OHR BiH Media Round-up, 17/12/2002

CROAT RADIO HERCEG-BOSNA (18,00 hrs)	**BH TV 1** (19,00 hrs)	**FED TV** (19,30 hrs)	**RT RS** (19,30)
HVO veterans protests	Trial of Biljana Plavsic started today in the Hague	Trial of Biljana Plavsic	Trial of Biljana Plavsic
Christmas crèche burnt set on fire in Mostar	Report on Hercegovacka Banka completed	Herecegovacka Bank report presentation	Greek delegation visits RS
Hercegovacka Bank report presentation	Sarajevo special policemen acquitted	HVO veterans protests	Hercegovacka Bank report
FBiH Chamber of Commerce predicts economic collapse		Acquittal of Sarajevo Canton special policemen	Dragan Davidovic appointed new acting director of RTRS

Oslobodjenje	HVO veterans/war invalids came out at roads in FBiH – a whole day blockage of roads as of Thursday; 19 Sarajevo Canton special policemen acquitted; Hercegovacka Bank: KM 216 million embezzled; Ruling in Plavsic case to be announced tomorrow: Plavsic was supporting the division of BiH
Dnevni Avaz	SDA proposes new premier: Hadzipasic nominated for the FBiH PM designate; Report on Hercegovacka Bank: KM 216 million stolen from the Croat people; Plavsic accuses Karadzic and Milosevic; The Court acquitted Sarajevo special policemen
Dnevni List	Toby Robinson ended up investigation on Hercegovacka Bank case: 216 million Marks embezzled through bank

Vecernji List	As of Thursday even bigger protests because disability allowances were not paid: HIDRA is closing border crossings and roads
Slobodna Dalmacija	Associations of war victims on roads because of unpaid disability allowances: Border crossings and roads blocked for two hours”
Glas Srpski	No breathing space for refugees and displaced persons: The law says – eviction!; Banja Luka: “Banjalucanka” crops in champion’s league
Nezavisne Novine	ICTY discusses sentence to Biljana Plavsic: Admission of guilt has a special meaning; Protest of HVIDRA in BiH Federation: Through road blockades to disability allowances; RS Tax Administration announces blockade of “Birac”; Toby Robinson on investigation in Hercegovacka Bank: 216 million DM misspend
FRY Nacional	The Hague will use Biljana Plavsic’s plea of guilty as a proof against Milosevic and Mladic
Blic	1.2 million people could stay without BiH citizenship; Due to archeological excavation building of a mosque stopped
Vecernje Novosti	Plavsic’s trial: No forgiveness?

Hercegovacka Bank report	
Report presented yesterday in Mostar	The Provisional Administrator of the Hercegovacka Bank dd Mostar, Toby Robinson, on Monday presented the results of an investigation into the bank’s dealings in Mostar. The findings point to the fact that at least DM 216m have been embezzled. The funds in question were provided by the Croatian government to pay the wages of members of the Croat Defence Council (HVO), veterans’ benefits and compensation to the families of fallen soldiers, which they had never received. The funds were used in an attempt to unlawfully amend the BiH Constitution and for the personal use of certain founders of the Hercegovacka Banka and a number of lobbies, Robinson told journalists.

HR considering the report	The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will consider the Report issued on Monday by the Provisional Administrator of the Hercegovacka Banka, and take a decision on the future of the Bank, probably before the end of the year. Under the terms of the FBiH Law on Banks, the High Representative has to choose one of three options: liquidating the Bank, re-capitalizing and restructuring the Bank, and third, selling the Bank. The High Representative's decision will be based on the best interests first and foremost of the depositors; the best interests of the local economy; and what is necessary to ensure the law is upheld and the integrity of both the banking system and the Constitution are maintained, according to the Chief OHR Spokesman, Julian Braithwaite. (Dnevni Avaz, p 5, mentioned on the front page: "KM 216 million stolen from the Croat people, Oslobodjenje, p 6, mentioned on the front page: "KM 216 million embezzled", Nezavisne Novine, p 4)

