OHR BiH Media Round-up, 18/12/2002

CROAT RADIO HERCEG-BOSNA (18,00 hrs)	**BH TV 1** (19,00 hrs)	**FED TV** (19,30 hrs)	**RT RS** (19,30)
HR proclaimed Federal Budget for next year	BiH Parliament has not passed the Citizenship Law	Fresh milk scandal in Slovenia	Biljana Plavsic confessed crimes against humanity
Suspects detained for setting on fire Nativity Scene in Mostar	HR proclaimed Federal Budget for 2003	22 Sarajevo special policemen left without certificates	HR: BH Parliament should be driving force of reforms
HVO veterans continue with blockades of roads	Mladen Ivanic assessed single PDV would make an argument in BiH	FRY ratified the Dayton Peace Accord	BiH HoR Speaker requested HR to impose the law on citizenship
Mostar University marked 25th anniversary	Yugoslavia ratified Dayton Peace Accord	BiH House of Representatives has not adopted the Law on Citizenship	Role of the BiH Standing Military Committee enforced

Oslobodjenje	Bitterness even after acquittal – Celo offers bodyguard job to special policemen; Hercegovacka Bank report – Money was controlled by Jelavic, Prce and Rojs; Dual citizenship – Deputies from RS rejected the Law

Dnevni Avaz	Interview with Paddy Ashdown – It is not my job to choose the prime minister; Sarajevo special policemen to lodge complaint to UN Security Council
Dnevni List	Fourth session of BiH Parliament held: Ashdown will have to impose law on dual citizenship
Vecernji List	How will OHR solve case of the blocked bank: Hercegovacka bank into receivership
Slobodna Dalmacija	Paddy Ashdown will proclaim law on changes to regulations on dual citizenship at the last moment: BiH almost lost half a million citizens
Glas Srpski	RS Anti Money Laundering Department identifies 250 million suspicious money transactions; Paddy Ashdown – Changes or failure
Nezavisne Novine	Paddy Ashdown addresses BiH Parliament – Reforms will be implemented either by BiH authorities or by OHR; Plavsic seeks justice for herself and innocent victims of war
Vecernje Novosti	The Dayton finally ratified; Plavsic: I am guilty, not Serbs
Blic	A man killed ex-wife; Albright and Bildt defended Plavsic in the Hague; Ivanic: VAT must not open old arguments; Ashdown: Either urgent reforms or catastrophe in BiH

BiH House of Representatives session	

HR addresses the BiH HoR	The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, on Tuesday addressed the BiH House of Representatives and called on parliamentarians to "replace the dead weight of obstructionism with a new dynamic of progress and reform." He said the new state parliament would be "the most important in BiH's post-war history," because during it's four-year mandate "BiH will either reform or fail." The High Representative said that with a looming economic crisis, the need for fast and efficient reform has never been greater: "Foreign aid is declining sharply, unemployment is high, economic growth is low, inward investment is almost non-existent, and there is a huge balance of payments deficit – BiH spends four times more on imports than it earns in exports. Economic disaster is staring this country in the face. Bankruptcy is just around the corner. The only solution is fast and efficient reform. The only other option is to slash imports, and that would make the economy contract, which would mean even higher unemployment, more poverty and social dislocation." (Oslobodjenje, p 4: "BiH is running out of time", Dnevni Avaz, p 4: "Every decision I impose is a failure of the BiH's system", Blic p 7 headline 'Ashdown: Either urgent reforms or catastrophe') Nezavisne Novine quotes (front page, p 3: "Reforms will be implemented either by BiH authorities or by OHR") Paddy Ashdown as saying that "there is no doubt that reforms have to be implemented, but the question is how fast the implementation should go and who will run the reforms – you (BiH authorities) or I". Ashdown said that one of the most important tasks is to improve the efficiency of the state. Glas Srpski quotes (p 3) the High Representative as saying in his address before the BiH HoR that the most important task that lies before BiH authorities is to make sure BiH becomes a more efficient country so that it can respond to all demands of its citizens. The High Representative stressed that BiH politicians have to be more decisive in implementing reforms in this country. "You have the authority to initiate and stimulate changes that BiH needs, you have the power to work on cutting back the crime, to foster entrepreneurship, to work on creation of new jobs and collect money for vital public funds", said Ashdown. He said that the BiH economy is in a catastrophic situation and that something has to be done about it immediately. "If you do not start the economy immediately, then you will be facing a catastrophe with your eyes closed", said Ashdown. Vecernji List (page 3) covered the OHR press release "Speech by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Paddy Ashdown to the BiH House of Representatives", titled "First address of Paddy Ashdown to new composition of state Parliament: Establish Coalitions as soon as possible". Slobodna Dalmacija (page 17) also covered this press release under title "State faced with disaster".

