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BiH State-related Issues

Tokic finally signs a letter of intent

According to Oslobodjenje, the Chairman of the BiH Parliament's House of Peoples, Sejfidin Tokic, signed on Tuesday with certain lateness a letter of intent on the BiH's readiness to fulfill obligations arising from the full membership in the Council of Europe. "This moment of taking over of the obligations on behalf of the BiH state institutions demands beginning of a more intensified harmonization of the BiH legal-constitutional system with the international and European standards," Tokic said. Asked why he had not signed the document together with other BiH state officials, Tokic said he had not been informed on time about the signing ceremony.

AID, SNS and OBS RS destabilizing BiH

A single BiH intelligence-security system would make sense only if it would be a product of a political consensus in the country, otherwise the country's single intelligence-security service would be just a form, as essentially the Bosniak, Croat and Serb secret services would continue their operations on the ground. According to Oslobodjenje, this was one of the assessments made in Sarajevo on Tuesday at a round-table on the BiH intelligence services, organized by the BiH Center for the Security Studies in the framework of the preparations for drafting a BiH security policy. The Center Director, Bisera

Turkovic, emphasized that a problem in BiH was not in number of the intelligence services but in a fact they had been established on the ethnic basis. The Senior Deputy High Representative, Matthias Sonn, who participated in the discussion, claimed that the intelligence services had to be de-politicized and a subject of the democratic control. "This must be achieved particularly bearing in mind that some intelligence officers are involved in the criminal activities," Sonn emphasized.

Tokic challenges constitutional foundation of the laws on intelligence services in BiH

The Speaker of the BiH Parliament's House of Peoples, Sejfudin Tokic, will request the BiH Constitutional Court to consider the constitutional foundation of the laws on the three intelligence services in BiH. "According to one of these laws, for example, AID is authorized to arrest people, detain them and establish cooperation with Interpol, which violates certain provisions of the Constitution," Tokic told Dnevni Avaz.

Federation

Fena: Ramo Maslesa appointed new BiH Federation Interior Minister

At the continuation of its eighth session in Sarajevo on Wednesday, the BiH Federation House of Representatives confirmed the appointment of Ramo Maslesa as the new entity Interior Minister. The SDA representatives voted against the appointments in accordance to the party's position not to support any personnel solution proposed by the Alliance for Change. The deputies did not consider the appointment of Rifat Skrijelj as the Federation Minister of Social Welfare, refugees and Displaced Persons, which was a point on the agenda, since his Bosnian Patriotic Party (BPS) had requested

the postponement of this appointment. The House continued work at its ninth session also attended by the HDZ representatives for the first time after a long time. The deputies are expected to discuss the Budget re-balance for this year and a few draft laws from the field of privatization.

There will be no reshuffle of the BiH Federation Government

The Coordination of the Alliance for Change assessed that the results the Alliance had achieved thus far were very good, and it therefore decided to fully support the BiH Council of Ministers and the Federation Government and their reforming course. The Chairman of the Coordination, Kresimir Zubak, told journalists in Sarajevo on Tuesday that, at its session held in Sarajevo on Monday, the Coordination had decided that there would be no reshuffle of the Governments, since there were no reasons for major changes. This does not mean, according to Zubak, that the replacement of certain officials has been excluded. Oslobodjenje quoted Zubak as saying that the Coordination had also accepted a BPS' (Bosnian Patriotic Party) initiative for a temporary postponement of the appointment of a new BiH federation Minister for Social Welfare, refugees and Displaced Persons in place of The Hague's prisoner and the party's leader Sefer Halilovic. As it was agreed, Hamo Maslesa will be appointed BiH Federation Interior Minister. Zubak said that the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, would be requested to use his powers and accelerate changing of the entity Constitutions in accordance to the BiH Constitutional Court's decision on the equal constitutional status of all three peoples in the entire BiH's territory. A meeting with Petritsch will be held following the session of the Peace Implementation Council's Steering Board scheduled for December 6.

