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BiH State-related Issues

BiH asks Interpol to issue arrest warrant for former foreign minister Muhamed Sacirbey

SRNA news agency and the Federation Television reported that the BiH authorities asked Interpol on Saturday to issue an international arrest warrant for former ambassador to the UN Muhamed Sacirbey over allegations that he misused government funds. The spokesman of the Federation Interior Ministry, Nazif Dinarevic, said that, after an investigation completed last March, the ministry's auditing team concluded that Sacirbey had deprived the BiH mission in New York of more than 610,000 dollars in 2000.

Sacirbey, who was replaced in December 2000 and who still lives in the United States, has denied any wrongdoing and said that the problem was caused by confusion in the financial sector. Subsequent investigation into some other financial transactions has indicated that funds which were at his disposal and spent without any supporting documentation might total 2.5 million dollars, the audit team said in its report. An unnamed Interpol official has said that the US judicial authorities will examine the evidence against Sacirbey, a citizen of both the USA and BiH, and then decide whether to try him in the USA or extradite him.

Redefining of the Ploce port Agreement

In a statement for Saturday issue of Oslobodjenje, the chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Zlatko Lagumdžija,

denied the information that that the Council or he personally took part in any negotiations on redefining the Agreement on the use of Ploce port and the possible abolishing of the International member of the Ploce Steering Board. He also refused to comment on the recent statements by the Croatian ambassador to BiH, Josip Vrbosic, that there is a "certain willingness and interest in the Council of Ministers to abolish the disputed international member of the Board," which could further complicate the process of resolving of the controversial issues between the two countries in this sphere, as all disputes would be addressed before the International Court for the right to sea in Hamburg.

Serbian "secret" group threatens Serb Civic Council leaders

A secret Serbian organization called "Gavrilo Princip" has sent a threatening letter to Mirko Pejanovic, chairman of the Serb Civic Council (SGV) in Sarajevo, with a list of persons whom, it claims, it has sentenced to death. The SGV announced on Saturday, *Oslobodjenje* reports on its front page, that the list includes SGV Chairman Mirko Pejanovic; retired BiH Army General Jovan Divjak; members of the SDP Bogic Bogicevic, Miro Lazovic, Boro Bjelobrk and Tatjana Ljubic-Mijatovic; Obrad Piljak, former Deputy Governor of the BiH National Bank; veteran Dragutin Braco Kosovac; priest Krstan Bijeljic, and Zoran Cegar, whom the letter claims is responsible for the "murderer of Serbs in Sarajevo".

The SGV has condemned the threats and forwarded the letter to the Federation Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Conscientious Objection and Civil Service in BiH at a standstill

In its Saturday's issue, *Oslobodjenje* carries a lengthy article about the possibility of introducing a conscientious objection and the civil service in BiH for those whose

religion or personal conviction object to any association with arms and military. The daily notes that voices of certain NGOs and human rights groups have become louder in the recent months, however, despite earlier promises, the Entity Defense Ministries failed to reach a consensus on this issue. Many neighboring countries, including Croatia and Slovenia, have introduced this alternative form of service, which generally lasts longer than a regular military service.

Mariofil Ljubic, Deputy Chairman of the BiH House of Representatives – It is time for constitutional changes

In an interview for Slobodna Dalmacija, Mariofil Ljubic, the Deputy Chairman of the BiH House of Representatives, stated that the priorities of the House in the year of 2002 are the adoption of the Law on Returns and creation of the prerequisites for the economic prosperity of the country. Ljubic stressed in particular that it is about time “to sit down and discuss revision of certain provisions of the BiH Constitution because the current social and political circumstances call for the political parties in BiH to sit down and try to make an agreement on certain matters.”

The most essential matter that needs to be affirmed in the course of this year, according to Ljubic, is the principle of equality of all three peoples, along with ensuring a high degree of respect for human rights. “Therefore, it is necessary to pass the Law on the Rights of National Minorities, and as for the constituent peoples, we need solid instruments to guarantee their equality as a prerequisite to the economic prosperity of BiH since the country is facing an economic and social collapse,” said Ljubic.