CRO Press on Hercegovacka Bank report presentation	Jutarnji list (p 7, "Investigation into the Hercegovacka banka completed", by S.P.), Slobodna Dalmacija (front page & p 14, "Hercegovacka banka would have fallen apart by itself", by Miroslav Landeka), Dnevni list (front page & p 5, "216 million Marks embezzled through the Bank", by J.D.) and Vecernji list (front page & p 2, "216 million Marks of the Republic of Croatia's money, meant for the HVO, misappropriated", by Zoran Kresic) report that at yesterday's press conference in Mostar, the Report and conclusions of the investigation into the Hercegovacka bank were announced. Reporting that it was underlined the Bank was insolvent on April 6, 2001, all the 4 media reports carry that what made the investigation difficult is a complex network of subsidiaries, as well as many activities aimed at hiding the way business was run. All the 4 reports also emphasise Toby Robinson's statement that the amount of some 216 million KM, which Croatia allocated as assistance to HVO members and their families, was re-directed for purposes other than the original one. Noting the Report has already been delivered to the High Representative and that a copy is about to be handed over to the FBiH Prosecutor's Office, it is reported that in this Bank's case many provisions of the Law on Banking were violated. Carrying that it has been reported that the Bank was also used for forcible change of the BiH Constitution, VL comments this is obviously an allusion to the establishment of the Croat self-rule. VL also referred to the part of the Report which refers to the Hercegovina Holding project, it carries the names of high-ranking HDZ officials that are brought into connection with the Bank, and the special part of the Report on the relation between the bank and the shareholders – companies, sports clubs, various Foundations. VL also carries that, describing the relation with the Mondo company, "which was established by the HDZ and which was the bank's shareholder", Robinson notes that Dragan Covic, in his capacity of Soko director, liquidated the company. VL, DL and SD carry Julian Braithwaite as saying that the High Representative will, most probably by the end of the year, make the decision on the Bank and choose between the 3 options available. VL also reports that Braithwaite, having been asked by a journalist whether the Report would be handed over to the Republic of Croatia's Government, has stated that it would be delivered to all the parties for which it is relevant to have it. VL also carries that Braithwaite has refuted the possibility of connection between the timing of publishing the Report and the establishment of the BiH authorities, in which, VL comments, HDZBiH, which is being brought into connection with the Hercegovacka bank, should participate. VL also comments that the Bank's Provisional Administrator has at the press conference stated, what is contrary to the content of the Report, that it was the "most progressive bank in the BiH banking system", that it had the best branches network and that it played a significant role in economy of Herzegovina. Kresic thus wonders how come "the best bank was a threat to BiH". SD (page 16) carries that during the press conference of Hypo-Alpe-Adria Group Bank, which was held in the seat of this bank in Klagenfurt, Wolfgang Kulterer, the President of the Steering Board of Hypo-Alpe-Adria Group, stated among the other things that this bank is not interested in purchase of Hercegovacka Bank.