HDZ caucus in the BiH Federation Parliament press

criminal charges against Behmen

The Croat Democratic Union (HDZ) caucus in the BiH Federation House of Representatives pressed criminal charges against Federation Prime Minister Alija Behmen due to a reasonable doubt he had abused the office. According to Oslobodjenje, the party deputies claim that Behmen made a damage to the BiH federation of nearly 80 million KM through the approvals for these funds spending in purposes not foreseen by the entity Budget. Commenting on the HDZ accusations, Behmen said he had made all the decisions in accordance to the Constitution and the valid laws. He added that "the gentlemen from the so called self-rule should be aware of a fact the time of the political manipulations is far behind us."

Croat caucuses in the BiH and Federation House of Peoples drafted 40 amendments to the Federation Constitution

Oslobodjenje reports that the Croat caucuses in the BiH and the Federation Houses of Peoples have drafted 40 amendments to the BiH federation Constitution. The amendments will be delivered to the Federation Constitutional Commission, caucuses of the political parties and to the relevant institutions of the international community. They refers to the constitutional solutions ensuring a full equality of all constituent peoples in the Federation.

Vecernji List : Interview with Josip Merdzo, the HDZ General Secretary

Interview conducted by Robert Bubalo (Provided by OHR Mostar)

At the beginning of our talk Josip Merdzo stated that he does not expect either applauding or boos.

'We have judged that the functioning of the Alliance has become very questionable and we have decided to get engaged in the Federation Parliament. The economic and social situation

is critical in the whole country. The Alliance does not implement pre-election promises and we have concluded that it is necessary to refer to their mistakes, but also to demand some answers from the Federation Government. Concretely, we have a very interesting agenda for Wednesday, and one of the items will be the budget revision, as well as many interesting laws, like the one on the budget execution, concessions or the laws referring to the privatization process.

Are you planning to stay in the Parliament, or you will leave it again if you face with some obstacles?

We have decided to stay. It would be bad to speculate as to what might distance us from it. (...) Our position in the House of Representatives is the least disputable, however, when the House of Peoples is in question we shall be extremely careful. At the moment, we can welcome the new Election Law that annuls interim rules on the ground of which the elections for the House of Peoples were held. However, we should wait for the set of constitutional reforms, and then we shall know if this country could remain a

self-sustainable whole, in which each people has its place, that according to the Constitution belongs to it. (...) We believe that the House of Peoples is the only possible solution by which we could protect national interests. I believe that some people from the line of the Alliance have realized what we are talking about and in the statements given to media by NHI members, we can see their displeasure over their position within the Alliance and over the constitutional changes.

Is it possible that the HDZ find a common ground with Wolfgang Petritsch?

Parties, belonging to the HNS, have a support of more than 90% of the Croats in BiH. When they accept this as a fact and something normal there will be no obstacles for the

establishment of communication.

It seems as if the Croat National Assembly has capitulated on the establishment of the Croat self-rule?

The HNS and the process of the establishment of the Croat self-rule, which emerged out of despair, should be viewed separately. (...) The self-rule has never succeeded to respond to a great injustice, which was done to the Croats. The HNS remains and it will grow into one all-Croat block and probably, in the line of such an orientation, in future it will appear at the elections with other parties. (...)

An investigation has been launched against Ante Jelavic. According to your information, will the bill of indictment be issued?

I would not like to discuss as to which the result of the investigation will be, however, it is clear to everyone that this is about a political process. The connotations stated in the charges are simply inappropriate. It was not about the pulling down of the state or its constitutional organization. Still, we believe that the bill of indictment will not be issued.

What is the situation like within the HDZ, at the moment? It has been believed that a strong military lobby, that rules the party, does not make possible the reform of the party, and, allegedly, HDZ members from Bosnia who have been marginalized, are not satisfied?

I would not say that anyone is marginalized. If you have a look at the composition of the Presidency you can see that the HDZ members from Herzegovina and Bosnia are equally represented.

Yes, but, mainly, these people are not influential?

