OHR has not found a way to stop such practice or it has tacitly accepted the illegal allocation of parcels," Mehmedagic said. "In Prijedor, 4,000 locations have been allocated to the citizens who do not want to return to the Federation, and the same is in Kopaci, Bijeljina, Modrica..." he added. "The international community has actually through changing a package of property laws attempting to cover its incapability to return refugees and displaced persons. All this has been initiated by Werner Blatter, the head of the UNHCR Mission to BiH, who cannot openly say that the UNHCR is not able and does not know how to implement the Dayton agreement," Mehmedagic concluded.

Republika Srpska

RS National Assembly gives initial nod to Draft Law on Cooperation with the ICTY

After a long and at times heated discussion, deputies in the RS National Assembly adopted, after the first reading, the controversial Draft Law on Cooperation with the ICTY. Media report that the Law, which will provide for the arrest and extradition of indicted war criminals, will go for a final reading before the Assembly in early September. RS Deputies also accepted a recommendation put forth by the SDS to create a working group which would write a study on the character of the war in BiH, on the basis of which a good-quality, comprehensive law on cooperation with the ICTY would be made.

Suspicious Posters turn up in Banja Luka

Some Federation and nearly all RS media report that “odd” posters have appeared in Banja Luka near the work residence of the RS President Mirko Sarovic. The posters show Sarovic wearing a Muslim clerical headgear and display in the background the picture of Ferhadija mosque. At the bottom of the posters, there is a line: “Let be what can’t be”(most probably referring to future coexistence between the Bosniaks and Serbs in the RS). Although no one directly claimed responsibility for the posters, media speculate that their appearance has something to do with the ongoing discussion in the RS National Assembly on the adoption of the Law on cooperation with The Hague.

SDA protests the withdrawal of Daniel Ruiz from Trebinje

In a statement for the press, the SDA said it does not condone the decision of the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, to withdraw Daniel Ruiz, his Special Envoy to Trebinje, from this post and appoint a Hungarian diplomat, Istvan Osz, in his place. The SDA said Ruiz has become a victim of intrigues created by his own colleagues.

International Community

Dnevni Avaz: Interview with the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch – I advocate the withering of the OHR

In an one page interview with Dnevni Avaz, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, explains the concept of the Partnership Forum for discussion between representatives of the International Community and local authorities. He stressed that the International Community, and the OHR in particular, will stay in BiH and will continue providing support to local institutions which should assume more responsibility for the peace process. (full translation follow)

PDHR Donald Hays Meets Zivko Radisic and Karlo Filipovic

Both Banja Luka and Sarajevo dailies report that the new Principal Deputy High Representative Ambassador Donald Hays met with the Serb member of the BiH Presidency, Zivko Radisic and the Federation President, Karlo Filipovic in Sarajevo yesterday. In a press release, Radisic's cabinet said that Ambassador Hays and Radisic agreed that representatives of both BiH state institutions and the IC have to create climate in which partnership relations will be developed. The President of the Federation, Karlo Filipovic told the press that the main topics of the meeting were the adoption of the Election Law, the implementation of the BiH Constitutional Court ruling on constitutionality of peoples and the need to create the similar mechanisms for protection of vital national interests in both entities. Asked to comment on work of the CRA and transformation of RTV BiH, Filipovic said that initiative should come from BiH authorities.

Stability Pact Coordinator Bodo Hombach visits Mostar

The Special Coordinator for the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe arrived yesterday in Mostar on a three-day visit to BiH. During his short stay in this Herzegovinian town, Hombach met with the city's mayor Neven Tomic and his deputy, Hamdija Jahic, and discussed several possible project for the future. Following the meeting, Hombach commended the two for their significant contribution to the creation of a positive political climate in Mostar.

Brcko District

Brcko Supervisor welcomes the decision of high school teachers to accept the new curriculum for District schools

At a press conference, the International Supervisor for Brcko District, Henry Clark, announced that high schools teachers in the District have accepted the plan of implementation of the educational curriculum for schools in Brcko. Clark added that this was just one of the first steps in the process of

securing the multiethnic education in the District. He stressed that all teachers will now be trained for work in the new educational system.

Editorials

Vecernji List: Without House of Peoples, BiH has no prospects

By Stjepan Kljucic

"Today, when we rationally look at the situation in BiH, a serious question suggests itself – is there one good reason why the entities should not have the same constitutional and legal position? Of course there is not, and yet, instead of amending the flaws of the Dayton, as is also called for in the BiH Constitutional Court Decision on the Constituent status of all peoples, many are ready for starting the process of abolishing the House of Peoples in the Federation and replacing it with the Constitutional Commission, established by the High Representative. In fact, all attempts of eliminating or ignoring the House of Peoples have a very clear background: the forces that do not want to realize that the equality of peoples must be and is the fundamental guideline of coexistence in BiH, are on the political scene again. It should be said loud and clear once again that those who do not want equality in BiH and parity in the common state institutions, can be in power in one third of the BiH territory," says Stjepan Kljucic, among other things, in the Vecernji List editorial.