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BiH State-related Issues

Three senior Bosniak officers plead not guilty to war crimes charges

Three senior BiH Army wartime officers on Thursday denied responsibility for war crimes against mainly Croat civilians in central BiH in 1993-94. Retired generals Mehmed Alagic, 54, Enver Hadzihasanovic, 51, and 37-year-old brigadier Amir Kubura were the highest-ranking Bosniaks yet to appear before the UN International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia. The three pleaded not guilty to violations of the laws or customs of war and grave breaches of the Geneva conventions between January 1993 and January 1994 during vicious fighting between Bosniaks and Croats. Dressed in suits, the accused stood as the charges – which include the killing of at least 200 Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb civilians during attacks against Croat forces – were read out in court.

The indictment lists 19 counts, including murder, inhuman treatment, hostage-taking and destruction of institutions dedicated to religion. Prosecutors say the three, arrested last week by the authorities of BiH Federation, bear command

responsibility for the crimes, many of them perpetrated by foreign Muslim fighters calling themselves “Mujahideen” or “Holy Warriors”, who flocked from Arab countries to help Bosniaks defend themselves.

CRA discussing new tender for the third GSM operator with the Council of Ministers

An advisor to the Communication Regulatory Agency (CRA), James Milne, said yesterday that the CRA did not determine the price of a third GSM operator license, but added that, when it does, the price will not be high. Milne explained that the practice of selling licenses for higher sums in European countries proved to be inefficient and unfair. “Earlier operators gained the licenses without compensation, such as the case is with the present two GSM operators in BiH,” he said.

He added that the CRA will confirm the maximum amount for the GSM license, while the price may reach higher amount during the tender process. During yesterday’s discussion with journalists, Milne confirmed that the CRA is presently negotiating with the BiH Council of Ministers about the new tender. “When we finalize the discussions with the Council of Ministers on this issue, we’ll start the activities for a new tender for the third GSM operator,” he said. (covered prominently in all Federation media) See the attachment for full text of Oslobodjenje report on the CRA briefing.

BiH Presidency adopts foreign policy platform

At yesterday’s session, the BiH Presidency adopted the Foreign Policy Platform of BiH, (i.e., the document titled “General Guidelines and Priorities for Implementing the Foreign Policy of BiH”) which defined the general guidelines, tasks and priorities for the country’s foreign policy. The Platform will be forwarded to the Council of Ministers and the BiH Parliament as a final document which will enable institutions to conduct more coordinated policy in the future. Following

the session, the Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency, Beriz Belkic, said that, together with the agreement on the common defense policy, the Foreign Policy Platform is the most important document for BiH.

SDP denies wanting to establish party control over RTV BiH

In a statement for the press, the SDP BiH said that its efforts in the transformation process of the RTV BiH are maliciously being (mis)interpreted as an attempt to establish a full party control over media in BiH. “As one of the ruling parties, the SDP is responsible for the state of the entire public sector, and in particular of media which are there to serve to the citizens who are paying for them. For that reason, the SDP does not intend to transfer that responsibility to others or completely hand over the public media to those who simply happened to have positions in those media,” reads the SDP statement.

The party, however, added that it will continue its cooperation with institutions created by the High Representative in order to overcome the present difficulties at RTV BiH.

Air Bosnia rejects UN allegation of illegal immigrants trafficking

General Manager of *Air Bosnia*, Omer Kulic, rejected the accusation of UN officials in BiH that this airline is fostering illegal immigration into and through BiH by rerouting its flights from Istambul, Turkey to Tuzla. “We really do not care that Tuzla airport does not have State Border Servicemen checking the passports. Prevention of illegal immigration is responsibility of adequate state institutions, not of an airline,” said Kulovic, and strongly condemn, what he called, media campaign against the *Air Bosnia*.