I cannot agree with you. Anyone who engages through the party

structure can have influence. (...) As far as the military lobby is concerned I do not have any information or concrete indications about its existence. Perhaps, there used to be some elements for such claims, however, now it is different.

A part of your members got rich over night. Will you distance yourselves from such people?

Each illegal phenomenon has its name and surname. I reject the criminalization of the party because of a few people. There are Judiciary, Prosecution and Court institutions in BiH. These issues should be resolved through these institutions, even if they involve people from the HDZ top.

Is the coalition between the HDZ and SDP possible some day?

Big changes should take place on both sides before we start thinking about it. I believe that it would be very difficult to realize it at this moment.

Does the HDZ BiH have allies?

Of course, the HDZ is not alone. We have extremely good contacts with our Diaspora, with the people who are close to the American Congress. We have excellent contacts with numerous parties from the EU, especially from Germany, Belgium and Italy. We have regular contacts with them and many of them, unlike their state leadership, understand our position very well. They are lobbying in their countries and in this way we are changing their view on the position of the Croats in BiH.

Dnevni List: Will Ante Jelavic be arrested following launching of investigation?

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Dnevni List asks whether Ante Jelavic, following the Sarajevo Cantonal Court's decision to launch an investigation against him and leaders of the Croat self-rule, will be placed into

custody. The paper tried to contact Investigative Judge Kamenica to find out what his intentions were but failed to reach him. It also learns that Jelavic and other suspects are yet to officially receive the Court's decision. BTW, the law determines that one can appeal to a decision on launching of an investigation within three days upon receiving the decision. The article also carries Ante Jelavic's lawyer, Josip Muselimovic, as saying that his client will not be placed into custody because the doubts on that were cleared on August 29.

Dnevni List carries Marko Tokic and Petar Milic's reactions to the Sarajevo Cantonal Court's decision.

Marko Tokic: "My stance is well-known. It confronts the constitutional-legal establishment of the FBiH. It is clear that an indictment containing everything they need can be issued together with the verdict, with which the one who decided on the competence with regards to the Croat self-rule case is familiar to. It is the HR, of course. He is our prosecutor, judge and jury".

Petar Milic: "I am not surprised. There were similar processes in the history. Now we have judges, reformed communists, who want to turn us into Bosniak-Catholics and they are being supported by "the last communist dictator in Europe" Wolfgang Petritsch. This is a big test for the Croat people and its leadership, and for me personally. We will not give up what we consider the freedom of the Croat people. I am always ready to make appropriate moves and I will not allow that I end up in prison, or better said, in concentration camp for the Croats"

Slobodna Dalmacija: Peaceful rally in Stolac for a decent living

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

A protest rally against all injustices that Stolac Croats are exposed to, was held at the Sports Hall in Stolac in the

organization of Croat Homeland War associations and the Headquarters for Protection of Croat Dignity and Existence. The rally went in a peaceful and dignified atmosphere in the presence of around a 1,000 people.

Marinko Raic addressed those present on behalf of the Headquarters and said that the mosque is being constructed illegally on the foundations of a Catholic Church instead of launching a Stolac Radio Station, as announced by a number of Croat politicians. He added that, parallel to this, crosses have been devastated, Croat symbols removed and Croat children beaten up.

Stolac Mayor Zeljko Obradovic was pleased to hear that the Headquarters would be cooperating with the current authorities and that all issues would be solved through the institutions of the system. A functioning system is in the interest of Croats, as the election winners, said Obradovic, reports Slobodna Dalmacija.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Turbulent session of the Stolac Municipal Council

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

The session of the Municipal Council of Stolac, held on Tuesday, was in many ways a copy of a number of previous sessions, reports Slobodna Dalmacija. The atmosphere got "heated up" when the agenda point of harmonization of the Municipal Statute to the Cantonal Law on Local Administration came to turn for discussion.

The Croat and Bosniak sides agreed that the Statute should be harmonized to the Law, but they had big differences when it came to legal ways of regulating the matter, and the discussion was very gall and loud at times.