He thinks that the Constitutional Court Decision on the Constituency of Peoples is being implemented much too slowly, which he holds unacceptable. The option of introducing a constitutional commission in the RS while maintaining the

House of Peoples in the Federation, in Ljubic's opinion, would be a bad statement and would not be encouraging as far as the return process is concerned.

Federation

Federation government to discuss the problem of military apartments and the recent ruling of the Human Rights Chamber

Oslobodjenje and Dnevni Avaz reported that the Federation government will discuss the recent decision of the BiH Human Rights Chamber on Military Apartments at one of the upcoming sessions. This issue has been termed as very complex by the government, which also stressed that it could have serious implications for a number of other similar cases. The dailies report that after Federation representatives in the Human Rights Chamber submitted a full report on the issue to the Federation government, the latter asked the Chamber to annul the decision which grants right to former JNA officers to repossess their apartments in this entity. Speculations have it that this controversial issue could be forwarded to the BiH Constitutional Court and that the High Representative might be asked to take part in its resolution, as the disputed Article 3A (The Law on the Cessation of the Application of the Law on Abandoned Apartments) was imposed by the OHR.

Dnevni Avaz writes, quoting the mentioned Federation report, that there are 16,052 military apartments in BiH: some 14,000 on the territory of the Federation and 3,493 in the RS. The Federation Public Attorney for Military Issues, Nura Zimic, told the daily that, if the Human Rights Chamber overturns its ruling, this entity would be able to save some 1,500 apartments, most of which were awarded to veterans and the families of the fallen soldiers. Avaz also reports that the OHR had asked the Federation Ministry of Defence to provide a

list of all officers in the Federation Army who had apartments elsewhere on the territory of the former-Yugoslavia and have been unable to reposes them. OHR spokesman, Oleg Milisic, told the daily that the OHR would simply like to know the exact number of such individuals, but refused to speculate if this institution could undertake any concrete steps in this process, so as to enable Bosnian officers to repossess their apartments in other neighbouring states.

Process against Jelvic, Prce and Curcic to resume before Sarajevo Cantonal Court

Slobodna Dalmacija reports that the process against Ante Jelavic, Miroslav Prce (former Federation Defence Minister) and Dragan Curcic (former HVO general) will resume before the Sarajevo Cantonal Court on Wednesday on charges that they committed criminal act of undermining the defence capability of the Federation BiH described in the article 144 of the Federation criminal code. The daily announces that the current Federation Defence Minister Mijo Anic should be summoned as a witness too. Jelavic lawyer, Josip Muselimovic, announced that Jelavic is most likely to show up on Wednesday.

Pensions to go up after the integration of pensions funds in the Federation?

Oslobodjenje writes that the average amount of the lowest guaranteed pension in the Federation could go up to 121 KM after the integration of the two pension funds in this entity. The daily notes that this would be the most logical and agreeable consequence of the integration, taken into consideration the thus far financial disparity in the pension funds in Mostar and Sarajevo. Meanwhile, the newly formed Pensioners Party in BiH asked for the abolishment of the controversial article in the Law on Pension Funds and which stipulates that the amounts of paid pensions will be determined by the level of funds collected on monthly basis.

Dnevni List: ICTY investigators interrogates Jadranko Prlic for seven days

Dnevni List reports that the ICTY investigators were interrogating Jadranko Prlic for seven days and that the journalists found about it during the Christmas and New Year's holidays, but no one, including Dr. Prlic himself, found it appropriate to inform the public about it and no information could be acquired from The Hague, either, so it all came down to speculations. Dnevni List reporter contacted Ante Jelavic's office at that time but was told that they also heard Dr. Prlic had been interrogated but were not entirely sure if it was true, and if it was, they wondered what Prlic told the ICTY.

Ten days later, the daily found out from unofficial but well-informed sources close to Prlic himself on the one hand and from his defense council on the other, that the interrogation lasted for a whole week. Prlic reportedly hired a sizable team of lawyers, one in charge of each element of the indictment bill.