Federation

Small Depositors of Hercegovacka Banka will be protected

At yesterday's press conference, the spokesman for the Provisional Administrator of Hercegovacka Banka, Johan Verheyden, said that, if the bank is liquidated, its small depositors will be paid out their savings. He stressed that depositors' funds are stored in a safe place – the BiH Central Bank in Sarajevo – and will be available in the case of liquidation of the bank. Verheyden also told journalists that the Provisional Administrator, Toby Robinson, paid four outstanding salaries to Hercegovacka Banka's employees and is presently working out a new personnel plan for the bank. (very prominently covered in all Federation media)

Slobodna Dalmacija: Neither side is happy with Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje Agreement

Split's Slobodna Dalmacija reports that neither side is satisfied with the recently brokered agreement on Gornji Vakuf- Uskoplje. According to the daily, Bosniaks anted one municipality, however, without Uskoplje, while Croats would have been happier with two municipalities, whereby one – the Croat one – would include Uskoplje.

Ambassador Matthias Sonn, the Senior Deputy High Representative, a signatory of the Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje Agreement, characterized this as an acceptable solution that provides assurances of a fair distribution of power. Ambassador Sonn said the Agreement is an important step further toward reconciliation and a standard that should be employed in the whole of BiH, reads Slobodna Dalmacija.

However, says the daily, the public is still unclear as to what the Agreement implies and why all of its signatories are equally discontent. Under these circumstances, comments Slobodna Dalmacija, it is yet to be seen how realistic is the willingness to coexistence, burdened with the war, having in

mind the fact that the Croats of Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje have not given up their request for establishing Croat Municipality of Uskoplje.

Cardinal Puljic on the Croat National Assembly

During Tuesday's interview with Oscar C Radio in Mostar, the Cardinal Vinko Puljic said, among other things, that Croat politicians are wasting their energy on mutual conflicts and internal party fights. Commenting on the role of the Croat National Assembly (HNS) in BiH, Puljic said that this body can in no way replace state institutions, but should simply provide guidelines and supporting means in the process of strategy-forming of Croats in BiH.

Mostar Croat Christian Democrats: To unite the Municipalities with the Croat majority

The Croat Christian Democrats' Mostar City branch recommended the unification of the three Mostar municipalities with the Croat majority. Apart from a political statement, the initiative carries a material dimension too because, the Croat Christian Democrats think, it would provide for a reduction of the number of facilities that the Municipalities use as well as the number of employees, which would take some burden off the Municipal budget and the funds could be used to solve other vital problems

Serious failures in the "Leutar case" investigation

A senior official of the local judiciary engaged in the "Leutar case" said for "Vjesnik," under the condition that his identity stays anonymous, that the indictment in the case of the murder of the late Deputy Minister of Interior could soon be extended. "We have indications that there was a conspiracy in this case in which some of the former leading politicians were involved," said the official, adding that if the indications turn out to be true, the indictment could be extended to "very high" circles. The media have earlier

speculated that some of the leading HDZ politicians could be involved in the case but also some high officials from the Bosniak side (…) Together with announcements of the possible expanding of the indictment in this controversial case, there are some serious failures in the investigation unfolding. It was only recently that the scandalous information has been revealed that a film, that was taken just after the explosion by an official of the US Embassy, was destroyed (the Embassy is located near the crime scene). The film that could have contributed to the investigation was destroyed by orders of the then Cantonal Minister of Interior Ismet Dahic who was not questioned during the investigation at all. Apart from that, the policeman who was securing the Embassy at the time of the assassination, did not give his statement either. According to Vjesnik's findings, the man is now in Sweden. Furthermore, it is a big failure not to pay enough attention to the fact that the explosive which was used to kill Mr. Leutar is similar to the one used in the attacks on the Croat returnees and police officers in Central Bosnia, months before the assassination on Mr. Leutar.

Republika Srpska

Reactions To Dodik's Statement That Leading People of the RS Customs Administration Are Involved in Racketeering

Nezavisne Novine quotes Chief of the State Border Service, Tomislav Mihalj, as saying that the SBS does not have information about the organisation "Typhoon" and the group ran by Ljuban Ecim. Commenting on Milorad Dodik's statement that Ljuban Ecim and the group "Typhoon" smuggle all sorts of goods throughout the country and use the money to finance Radovan Karadzic's security, Mihalj says that SBS does not have any information about this and stresses that the SBS will look into it. "We shall look into these allegations and if it proves that they are correct we shall help the authorities to

prevent such things from happening", says Mihalj. Nezavisne Novine carries press release issued by the RS Customs Administration which says that Dodik's statement about leading people of the RS Customs Administration allegedly involved in racketeering Banja Luka business people as well as about financing of Kradzic's security is completely false and aimed to discredit RS institutions and especially the RS Customs Administration. The press release further reads that with these statements Dodik is trying to distract the attention of the public from the fact that criminal charges were pressed against former Head of the RS Customs Administration, Dragoljub Davidovic and SNSD top officials, Nikola Kragulj, Zoran Tegeltija and Mirko Nozica.