The Croat councilors want the two-thirds majority vote principle in the decision-making process abolished and

advocate the simple majority principle instead, which caused a strong opposition on the part of the Bosniak councilors. Since no agreement was reached on the matter between the two caucuses, the problem will be discussed in the next session.

Republika Srpska

RS Supreme Defense Council announced modernization of the RS Army

The Republika Srpska Supreme Defense Council held session on Tuesday, at which modernization of the RS Army (VRS) was discussed. After the session, the RS president, Mirko Sarovic, stated that serious activities were underway in the RS in order to transform the RS Army into a modern and professional military force. He explained that the RS Defense Ministry as well as the VRS are carrying out activities to establish new doctrines and organization of the VRS, according to which it would be professionally trained and adequately paid. Sarovic also stressed that the VRS effective would be reduced and all the restructuring process would be completed by 2005 in accordance to the RS' international obligations.

The RS Government intends to remove obstacles to investing in the entity

The Republika Srpska Government, at its session held on Tuesday, adopted an action plan to remove obstacles to foreign investments, the RS Minister for Economic Relations, Fuad Turalic, stated following the session according to the Glas Srpski.

A joint commission of the International Financial Corporation and World Bank assessed that there were many administrative obstacles to the foreign investments in the RS and BiH. On September 14, the RS Government established a coordination team, which prepared the action plan for the realization of

studies related to the improvement of conditions for foreign investments. According to the plan, the process of company registration will be less complicated, as the rights of the share-holders will be fully respected. The action plan will be delivered to the World Bank.

RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic to propose reshuffle of his Cabinet at the RS National Assembly Session on Wednesday

Nezavisne Novine writes that Republika Srpska Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic will propose amendments to the entity Law on the Government in order to reduce the number of existing ministries from 21 to 15 at Wednesday's session of the RS National Assembly. Ivanic will in this way try to reduce pressures coming from the international community, which is convincing him to exclude SDS Ministers from the Government.

International Community

Del Ponte says FRY Army hides General Ratko Mladic

The Hague Tribunal Chief Prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte, on Tuesday warned the United Nations Security Council that the authorities in Belgrade and Banja Luka were continuing to obstruct efforts of the international Tribunal to bring to justice all persons indicted for the war crimes committed in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. According to the SENSE news agency report carried by Oslobođenje, she was particularly critical towards the Yugoslav authorities. As an evidence that nothing essentially had been changed in the Belgrade's cooperation with The Hague Tribunal even following establishment of the democratic authorities, Del Ponte with regret informed the Council that General Ratko Mladic, wartime Bosnian Serb Army commander indicted for most serious war crimes, was still living in the FRY territory under "the official protection" of the Yugoslav Army. Speaking about the situation in BiH, Del

Ponte assessed as the most problematic a lack of the appropriate cooperation between the Tribunal and the Republika Srpska, in which Radovan Karadzic, the most wanted war crime suspect, "has been sheltering for almost seven years. She said that a good example of cooperation had been a decision of the BiH Federation Government to hand over to The Hague some of its former leading military officers. Please see the [address](#) by Carla Del Ponte.

AFP: Yugoslavia denies war crimes suspect Mladic is in the country

Yugoslavia's interior minister, Zoran Zivkovic, on Tuesday rejected accusations from the UN war crimes prosecutor that one of the most wanted men from Bosnia's 1992-1995 war, Ratko Mladic, was being sheltered by the Yugoslav army. "According to the information I've received over the past year, General Mladic is not in our territory," Zivkovic said on state television channel RTS. He said that, to the best of his knowledge, Mladic was not under the Yugoslav army's protection. The minister added that Belgrade's federal government "has not promulgated any document obliging this institution (the government) or obliging some other person to protect somebody convicted of war crimes." However, the Deputy Hague Tribunal Chief Prosecutor Graham Blewit on Wednesday told a press conference at the ICTY building in The Hague that Mladic was spending most of the time in Belgrade under the protection of the Yugoslav Army. Mladic was the military commander of the Bosnian Serb army, which itself was strongly supported by Serbia, the dominant state in the Yugoslav federation. He, and Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadzic, are the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia's most wanted fugitives, wanted for atrocities committed against Bosniaks and Croats during the Bosnian war.