Dnevni List, although familiar with what Prlic told the ICTY investigators, could not determine in what capacity Prlic was interrogated, i.e. whether he is a suspect, an indictee or a witness. The daily was told that he was questioned "as a sort of suspect." After the reporter insisted it was a category that the law does not recognize, the daily's source said Prlic's status in relation to the ICTY was the same as that of Croatian General Petar Stipetic.

During the interrogation, Prlic reportedly laid all the blame for crimes on Dr. Franjo Tudjman, Gojko Susak, Mate Boban, Valentin Coric and Bruno Stojic. He admitted to having signed for the establishment of collective centers for imprisoned Bosniaks (Dretelj and Heliodrom) and repeated the following: "I am a businessman, I am not interested in politics, the others dealt with politics."

Dnevni List: Last year was a record year for Aluminij Mostar by the number of attacks on the company's management

A recent statement by Ernevaza Hrustanovic, the President of the Commission in charge of the implementation of Article 143 of the Labor Law, saying that all personnel business in the Aluminij Factory in Mostar was conducted in accordance with the Labor Law, caused numerous reactions in the country. Aluminij managers said it is another proof that their operations were legal and that the Federation Government had no arguments for their actions.

As a reminder, says the daily, Milivoj Gagro, a pre-war Mayor of Mostar and a senior official of the Croat Peasants' Party, has been appointed as the Chair of the Steering Board of Aluminij, which is only one of the proofs that the Federation Government prioritizes political correctness over competence. Gagro is remembered as a person who wanted to let the Serbian-Montenegrin aggressor access all the hills surrounding Mostar.

The Union of Metal Workers in the east part of Mostar, which was formed by the former Mostar Mayor Safet Orucevic, have realized that their petty politics make no sense anymore, especially following the aforementioned statement of Ernevaza Hrustanovic, said Dnevni List.

Two railway companies in the Federation to merge into one on January 8

Dnevni List on Saturday reads that the Public Company "Zeljeznice Herceg Bosne Mostar" (**Herzeg-Bosnia Railways**) and the Public Company "Zeljeznice BH Sarajevo" (**BH Sarajevo Railways**) will **merge** into one company "Zeljeznice FBiH" (**FBiH Railways**) **on January 8**, following the Federation Government's decision to merge the two. Ivan Knezovic, the CEO of the Herzeg-Bosnia Railways regrets the decision because, in his opinion, the Herzeg-Bosnia Railways is a successful company

that pays its employees and honors other obligations unlike the BH Sarajevo Railways that owes 30 million KMs in unpaid taxes.

Republika Srpska

ICG's Mark Wheeler: The structure and organisation of entities in BiH to change

During his Friday visit to Banja Luka, the head of the ICG (International Crisis Group), Mark Wheeler, said that the RS will not be able to improve its relations with The Hague Tribunal as long as the two prime Serb suspects, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, are at large. Dnevni Avaz quotes Wheeler as saying that the two entities will remain in place in BiH, however with different structure and internal organization. "There will be no new peace agreement in BiH. The Dayton Peace Agreement must be fully implemented, after which the citizens of BiH will write their new constitution," he stressed.

Ruling RS party warns against attempts to change Dayton Agreement

The Serb Democratic Party, SDS, said that the International Crisis Group [ICG] has no mandate to ascertain that the entities will enjoy even less sovereignty in 2002 and that the central institutions of BiH should be further strengthened by reducing the competencies of the entities. "For a long time the people in the RS have wondered on what basis this informal group of lobbyists has been authorized to influence the policy of the international community in BiH," the SDS says in its statement quoted by SRNA news agency.

The SDS also said that in order to set up a functional Bosnia-Herzegovina, it and the other parties of the ruling coalition will never accept centralization.

