

OHR BiH Media Round-up, 11/7/2002

Print Media Headlines

Oslobodjenje: AM-SPED – Lagumdzija turned down the bribe and started the investigation; First burials in Srebrenica by the end of the summer

Dnevni Avaz: AM-SPED – Alija Behmen – we filed charges against Bralo because of the bribe; Srebrenica

Jutarnje Novine: Srebrenica – commemoration day

Glas srpski: BiH Foreign Ministry fires Darko Trifunovic – Misic is more powerful than the law; BiH Presidency session – Radisic outvoted again; RS customs officers returned to their jobs

Nezavisne novine: 10,000 people evacuated in Japan because of the typhoon; Kostunica's Advisor says all sides should say they are sorry for war in BiH

Vecernji List: Federation Defense Ministry fails to pay taxes on exported guns

Dnevni List: Federation deputy Defense Minister smuggles 80,000 guns to the US

Financial Scandals and Affairs

AM-SPED

In a front page article in **Oslobodjenje**, Azhar Kalamujic and Senka Kurtovic write that the SDP leader, **Zlatko Lagumdzija**, confirmed that he and the Federation Prime Minister, **Alija Behmen**, were offered a 21 million KM bribe by **Tino Bralo**, the owner of AM-SPED company in exchange for his funds being de-blocked. *"When I found out about this offer, I immediately informed four relevant persons from the Anti-terrorism taskforce and, together with Alija Behmen, asked them to form a very tight team which would investigate this matter...and, if the charges prove to be true, to initiate legal proceedings against persons involved,"* Lagumdzija told the daily. *"I*

really hope that we will manage to save the millions belonging to tax payers and I also hope that this case will be a good message to everyone that we are not ready to a compromise when it comes to fight against any form of crime. I will never allow any sort of robbery to take place under umbrella of the SDP regardless of the price offered to us."

In a statement for **Dnevni Avaz** (also front page, by Almina Pilav), the Federation Prime Minister, **Alija Behmen**, also confirmed that he and Lagumdzija have been offered a bribe by Tino Bralo. *"That information is correct. Fifteen days ago, he offered us a bribe via his mediator, saying this would be a support for our pre-election campaign. This is the most typical example of corruption in the public sector,"* said Behmen. The daily quotes **Bralo**, however, as rejecting all accusations and saying that he is a victim of inter-party conflicts. *"I have never in my life set down with Behmen or Lagumdzija, I don't even know these people. It is a complete nonsense that I offered them a multimillion bribe. I believe that some of these politicians are trying to topple each other by using me,"* Bralo told Avaz. He also rejected allegations that he is the actual owner of AM-SPED company, but said that he has rights to 42 million KM of funds frozen in "various criminal activities," as Oslobodjenje noted.

At a press conference held in Sarajevo, the NHI leader, **Kresimir Zubak**, said that the NHI will sue Oslobodjenje because of the article in which it is alleged that Tino Bralo paid 400,000 KM to this party in exchange for settling the AM-SPED affair. *"This is an utter lie published in the pre-election period and which will be indescribably detrimental to the NHI. All our accounts are open to public, and all our financial documentation will be submitted to the relevant courts. Since its formation until today, the NHI never received a block sum of 400,000 KM, in particular not in a form of a donation,"* said Zubak, adding that this campaign has its political background, but refused to be more precise.

(**Oslobodjenje** and **Avaz** carry Zubak's statement)

Meanwhile, the former Federation Finance Minister, **Nikola Grabovac**, who was removed by the High Representative for his involvement in the AM-SPED affair, had on Wednesday his first hearing before the Cantonal Court in Sarajevo. According to Avaz, Grabovac claimed immunity and refused to give a statement. He told journalists gathered in front of the court building that he does not feel guilty on any charges and that he does not want to talk about the affair because of the "tremendous media campaign being directed at him." Grabovac also denied the claims that NHI received a donation of 400,000 KM from Tino Bralo. *"These claims are completely unfounded."* (**BHTV 1**, **FTV**, **Vecernji List (15)**, **Slobodna Dalmacija (16)**, **Jutarnji List (8)** also report on this item)

FEDERATION DEFENSE MINISTRY

Vecernji List (by Zdenko Jurilj) and **Dnevni List** (by Marko Markovic) report on their front pages about the alleged scandal in the Federation Ministry of Defense, which, according to the dailies, failed to pay taxes on 50,000 guns which were being exported to the US. The newspapers say that a contingent of 50,000 guns was bought in Yugoslavia by the UNITRADE company which had a task to transport the shipment to Ploce port and ensure their delivery to an American company in Florida. According to Jurilj and Markovic, the entire process was sanctioned by the Federation Ministry of Defense. In particular, the deputy Minister, Ferid Buljubasic, who wanted to evade paying 65% tax on the weapons, allegedly forged documents which now state that the arms were bought 20 years ago and that the UNITRADE has to pay only a 5% tax. **Dnevni List** reports that the Principal Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, was very upset when he received information that the Federation Defense Ministry was involved in this case and requested an immediate investigation.