Nacional: Paddy Ashdown to bring Karadzic and Mladic to The Hague

Written by Janusz Bugajski (Provided by OHR Mostar)

In Southeastern Europe, if you hear a good news in the morning, it is more than likely you will hear something bad by the time the evening comes, says Janusz Bugajski at the beginning of his editorial about the situation in the countries of Southeastern Europe and the international attitude to it.

“Considering the American preoccupation with the global anti-terrorist war, unbalanced progress or a possible regression in the region could even intensify because of the international frustration and due to its being neglected by the USA. (...)”

In reality, American trans-national campaign calls for a solution of the accumulated problems in the region such as the Balkans, where so much political, diplomatic, army and economic capital has been invested in the past decade. Three issues remain unsettled and will require strong American leadership: the future of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, building of legitimate and multiethnic countries in Macedonia and BiH and progress of democratization across the region. The Dayton process in Bosnia is still hindered by resistance and inertia. Next High Representative of the International Community, the British Paddy Ashdown, will have a filled and demanding schedule in consolidating the central government, fighting Serb and Croat separatists, suppressing organized crime and corruption, providing a safe return for dozens of thousands of refugees and in integrating various institutions at the State level.

Still, ‘Ashdown’s era’ could be an ideal period to review Dayton and produce the necessary amendments in order to breathe a new life into the ever so exhausted document. However, for this strategy to be effective, the next High

Representative must have a more prominent political support from both Washington and Brussels. Above all, as a symbol of justice and multi-ethnic reconciliation, Karadzic and Mladic must finally join their supreme leader in The Hague. Any reduction of the American engagement, along with international fatigue as far as Bosnia is concerned, could lead to an unstable paralysis that will be used by nationalists on all the three sides. (...)," reads the article.

AFP: Yugoslavia's first ambassador takes up post in Bosnia

Yugoslav diplomat Stanimir Vukicevic on Tuesday officially took up his post as Belgrade's first ambassador to Bosnia nearly ten years after Bosnia declared independence from Yugoslavia, triggering the 1992-95 war. Vukicevic – representing the Yugoslav federation's two remaining republics, Serbia and Montenegro – presented his credentials to Jozo Krizanovic, chairman of Bosnia-Herzegovina's tripartite presidency, in Sarajevo. "It is a pleasure and great honor to be the first Yugoslav ambassador to Bosnia, the country which had, until recently, been within (our) joint state," Vukicevic told AFP. "There is a wide range of issues we have to tackle, and I have no doubt that solving those issues is of mutual interest," he said. Vukicevic said he would focus on "full political normalization" and "reestablishment of economic cooperation" between the two countries. Rebuilding of mutual trust, the return of refugees and cultural cooperation will also be high on the agenda, he added. Sarajevo and Belgrade established diplomatic relations last December, ending nearly a decade of frosty ties since the war, which opposed Bosnian Serbs backed by the regime of former president Slobodan Milosevic against Bosnian Muslims and Croats. The war claimed some 200,000 lives and left over one million refugees. Milosevic, indicted for genocide in Bosnia and war crimes committed in Kosovo and Croatia, is due to go on trial on February 12 before The

Hague-based International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Commenting the genocide charge against Milosevic, Vukicevic said that the ICTY tried individuals and "not peoples", suggesting that Serbs as a whole should not be blamed for the atrocities. Another sensitive issue in relations between the two countries is Bosnia's suit against Yugoslavia for genocide and aggression filed before the Hague-based International Court of Justice in 1993. "Things have changed since then, and the suit should be seen in the context of current situation," Vukicevic said. "We appeal to Bosnia to withdraw its suit, because it would be a good move" towards developing the cooperation, he said. "However, I think, that as far as we are concerned, (the suit) it is not an obstacle in establishing cooperation", Vukicevic added.