Trials; incidents

Trial of Biljana Plavsic before ICTY begins	Biljana Plavsic, the most senior official from the former Yugoslavia to plead guilty before the UN war crimes court in The Hague, said former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic was the brains behind the campaign of ethnic cleansing in BiH, documents released on Monday show. Plavsic, who was one of wartime Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic's closest allies, said Milosevic worked closely with the Bosnian Serb leadership in the planning and execution of wide-spread persecutions of non-Serbs. The 72-year-old former biology professor, the first woman to appear before the war crimes tribunal. In October she changed her plea to guilty on the charge of persecution and in exchange charges of genocide during the 1992-95 BiH war were dropped. The former RS president is the highest ranking former Yugoslav official to acknowledge her role in Europe's bloodiest conflict since World War II, in which an estimated 200,000 people were killed. She appeared before the court on Monday in the last hearing before she will be sentenced. The verdict will not follow immediately after the three-day hearing but will be handed down at a later date. (AFP, Oslobodjenje, p 7, mentioned on the front page, Dnevni Avaz, p 8, mentioned on the front page, Nacional p 4 headline "Plavsic severely accused Milosevic and Karadzic', Vecernje Novosti p 10 headline 'Appraisals without forgiveness', Blic p 17 headline 'She accused Milosevic of ethnical cleansing') Nezavisne Novine, p 3, and Glas Srpski, p 3 – headline: Plavsic blames everyone, also reported on the issue. Amongst others, the SNSD leader, Milorad Dodik, appeared on Monday in the courtroom as defense witness. Dodik testified on his contacts with Biljana Plavsic and her political activities during and after the war. Dodik spoke about Plavsic's opposing the SDS policy and their joint efforts and engagement in implementation of the DPA. According to Dodik, the role that Plavsic played at the time preserved the Dayton Agreement. Vecernje Novosti reports that the trial was very well prepared performance directed by the Prosecution, which could be concluded from numerous sentences stated by witnesses and even by the prosecutor that all started with: "Yesterday, when we talked about this…" "Biljana Plavsic will not testify in Milosevic's trial, but there is a possibility that she will testify in Krajisnik case as a witness of defence. She is determined not to accuse any of former RS officials," Jezdimir Spasojevic, member of the SNS Main Board, said. (Blic p 17) Legal advisor of Slobodan Milosevic, Moma Raicevic, said that Plavsic's admission of guilt was not her individual decision, because it would reflect on the cases against Radovan Karadzic, Ratko Mladic and Slobodan Milosevic. Raicevic said that the Hague Prosecution would use her guilt plea as a proof that there was a chain of command and connection between the RS and Yugoslav authorities in organising crimes against non-Serbs in BiH. According to Raicevic, Plavsic worked during the war for foreign masterminds / wire-pullers and against national interests. "It is well known her famous sentence that she would sacrifice a half of Serb population if necessary for benefit of war goals. Milosevic was against that disastrous policy," Raicevic said. (FRY Nacional p 4) Vecernji List (front and page 15, "Madleine Albright defends Biljana Plavsic"), Vjesnik (page 2, "Plavsic: Milosevic was initiator and executor of ethnic cleansing policy in BiH"), Jutarnji List (front and page 8, "Secret deal with The Hague: B. Plavsic accused Milosevic of ethnic cleansing"), Dnevni List (page 10, "Discussion on sentence against Biljana Plavsic started") and Slobodna Dalmacija (page 7, "Madleiane Albright will testify in favor of Biljana Plavsic") carry that the final hearing in the case of Biljana Plavsic started in The Hague.