In an interview with **Dnevni list** (page 5, conducted by

Miroslav Vasilj), **Mijo Anic**, the Federation Minister of Defense, said that he asked for a financial audit of the Bosniak component of the Federation Army. He said that his deputy, Ferid Buljubasic, was *"doing things behind his back and one-sidedly, which he interpreted as a direct attack against him (Anic) personally and the continuation of an organized persecution against Croats in the Government."*

CIPS

In today's **Dnevni Avaz** (p.2), Edina Sarac continues the CIPS (Citizens Identity Protection System) saga. She quotes a Minister from the BiH Council of Ministers who did not want to be named, but who argued that the entire involvement of the CoM in this project is somewhat confusing and dubious. *"At nearly all sessions when the CIPS was on the agenda, one could not figure anything out or make any coherent conclusions. Everything is 'wrapped' in such a way that one cannot figure out what it is all about,"* the source said, adding that he personally believes that the Council only wants to leave impressions that this state institutions is seriously engaged in the implementation of CIPS. *"However, in reality – this is completely opposite. There were never any concrete results."* The daily notes that the discussion on CIPS project should be included on the agenda of today's CoM session, when this *"confusing story could finally be unraveled."*

In a statement for **Dnevni Avaz** (p.2), **Jadranko Prlic**, the leader of the ProEns party and a deputy Minister in the CoM, said that he does not have any connections with the Optima company, which has been entrusted with designing software for the CIPS. *"I, personally, have no connections with that company. However, since 1990, my wife is a co-owner of Optima and that is my only connection. The fact that this company got the job, and that my wife is one of its co-owners has absolutely nothing to do with me,"* Prlic told the daily.

The owner of the Strom Telecom company, **Miodrag Skrbic**, (also

a brother of Mirko Skrbic – the director of the CIPS project) who has also been named by Avaz as being in charge of the implementation of one aspect of the CIPS, told the daily that he and his company have nothing to do with the project. *“My only connection with this is my brother,”* Skrbic said.

Glas srpski (p.3) and Nezavisne novine (p.3) quotes the Head of the Personnel Department with the RS Customs Administration, **Milomirka Dosenovic**, as saying that the RS Government and the RS Customs Administration (RS CA) agreed that 22 employees of the RS Customs Administration, who were suspended after the CAFA0 report had been released, be returned to their jobs. Dosenovic said that this decision is in accordance with the Law on RS Customs Administration and the Book of Rules on the disciplinary and material responsibility of customs officers. *“The RS Government and the RS Customs Administration agreed that the investigation into this case continues. However, given that after a month and a half the investigation has not showed that there is enough evidence to initiate disciplinary procedure against these 22 employees, we have decided to return these people to their jobs, which is in line with the Book of Rules”,* said Dosenovic. She said that 6 employees, who held executive positions within the RS Customs Administration, will be given some other jobs in the RS CA and will not be returned to their previous jobs. (**RTRS** and **FTV** also report on this item)

A **poll** conducted by **Dnevni Avaz** shows that 68% of BiH citizens believe that state authorities are not doing enough to fight corruption. According to a poll, only 12% of the polled citizens think that authorities have a positive record, while almost 20% have no opinion on the matter. The telephone poll was conducted among 300 individuals in Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar using a method of random sampling.

Srebrenica Commemoration

Dnevni Avaz, Oslobodjenje and Jutarnje Novine report on their

front pages on Thursday about the commemoration ceremony which will be held in Potocari near Srebrenica later today to mark the seventh anniversary from the massacre. RS police said on Tuesday that they are confident that enough men will be deployed for the ceremony which will be attended by some 5,000 people.

UN mission in BiH

The United States offered a new compromise to the UN Security Council Wednesday, in a move to end the impasse caused by its staunch opposition to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The new proposal came after almost six hours of criticisms and pleas from 35 countries for a change in the US position, in an open special session of the council Wednesday. In the new draft, the US proposes that immunity be granted on a yearly basis, and be subject to an annual Security Council vote. British ambassador to the United Nations, Jeremy Greenstock, who holds the revolving council presidency, said Wednesday that council members now "wish to send the text back to their capitals to take instruction." Canada's ambassador to the world body, Paul Heinbecker, the first to speak at Wednesday's session, warned against any compromise that would place US peacekeepers outside the realm of prosecution by the court.