AFP: UN sacks Bosnian Serb police for serving in war-time camp

Three Bosnian Serb policemen have been sacked by the UN police for their role in detaining non-Serb civilians in a facility held by Bosnian Serbs during the 1992-95 war, the United Nations said Tuesday. Evidence and witness testimony showed that Brane Cosovic, when serving as a military police commander in the southeastern town of Foca in 1992, "ordered the detention of non-Serb civilians," UN spokesman Stefo Lehmann said. "Members of the Foca military police were directly involved in the commission of numerous atrocities against non-Serb civilians in the Foca area in 1992," he told reporters. The two other policemen, Miodrag Koprivica and Zoran Vladicic, were identified by witnesses as interrogators in the former Foca prison used by the Bosnian Serbs to detain non-Serb civilians. After the war the three worked as crime inspectors with the Foca police. "It had been determined that the war-time background of these officers renders them unfit for service in the police forces," Lehman said, adding that the dismissal had an immediate effect. The UN mission in Bosnia is tasked with training and supervising the work of

local police. In the early stages of Bosnia's brutal war Bosnian Serbs captured Foca, 70 kilometers (44 miles) southeast of Sarajevo, driving its predominantly Bosniak and Croat population out of their homes, as part of their ethnic cleansing campaign. Hundreds of them were held in detention camps. The records of the three were also shared with the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which has indicted several Bosnian Serbs for war crimes committed in Foca area. The United Nations has sacked around 15 officers over their role in the war.

Editorials

Dnevni List: Croat leaders in The Hague and/or Sarajevo

Written by Zvonko Dragic

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Despite all efforts from Ante Jelavic and others' attorneys, Investigative Judge Idriz Kamenica of the Sarajevo Cantonal Court decides to launch an investigation against the leaders of the HNS. The accusations are ridiculous and sad, not only for the suspects but also for the future of BiH as a state and the authors of the rigged process. In a country that is not unified, sovereign or democratic any other outcome would have been for "believe it or not" column. But since this indirectly concerns the future of the BiH Croats, it is hard to imagine that this message would be ignored. If the Croats are politically killed today then they are only one step away from the biological death. The people who are being persecuted are the embodiment of the BiH Croats' political will. One might ask himself/herself, considering the fact that many proven criminals are still at large, what's behind everything. Perhaps to bring the suspects to Sarajevo or to prove the

multi-ethnicity of the BiH judiciary where the Muslims charge and run trials whilst the Croats sit on the defendants' benches? Or perhaps democracy is not what it should be, but a thing what the "stronger one" ordered, reads Dnevni List.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Slavo Kukic – a victim or an aggressor?

Written by Josip Jovic (Provided by OHR Mostar)

The article says that Slavo Kukic, the Chairman of the FTV Steering Board and a university professor, has recently complained of having found a threatening letter in the windshield of his car and explained it as a political lynch by a part of the HDZ structures. Kukic also complained of his position at the Mostar University being seriously endangered by the Pedagogical School Dean Simun Musa for Kukic's alleged friendship with the dismissed Rector Marko Tadic, who suited the international more than he did the national community.

Jovic says the BiH media sided with Kukic and the case has been presented as yet another evidence of journalists and intellectuals being intimidated by the HDZ people, who have long been declared the obstructing factor in the BiH's way to brotherhood and unity.

The article reads a strong process of de-constituting Croats is ongoing in BiH and the most recent case of reducing the basic rights of Croats was the shutdown of the HTV and the Federation TV launch, "which, unfortunately, both by its contents and its style, resembles the Sarajevo Television from the Yugo-communist times. Slavo Kukic himself is heading such a television."

The program of disenfranchising Croats cannot be carried out convincingly and efficiently without Croats such as the professor from this story, says Jovic.

"He will stress his high price and ask his masters, in this

case the Federation partner or the international protectors, to give him a high reward. When someone complains of not teaching three, but only two subjects, which is his part-time job anyway, and when he is ready to accuse everyone else for it and use the favor of powerful structures, then what you can see is careerism and servility without any limits.

That is what all non-national regimes feed and fail on," concludes the article.