

Interview: Wilfred Martens, Police Restructuring Commission Chair: “RS MoI Will Have Important Role in State Police Structure”

*Operative control over police will be completely separated from political control and policy creation * There was no agreement, therefore I suggested three maps to the OHR * Police officers who will lose their jobs should receive severance pay*

PRC Chair Wilfred Martens denies BiH police experts' claims that stronger political control over police will be imposed through Police Board.

Participants at the Vlastic meeting agreed that this Board's tasks would be budget planning for the police and participation in appointment of management. For people from the police this is enough to be worried.

Martens claims that Police Board and other things agreed at Vlastic are fully in line with Commission's report and do not contradict concept of single police structure.

Consensus in police

«I would not have accepted the Police Board proposal if it would damage the integrity of the report and it would not have received the support of Javier Solana and Ollie Rehn if it did deviate from the single structure.», ka'e Martens.

He explains that principles of policing, e.g. focusing on drug trafficking, were made by BiH representatives.

«Under the new structure this is ultimately the responsibility of the Minister of Security, working together with the Police Board, your neighbours in the region, the EU and so on. This agreed policy is then passed on to professional policemen to make operational. It is they who manage the operational elements of police work; the directors of SIPA, the SBS and the Directors of the local police regional who co-ordinate their efforts. They work with the Community oversight councils who in turn can influence the policy making element», navodi Martens.

Oslobodjenje: You have said that what the politicians agreed on Vlašić is consistent with the EU policing standards. However, the principle of decision-making by consensus in the Police Board, according to what the professionals in this field say, is not characteristic to any modern police organization in the world?

Wilfred Martens: Not true: it is normal for consensus to be sought in policy making; BiH is a decentralised state after-all. However, there is no suggestion that operational policing will be conducted on the basis of consensus. Many critics of the Agreement have completely failed to understand this. Policy-making and operational policing are two different areas. Remember that in this new system, operational control of policing is completely separate from political oversight and policy making. The Conference of Directors and Commissioners will co-ordinate operational efforts. Operational decisions will be based on operational necessity – not consensus.

Oslobodjenje: The map with five police regions is the only map that guarantees functional policing, which would not be predominantly Bosniak, or Serb, or Croat. Why then do the highest international representatives give priority to the model with nine plus one regions, which, actually, maintains the ethnic division of the country?

Wilfred Martens: The 5 regions, the 9+1, and the 11-region map were possibilities, which met the technical requirements outlined by the policing professionals in the PRC. I do not exclude the possibility that there may be others too. There was a genuine debate among policing professionals in the Commission on which territorial breakdown would be best. No conclusive agreement was reached by the professionals, which is why I proposed three possible maps to the High Representative

It is important now for your politicians to come to a conclusion, which is based on technical criteria that make sense for police work. Only in this way can one ensure effective safeguards against undue political interference in operational policing all together.

Oslobodjenje: Considering that the International Community insists on reducing the cost of the institutions in this country, how come, then, that the existence of the RS MUP is accepted if it will not have police powers?

Wilfred Martens: It was not the PRC's mandate to close the Entity MoIs – but if the Entities decide to do so it is up to them. The proposed single structure will in itself generate very significant savings of the taxpayer's money.

Fair severance pay

Oslobodjenje: What will the RS MUP do after the establishment of the State-level police?

Wilfred Martens: There will continue to be a role for the Ministry's of interior and the RS Authorities themselves are most competent to answer this question for you. However, the entity and cantonal institutions, including the RS MUP will continue to play significant role through the newly agreed State level structures – that was agreed at Vlasica.

Oslobodjenje: How many police officers will lose their jobs after the reform of police structures in BiH and how many members will the state police have?

Wilfred Martens: A review will need to be conducted, but the PRC recommended that any redundancies should be supported by a just compensation package. What happens next will need to be worked out by your politicians.

Oslobodjenje: When will, for example, a police officer from Sarajevo be able to chase criminals in East Sarajevo without impediments, and vice versa?

Wilfred Martens: The primary object of this effort is to give the people of BiH a police service that protects them from crime. It is to ensure that police in BiH have the resources they need to catch criminals and that BiH develops a single law enforcement space to fight back against the single criminal space that already exists. Even now your law enforcement agencies try to co-operate on an informal basis, after all they are professionals, but even they will tell you that there is no system for this type of work. We will only get an idea of when this reform will come into effect after the final round of talks due to start on the 16th as I understand the leaders of your political parties will then agree on an implementation plan.

Commissioner Olli Rehn expects firm agreement

I saw in Brussels a clear understanding that without this reform, making a reality of BiH's EU aspirations would be impossible. This coupled with the willingness to compromise that I witnessed on Vlasica a few days ago shows that your politicians can make this important step towards EU accession. Commissioner Rehn said that now is the time for concrete action has come. He said that he expects a solid,

comprehensive agreement at the Parliamentary level.—I do not think the message could be more clear.