RS sends files on two Croat war crime suspects to Hague tribunal	The office of the RS Government for relations with the ICTY forwarded on Monday criminal files against war crime suspects Tomo and Anto Djojic to the Banja Luka office of the Tribunal. A statement released by the RS Government's office says that the suspects – as members of an informal group called Vatreni konji [Horses of Fire] operating within the 102nd Odzak brigade of the Croat Defence Council [HVO] between May and June 1992 took part in massive illegal arrests of Serb civilians in Novi Grad and the surrounding area and their deportation to collection camps in the elementary school in Odzak and Strolit factory in Odzak and further to a camp in Srpski Brod. (Blic p 7)
Sarajevo court acquits 19 police charged with using excessive force	Nineteen special police officers – who had been charged with inflicting serious bodily injuries, carrying out unlawful arrests and using excessive force in the Zujevina action were acquitted on Monday. The International Police Task Force (IPTF) has refused to comment until tomorrow as to whether the special police officers would get back their certificates and whether they will be readmitted to work. After 60 hearings and over 40 witness testimonies over the past two years – this is how long the trial lasted – the judge at the Sarajevo second municipal court, Vermina Hadzihasanovic, announced the following: "Pursuant to Article 345, Paragraph 3 of the Penal Code, they are acquitted." In August 1999 special police units carried out an action in the Zujevina restaurant, wearing masks and without identification badges. Charges were pressed against 19 of them who were under suspicion of beating and maltreating some of those arrested in the action. (Dnevni Avaz, p 27, mentioned on the front page, Oslobodjenje, p 3, mentioned on the front page)
Christmas manger set on fire in Mostar square	The police in Mostar have arrested three persons who are suspected of setting on fire the traditional Christmas manger on Rondo Square in the centre of Mostar last night, the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Interior Ministry has confirmed. Apostolic nuncio in BiH Giuseppe Leanza, Mostar bishop Monsignor Ratko Peric, and the Mostar political leaders visited the spot where the Christmas manger was set alight. Setting the Christmas manger on fire is a provocative and irresponsible act, the Mostar Office of the High Representative said. (BHTV 1, Oslobodjenje, p 3, mentioned on the front page, Nezavisne Novine, p 3) Vecernji List (front and page 5, "Muslims burnt down Nativity Scene in Mostar"), Slobodna Dalmacija (front and page 17, "Catholics from Mostar appalled by crime on Square of Croat great men: Nativity Scene burnt down") and Dnevni List (front and page 13, "Nermin Mehic, Samir Serdarevic and Elmir Dzanko: Burnt down Nativity Scene using napalm") covered the incident that took place on Sunday night in Mostar when the Nativity Scene was burnt down. VL and SD carry a reaction of Neven Tomic, the Mostar Deputy Mayor (VL titled "OHR encouraged attackers", SD "Where is International Community now?"). Tomic says that during the last three weeks we have been witnesses of a horrible climate in Mostar that does not contribute at all to the normalization of the situation in Mostar and adds: "In spite of the fact that the City was warning of this situation, the OHR did not react. Exactly due to the fact that the OHR did not react, a support to inflammatory statements was given and all this resulted in burning down of the Nativity Scene."
Explosion in Trebinje	An explosive device was thrown at the family house of Junuz Budalica, in the Rosovac settlement of Trebinje municipality in the night between 14th and 15th October. The explosion caused significant material damage. The Public security center in Trebinje condemned the incident and announced that the police launched an investigation in order to find the perpetrators (Blic, p 7)

HVO veterans/war invalid protests

Announcement of whole-day protests as of Thursday	Vecernji List (front and page 3 and 14, by Zoran Kresic, “As of Thursday even bigger protests because of unpaid disability allowances: HVIDRA is closing border crossings and roads”), Jutarnji List (page 4, “Protest of HIDRA BiH on border crossing with Croatia”), Dnevni List (front and page 7, “Peaceful protest of HVIDRA and Association of Families of Fallen Defenders and Homeland War victims: Two-hours blockade of roads and border crossings), Vjesnik (page 2, “Members of HVIDRA and Associations of Fallen Defenders blocked border crossings and roads”) and Slobodna Dalmacija (front and pages 14 and 15, “Associations of war victims on roads because of unpaid disability allowances: Border crossings and roads blocked for two hours”) covered yesterday’s blockade of roads and border crossings organized by Associations resulting from Homeland War due to the fact that the Croat Homeland War victims did not receive their disability allowances. The victims announced that as of Thursday they would start with whole day blockades, which will last until they receive their disability allowances. (Oslobodjenje, front page, pages 4-5, Dnevni Avaz, p 11, mentioned on the front page also reported on the issue)

Slobodna Dalmacija: Blockages result of double standards	Slobodna Dalmacija (page 14 and 15, by Zvonimir Cilic) carries an editorial saying that the aforementioned blockades are the result of double standards that are being applied towards the Croat and Bosniak victims. The editorial also says: “The fact that there are false invalids and other victims, that there are various malverzations and dirty games is not disputable at all, however, the way in which Minister Hadzovic wants to resolve this issue is completely illegal and unacceptable.”