RS President says creation of Serb entity “historic inevitability”

The RS President, Mirko Sarovic, said that discussions on the character of the RS will continue for some time in the future and that “they will not stop as long as there are opponents of the Republic and this kind of organization of Bosnia-Herzegovina”. In an interview for the Banja Luka-based daily Glas Srpski, Sarovic said that “the creation of the RS was a historic inevitability”, adding that he remained convinced, just as at the beginning of his mandate, that the RS was the more stable part of BiH. Commenting on the proposals on the introduction of constitutional changes in BiH, Sarovic reiterated that he disagreed with the principle of the distribution of powers according to the census in 1991. “If this census was used as a yardstick for measuring equal representation [of all nations in the government institutions] the system in the RS would become absurd, but that could be precisely what some people would like to see,” Sarovic said. Predicting that this year would be as difficult as the previous one for the RS, Sarovic said that he hoped to see a gradual recovery, particularly in the economic sector. “There are some difficult decisions ahead of us and the most important thing now is to reach consensus on them. The things I have in mind here are the constitutional changes, relations with The Hague tribunal, Annex 7 and a number of other issues.” Fena agency and Saturday’s Oslobodjenje carry excerpts from the interview.

Sunday Times: Ratko Mladic contemplating surrender

The Sunday Times reports that Ratko Mladic has entrenched himself in the basement of his Belgrade house in the fear that he might be caught by “bounty hunters” who want to collect a 5 million US\$ reward promised by the US. Nearly all media in BiH and Zagreb’s Vjesnik carry the Times article. See the full [article](#).

International Community

Wolfgang Petritsch: A Free Market Requires a Change in Thinking

In a commentary written exclusively for Dnevni Avaz, Nezavisne Novine and Dnevni List, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, discusses the pace of [privatisation in BiH](#) and argues that large companies, former mass employers in BiH, need to essentially change their way of thinking and adopt to new methods of production in order to succeed in the new system.

Editorials

Most *Sarajevo dailies* commented over the weekend on the introduction of Euro and its impact on the BiH economy. Both Avaz and Oslobodjenje noted that Bosnia has also been affected by “Euromania”, as great numbers of people rushed to the banks wanting to change their small DM savings into Euros. Both papers report that banks have introduced quite high and not standardized provision rates for the exchange.

Mirko Sagolj comments in Saturday’s **Oslobodjenje** that BiH is facing an important race in the year 2002 after which it has chances to become a full fledged state in the full meaning of this word. Four important benchmarks for the country will be the implementation of the Constitutional Court’s ruling on the constituent status of all peoples on the entire territory of BiH, the return of refugees, General elections scheduled for October 2002, and finally the long-awaited accession to the Council of Europe.

Ibrahim Prohic, also in Oslobodjenje, writes about the recently announced Interpol warrant for the former BiH Foreign

Minister and an Ambassador to the UN, Muhamed Sacirbegovic, while Ramo Kolar comments on the threatening letter sent by the secret Serbian Society "Gavrilo Princip" to members of the Serb Civil Council in Sarajevo.

Sunday's *Oslobodjenje* carries a commentary by Ivo Banac (prominent Yugoslav history professor from the Yale University and one of the most famous Croatian dissidents) and which was originally published in Split's *Feral Tribune* on the "historical inevitability of the creation of the former Yugoslavia and its subsequent dissolution" and the lack thereof.

Dnevni List: View from the Rhine – BiH as an island of peace

Written by Gojko Boric

Gojko Boric, in his commentary for *Dnevni List*, says that having reviewed the last year's policy of the "international tutors" in BiH, one can say without any exaggeration that they were trying to push BiH Croats into their very dubious scheme of "a single Bosnia." As if they learned nothing from the failure of [Benjamin] Kallay's policy of creating a "Bosnian nation" and the blood-shedding collapse of the Yugoslav experiment under the false slogan about "brotherhood and unity." Formally, Boric says, they were in favor of equality of the three peoples in BiH, but factually, they were reducing Croats to a national minority.

Boric notes that the international architects of the BiH state policy continue with their policy of removing all national characteristics, Croats could gradually leave their only homeland forever, and as Jacques Klein said on many occasions, there is no BiH without Croats. Since that would not be in the interest of the international community, either, because it would mean their capitulation, they must realize that Croats must be equal to Bosniaks and Serbs in all aspects, says

Boric.