International Community

US Congress will not send a fact-finding mission to BiH

Spokespersons of the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee of the US House of Representatives have denied allegations about a visit of the congressional delegation to BiH this summer, HINA reported on Thursday. The vice president of the BiH Croat Democratic Union (HDZ), Marko Tokic, said on Tuesday a delegation of the US Congress will soon visit BiH. This delegation, as Tokic said, "is tasked to investigate the work of High Representative to BiH Wolfgang Petritsch." The media have connected this with the testifying of Vinko Cardinal Puljic and Bishop Ratko Peric, who warned the US congressmen on July 25 on the unequal position of Croats in BiH, and criticized the decisions of dismissals of some elected officials.

No one in the US congressional committees wants to comment the possibility that the congressmen would "investigate" the work of Petritsch. They stress that the High Representative was in the United States in July, and that he met

with officials of the US Government and Congress. “Petritsch has informed several times the congressmen about the situation in BiH, work of his office, and SFOR activities,” the chairman of the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives, Henry Hyde, said.

OSCE concerned about growing political pressures on media in the RS

Today’s edition of Nezavisne Novine quotes an OSCE spokesperson, Sanela Tunovic-Becirevic as saying that the OSCE is very concerned about the growing pressure on RS media. Commenting on the RS government move to dismiss the general manager of SRNA news agency, Tunovic-Becirevic said that the OSCE has been informed about this case and is presently looking into all details.

OHR, OSCE strongly condemn the list of alleged war criminals in Glas Srpski

In a joint statement for the press, the OHR and the OSCE strongly condemned the publication of a list of the alleged Bosniak war criminals which appeared in Monday’s edition of Glas Srpski. “The publication of this list by Glas Srpski represents a grievous contravention of acceptable press practice. It imputes guilt to individuals who have not had the benefit of due process of law,” reads the statement. (News agencies carry the press release) See the attachment!

UN Spokesman Comments on List Published in “Glas Srpski” – ICTY Needs Evidence

At yesterday’s press conference the UN MIBH Spokesman, Alun Roberts, commented on the RS Documentation Center list of people who allegedly ordered or committed war crimes against Serbs in BiH: “As to the Documentation Center List, published in Glas Srpski recently I have to say that violation of freedom of movement has not been reported”. Roberts points out that the RS Government has the right to forward indictments to

the ICTY, but the it must have strong evidence if it wants the ICTY to accept the indictments. “The similar lists existed before but this is the first time that the RS Government Documentation Center identified war crime suspects”, said Roberts. Asked to comment on journalistic standards and publishing the list in the media, Roberts says that editor-in-chief decides whether some information or document will be published or not. Roberts says that similar lists were published in the Federation and Croatian newspapers and that violation of freedom of movement was not reported.

Brcko Supervisor Henry Clark to halt privatization in the District

International Supervisor for Brcko District Henry Clark announced yesterday that he would halt all RS privatization in the Brcko District because the RS government has engaged in privatization of several companies in the District without prior consultations with the District government or the OHR. “This is unacceptable. The interests of Brcko District must be considered in any entity privatization within the district, and this was very clearly not done,” said Clark. (Clark’s address at the press conference was well covered in all Federation media).

Meeting on “Social Cohesion” Initiative

The BiH Ministry for European Integration and OHR organized yesterday’s meeting that discussed an initiative of the Stability Pact titled “Social Cohesion”. The initiative is aimed to resolve social problems in the countries of southeastern Europe, high unemployment rate, low living standard and bad social infrastructure. The Minister for European Integration with the CoM, Dragan Mikerevic stated that special attention had been paid to social problems in BiH, particularly to the position of pensioners and disabled war veterans. The BiH authorities are to precisely define roles at all levels in order to take the responsibility for

solving these issues, Mikerevic pointed out.