Establishment of the executive authorities

SDA nominates candidate for Federation prime minister	At a session in Sarajevo on Monday the presidency of the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) concluded that it should continue talks with partner parties on the formation of a parliamentary majority regarding the distribution of posts in the Council of Ministers, including the post of prime minister designate, until a comprehensive agreement is reached including posts in entity (Federation and RS) governments, SDA deputy chairman Elmir Jahic told Fena. The party decided that Ahmed Hadzipasic from Zenica should be SDA's candidate for Federation of BiH prime minister designate. Jahic reiterated that the chairman of the Council of Ministers should come from the SDA and added that the Monday's session did not discuss the name of a possible candidate for this office. According to him, the party will carry out additional consultations and talks with partner political parties tomorrow, given that the BiH Presidency session is to be held on Wednesday. (FENA, Dnevni Avaz, front page, p 2, Oslobodjenje, p 8)

BiH Presidency agrees to nominate Croat as prime minister designate	Newly-elected members of the Bosnia and Hercegovina Presidency Dragan Covic (from the Croatian Democratic Union – HDZ), Sulejman Tihic (from the Party of Democratic Action – SDA) and Mirko Sarovic agreed on Monday that as the collective head of state they nominate acting chairman of the HDZ of BiH Barisa Colak as chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers in the next four-year term, Dragan Covic told Croat Mostar TV late on Monday. According to Covic, this agreement should be examined by the three national parties by December 18 at the latest, when the BiH Parliamentary Assembly is to discuss the appointment of a new chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers. Prior to this agreement in the BiH Presidency, SDA leaders publicly demanded that this office be given to a candidate from the Bosniak nation. (FENA, Dnevni Avaz, p 2, Oslobodjenje, p 8, Slobodna Dalmacija, last page) The Chairman of the BiH Presidency, Mirko Sarovic, announced that he will, on behalf of the Presidency, announce the name of the new Council of Ministers designate on Tuesday (Glas Srpski, p 3, Nezavisne Novine, p 7). According to Sarovic, the new BiH Foreign Minister will be of the Serb nationality.
Mikerevic to start talks on RS Government composition this week	High official of PDP, Branko Dokic, stated that the RS PM designate, Dragan Mikerevic, should begin negotiations with political parties on the composition of his cabinet during the course of this week (Nezavisne Novine, p 7, Glas Srpski, p 5).

VAT

VAT presentation at Banja Luka Faculty of Economics	Both Banja Luka dailies report (Glas Srpski, p 2 by Milenko Sajic, Nezavisne Novine, p 11) on yesterday's presentation of VAT at Banja Luka Faculty of Economics. Explaining the VAT to students, professors and entrepreneurs, the OHR Tax Expert, Mark Campbell, stated that some 18 months are needed for introduction of VAT and that the application of it may begin in 2005. It was stressed out at the presentation that the income collected through VAT belongs to both entities, RS and BiH Federation, and not to the joint institutions as it was misinterpreted in public. (Dnevni Avaz, p 8: New tax system to increase income of the entities") Dnevni List (p 12, Onasa report, "Mark Campbell, representative of OHR Economic Department: VAT cannot be realized if there are two accounting systems") carries Mark Campbell of OHR Banja Luka Economy Section as saying that VAT in BiH can function only if it is introduced as a unified system.

Implementation of property laws

Evictions in RS to continue	Glas Srpski (cover page) reports that “forceful evictions of refugees and displaced persons from other people’s property will continue”. In a nutshell, this is the answer of RS Minister for Refugees and Displaced Persons, Mico Micic, and OHR to the request of the Coordination body of refugee associations to stop the evictions during winter. The daily quotes Micic as saying: “Due to the new strategy in the implementation of property laws, the evictions cannot stop. We will try to provide temporary accommodation to every refugee family that is evicted.” The OHR Spokeswoman, Sonja Pastuovic, leaves no room for dilemma: “The right to return is a right that cannot be postponed any longer. Property laws are clear and local authorities are responsible for the implementation. The Ministry for Refugees and Displaced persons should do everything in its power to implement property laws.” (FRY Nacional, p 11)