(**AFP, Reuters**)

US Ambassador to BiH, Clifford Bond, visited yesterday the chairman of the BiH Presidency, Beriz Belkic, and discussed with him the further engagement of the US in BiH. Ambassador Bond stressed that it is a US interest to retain a strong presence in BiH and help the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, despite the final decision of the UN Security Council about the extension of the UN mission's mandate in BiH. (**Dnevni Avaz** p.2)

BiH State-level issues

Glas srpski reports (**front page**) that at yesterday's session of the BiH Presidency the Serb member of the Presidency, Zivko Radisic, was "again outvoted by other two Presidency members, Beriz Belkic and Jozo Krizanovic." Radisic did not support the item according to which the BiH Presidency will discuss the

proposed contract on hiring and funding foreign experts who will represent BiH in the lawsuit against the FRY. The paper quotes Radisic's Advisor Boris Kujundzic as saying that Belkic and Krizanovic requested the Council of Ministers that the money for foreign experts is set aside from the budgetary reserves of the BiH common institutions. (All other RS and Sarajevo media report on the session of the BiH Presidency, however do not argue that Radisic was outvoted)

BiH Presidency agreed yesterday on a platform of the joint meeting of the presidents of BiH, Yugoslavia and Croatia which is scheduled for July 15 in Sarajevo. According to Belkic, despite the previous statements, the BIH Presidency will not ask the FRY President, Vojislav Kostunica, to apologize for events in BiH. *"I personally believe that Kostunica should apologize, however, there will be years before a Willy Brandt from Yugoslavia appear and apologize for the lives lost in BiH,"* said the Presidency chairman, Beriz Belkic. (**Oslobodjenje** p. 3)

In a statement for **Dnevni Avaz** (p. 3), SDP's **Miro Lazic** said that the refusal of the FRY President, **Vojislav Kostunica**, to apologize for suffering of BiH citizens between 1992-95 shows "the lack of political and statesmanship judgement of the Yugoslav president." *"Kostunica should get enough strength and courage to apologize, as this would only mean that he is distancing himself from the catastrophic policy of his predecessor,"* said Lazic.

Glas srpski quotes (**front page**) the BiH Council of Minister Chairman, **Dragan Mikerevic**, as saying that the First Secretary of the BiH Mission to the United Nations Darko Trifunovic has been fired because of his personal conflict with BiH Deputy Foreign Minister Ivica Misic. According to a report, which Misic submitted to the Council of Ministers, Trifunovic has been fired because he is a FRY citizen. *"BiH Foreign Ministry proved that Trifunovic is a FRY citizens, but it did not prove that he does not have BiH or RS citizenship. Trifunovic was fired because he is a FRY citizens, which is not in accordance*

with the Law", said Mikerevic. He also said that the Council of Ministers does not have a right to interfere in the work of the BiH Foreign Ministry and especially not in the work of the diplomatic and consular network, because it is the responsibility of the BiH Presidency. Glas srpski further states that Trifunovic was fired because he has been privy to irregularities in the work of the BiH Mission to the UN. On several occasions he pointed out that some Bosniak diplomats, such as Safet Catovic, have links with terrorist organizations.

Federation Forestry Issues

Dnevni list (page 2) carries BiH Federation Prime Minister **Alija Behmen** as saying that he was dissatisfied that the activities such as the request for the removal of the BiH Federation Minister of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry **Behija Hadzihajdarevic** overshadow the "enormous success" of the BiH Federation Government and the Parliament, which had been achieved with the passage of the law on forests. In his reply to Ashdown, Behmen said that he did not want to get into expert commentaries of the explanation submitted by Hadzihajdarevic, which was also sent to the High Representative.

"I am not satisfied that the enormous success of the Government and the Parliament, that passed the law on forests after 13 years, has been overshadowed by this," Behmen said.

Electronic Media Headlines

BHTV 1

- Public debate about the UN mission in BiH/ICC issues in the UN Security Council
- BiH Presidency determines the platform for talks with Kostunica and Mesic
- NATO Secretary General calls on war criminals to surrender to the ICTY

FTV

- Federation Customs Administration director removes administrator of Orasje customs office
- Former Federation Finance Minister Nikola Grabovac appears before Cantonal Court in Sarajevo, cites immunity
- NHI's Kresimir Zubak says party will sue Oslobodjenje, denies receiving 400,000 KM donation from AM-SPED owner

RTRS

- BiH Presidency determines the platform for talks with Kostunica and Mesic
- US Ambassador to BiH says that Security Council's decision on UN mission will not affect the US presence in BiH
- ICTY-related issues: Plavsic and Krajisnik to face trial in November