Editorials

Slobodna Dalmacija: SDA President is the only one defending the army officers that went to The Hague

Written by Stjepan Kljujic

The editorial reads that there have been various comments on the surrender and departure of the three BiH Army officers to The Hague, but that the SDA President Alija Izetbegovic is the only one who publicly stood in their defense and claimed they are innocent. Kljujic quotes Izetbegovic as saying “there are no pure wars, all are more or less dirty. War is a process where you cannot achieve full control.” Kljujic goes on to recount the circumstances in BiH from 1992 on, and concludes by saying that the most important thing to note is that most of the citizens support these new arrests. “As in 1992 no decent and honest citizen was in a dilemma as to which side to take, today no decent and honest citizen is in a dilemma about the fact that all those who committed crimes must face the Hague Tribunal.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Rigged trial in Sarajevo

Written by Petar Milos

Petar Milos begins his piece by claiming that the letter Bishop Ratko Peric received from Daniel Simpson, the former Head of the OSCE Regional Centre in Mostar, has been met with approval and even enthusiasm in Herzegovina.

“Someone, and not just anyone, has finally agreed with Herzegovinians that the raid into Hercegovacka Banka was a shocking act that resulted in destruction of the economic foundation in this territory as well as plunder and impoverishment of small depositors, and which promoted

violence, employed by the International Community, as a problem-solving method.

Very few before Simpson supported the Herzegovinians' justified protests that even Croat(ian) political and media circles consider a priori, in the way of qualifying the looting of Hercegovacka Banka as a Croat interest. Simpson's statement, despite being his personal view, disturbed the international circles in BiH because it is now obvious that Simpson is right.

All the negative consequences of the Hercegovacka Banka raid are now apparent. Petritsch's statements that the aim was to punish the individuals who got rich illegally and who act politically destructive, really seem ridiculous. However, since the International Community is infallible, its leading officials dismiss the views of their former colleague as ungrounded.

Thus, the Head of the OSCE Mission in BiH, Robert Beecroft, claims to be disappointed at Simpson's statements, adhering to the assertion that there are bad guys in BiH that need to be eliminated from the political life.

He seems to have had in mind the leaders of the Croat people in BiH who advocate Croat self-rule and against whom the Cantonal Prosecutor's Office in Sarajevo launched an investigation over the alleged undermining of the Federation. This refers to the dismissed Member of the BiH Presidency, Ante Jelavic, and another six high-ranking Croat officials.

Launching of the investigative procedure against Jelavic and the others is, in fact, only a continuation of the story of Hercegovacka Banka and Croat self-rule. Having realised the destruction of the Bank did not result in a punishment of those particular officials, as had been promised, but a punishment of the whole people, the international administrators initiated an investigation and criminal charges

against them.

It is interesting that the procedure was assigned to the Cantonal Court in Sarajevo although it is the Supreme Court that has the jurisdiction in this case. At the same time, the OSCE and the High Representative are washing their hands of the whole business, and OHR Spokesperson Avis Benes says she expects that the judiciary of the Sarajevo Canton will do their job professionally and independently.

“Initiating of an investigation against Jelavic and the other advocates of Croat self-rule is another mistake of the International Community, which is trying at any cost to get rid of the politically unsuitable politicians as soon as possible, regardless of the reputation they enjoy with the people.”

Milos next lists the results of a survey conducted by the Split-based ‘Puls’ Agency for the needs of the State Department, and says those results show that the HDZ is still the most popular Croat party and Ante Jelavic, supported by 70% of the Croats interviewed, the most popular politician. On the other hand, the “co-operative” Croat politicians of the Alliance, says Milos, lost the little sympathy they used to have and 53% of those interviewed had a negative opinion about the Federation President Karlo Filipovic and 73% of them had a negative opinion about Ivo Komsic, the Chair of the Federation House of Peoples.

“All this shows that BiH Croats and the International Community are in a tragic disagreement and that they dislike each other both publicly and secretly. That would not be that much of a problem if the international administrators of BiH were not using all means available to try and make Croats love themselves, when they should better take into account the opinion of the majority of Croats. The policy of punishing their leaders additionally tightens the relations since it turns ‘criminals’ into heroes.

Investigation launching against the reputable Croat leaders, and at that, in Sarajevo and for the political statements that resemble a verbal offense, which Croats are very sensitive about since many of them served prison sentences on that basis during the communist times, is a planned political act that will not solve the problem. On the contrary.

Unfortunately, it is the people that will have to bear most of the consequences," concludes the editorial.

***Vecernji List:* Who is expelling mujahedeens to amnesty their crimes in BiH?**

Written by I. Barbaric

The editorial reads the presence of mujahedeens is a very delicate issue for the BiH authorities because it is well known that they committed atrocious crimes against Croats during the war in Central Bosnia and elsewhere.

Barbaric mentions a statement by Muhamed Besic, the Federation Minister of Interior pertaining to the surrender of the three BiH Army officers to the ICTY, and marks it as a scandalous one, adding that still, it shows how awkward is the situation that the current Federation authorities are in. What Besic stated was that the BiH Army did not have a genocide and prison camp promoting system, but that one cannot say there were no incidents on the part of the BiH Army, which Besic called "isolated incidents."

Another thing that could be unpleasant for the current authorities, says Barbaric, is the fact that the former Commander of the BiH Army Headquarters, General Sefer Halilovic, is the Minister of Refugees in the BiH Council of Ministers.

"One cannot escape the conclusion that expulsion of mujahedeens from BiH would make everyone, except for the families of numerous victims, rub their hands with

satisfaction because they would be rid of unpleasant witnesses and crime perpetrators," comments the author in conclusion.

Vecernji List: Zone of Lawlessness and Arbitrariness

By Josip Muselimovic, a lawyer

What is one to do after returning from holidays to the zone of lawlessness and arbitrariness. How is one to resist the challenges of the lawyer's profession, personal dignity and pride and how is one to suffer and yet keep silent when other sides are mostly silent and in an undefined state of expectation.

In this short comment of mine, I will present our readers with a few topical cases that our reality is reflected by. The International Community, i.e. those who came here as heralds of personal freedoms and democratic traditions, have annulled the election will of one constituent people, removed its leading officials and absolute election winners, stripping them of election mandates, and drove a number of its officials away with a very odd slave-holding clause "I bar them from holding any other official or elected public office, except if or when I approve it by a subsequent decision." Such decisions are signed by the High Representative for BiH and published in the Federation Official Gazette. What could an unfortunate person, barred from holding any official or elected public office, do then? Such a shocking decision has disturbed no one, but a few honourable exceptions among politicians, naturally outside of the current authorities and the highest clerical dignitaries, cardinals and bishops.

Petritsch granted full immunity from criminal prosecution (regardless of what they do) to those who set off, at the break of the day, for a raid of private property and Hercegovacka Banka, and he exempted all other requests, requests from the clients and depositors, from the jurisdiction of BiH courts.

Some light on this gloomy reality was shed by an honourable decision of the BiH Constitutional Court, which, while adopting an appeal of a defense council, declared that cases should be processed by respective courts that are realistically and locally competent to deal with them. The High Representative has recently passed and published a new law that enables certain cases to be allocated, within the same entity, to a court other than the one where they were originally scheduled to be tried. Arbitrariness and lawlessness at every step.

After all, is our University teacher and constitutional law professor Dr. Zvonko Miljko not right when he says that there are all sorts of curses in our people but that the worst of them all is “may you be a lawyer in the post-Dayton Bosnia.”

Describing the arrival of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Ivo Andric tells there came a rather short, pale-faced, beardless and mustacheless Austrian from Carinthia to be the governor of Otes (a district seat near Sarajevo). Describing his behaviour and law imposition, Andric says he had to be replaced after two years. As he was leaving the position, disappointed and discontent, he firmly believed those he left behind were incorrigibly primitive natives. In the whole of Otes, says Andric, everyone was deeply convinced that they were governed for two years by a crazy, completely crazy and mentally incompetent person. O tempora, o mores.