Law on Citizenship	The BiH House of Representatives on Tuesday rejected a request by the Council of Ministers to debate the draft law on amendments and addenda to the BiH Law on Citizenship in an emergency procedure, which means that it will now be put in a regular parliamentary procedure. Eleven MPs from the RS voted against the Council of Ministers' request, so it failed to win the necessary support. The draft law on amendments and addenda to the Law on BiH Citizenship envisages that the deadline for reaching an agreement on dual citizenship with other countries, which expires on 1 January 2003, should be extended for 10 years, to avoid the possibility of many BiH citizens who live abroad losing their citizenship. (Oslobodjenje, p 5, mentioned on the front page, Dnevni Avaz, p 4: "Serb deputies again rejected amendments to the citizenship law") Nezavisne Novine also report (p 3: "Ashdown says he will impose Law on Citizenship") that the HoR did not pass a decision that the Law on Citizenship should be discussed in line with urgent procedure, because Serb representatives from the RS were against it. The paper states that the Serb deputies requested that the ratification of the BiH-FRY Dual Citizenship Agreement is included in the agenda. The paper states that Ashdown said earlier he would impose the Law on Citizenship unless the BiH Parliament passes it and if the BiH House of Peoples is not formed until January 1st.
Cro Press on Citizenship Law	Slobodna Dalmacija (front and page 17, by Blanka Magas, "BiH almost lost half a million citizens) reads that the High Representative for BiH, Paddy Ashdown, will enact Law on changes to Law on BiH Citizenship in order to, as the HR puts it, help BiH citizens. "I wish you enacted the changes to the current Law on citizenship by yourself in the parliament today, but since you did not do it, I will do it so BiH citizens do not bear consequences", said HR Ashdown to MPs in the BiH House of Representatives. Dnevni List (front and page 3, by Irena Barbaric, "Ashdown will have to impose law on dual citizenship) carries a report from yesterday's session of BiH House of Representatives saying that the Speaker of the HoR, Sefik Dzaferovic, will address the High Representative and request him to impose a Law on changes and amendments to Law on BiH citizenship. The same daily carries an OHR spokesperson Oleg Milisic who did not want to speculate whether the High Representative would use the authority and enact the aforementioned law. However, Milisic reminded that the HR stressed on many occasions that he would work in the interest of BiH citizenry. Vecernji List (page 2, by zk, "Serb MPs block law on dual citizenship") reads that the Serb MPs in the BiH House of Representatives rejected a proposal of the BiH Council of Ministers to discuss the Law on changes to Law on BiH Citizenship in an urgent procedure. VL says that the only way to confirm changes to the Law on BiH Citizenship is to be enacted by HR Ashdown.

International community/OHR

Yugoslav lower house ratifies Dayton accord	FRY ratified on Tuesday the Dayton Peace Agreement for BiH signed in 1995, after it was passed by the Council of Citizens of the FRY Parliament. Council of Republics, the second House of Yugoslav Parliament, previously ratified the Dayton Accords. Representatives of opposition criticised ratifying of agreement seven years after its signing, simultaneously claiming that the Agreement is being violated and that the international community supports forming of unitary BiH. One of the leaders of the ruling coalition DOS Vladan Batic said that Tuesday's discussion is a "theatre of absurdity", considering that parliamentary majority supports ratifying of Dayton Accords, while "supporters of character and work of Slobodan Milosevic, who signed the Agreement, are now opposing its ratification". "The Dayton Accords contains a legal basis for forming of the Hague Tribunal and for prosecuting of war crime suspects on the territory of former Yugoslavia. This is exactly what Slobodan Milosevic signed", said Batic among other things, adding that ratification of Dayton Accords in the best interest of citizens of FRY, and the RS as well. Representative of the Socialist Party of Serbia Ivica Dacic said that SPS is not against the Dayton Accords, but disputes the reasons of its ratification. "You wish to justify and relieve yourself of responsibility for extraditing of Yugoslav citizens to the Hague Tribunal", Dacic told the authorities. He said that the Assembly should not discuss ratification of the Agreement, but the reasons of failing to respect it. "Dayton Accords in not respected, they wish to create unitary BiH. This is the real goal of those who wish revision of the Dayton Accords and this is the goal of international forces in BiH", said Dacic. Chief of DOS Representative group Slobodan Gavrilovic responded that the Dayton Accords and its annexes clearly state the basis for co-operation with the Hague Tribunal, and precisely formulates the relation of FRY and NATO, in reference to that NATO forces are enabled transit through Yugoslavia for the purpose of implementing of the peace plan. 75 representatives in the Council of Citizens voted in favour of ratification, while two abstain from voting. (Blic p 2 headline 'Legal basis for hunting war criminals', Nacional p 4 headline "FRY ratified the DPA', Vecernje Novosti p 3 headline 'The Dayton ratified', All BiH media)

Kostunica's statement re war crime trials	UN delegation's message to FRY authorities In an interview to Neue Züricher Zeitung, Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica said "local courts should work in parallel with the Hague Tribunal" in processing trials for war crimes committed in former Yugoslavia. "The Hague Tribunal will not be able to deal with all cases," Kostunica said. In the interview he said that all sides should apoligise to each other "because all sides committed crimes". "We all – Serbs, Croats and Muslims – are responsible, but at the same time we are all victims," Kostunica said among other things. (Blic p 2 headline 'All culprits and victims', Vecernje Novosti p 10 headline "All to apologise')
High Representative passes Federation budget for 2003	The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, on Monday issued a decision enacting the BiH Federation budget for 2003 and a decision enacting the Federation Law on the execution of the 2003 budget. The High Representative took this action in response to a request from the Federation House of Representatives. The House of Representatives asked the High Representative to intervene since the Federation House of Peoples has not been constituted yet, and thus the Federation budget could not be adopted in time to meet requirements of the IMF Board for consideration of the continuation of the stand-by arrangement and the disbursement of the second tranche of the arrangement. This tranche is worth around 15m dollars. (Oslobodjenje, p 5: "Ashdown imposes FBiH Budget for 2003", Dnevni Avaz, p 2, Nezavisne Novine p 7, Glas Srpski, p 3)
Busek: BiH must strengthen further in order to be integrated into Europe	Erhard Busek, the Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe, provided an additional explanation of his recent statement in which he had said that the status of BiH had to be resolved prior to the country's accession to the European Union. "When I said that I did not refer either to the change of borders or I was bringing the BiH state sovereignty into question. I do not know how my statement for a Vienna newspaper was translated, but I will repeat once again that BiH cannot enter the integration with OHR. That simply cannot be a solution. Europe need a BiH government which it will talk on the process of integration with," Busek emphasized (Dnevni Avaz, p 3, Nezavisne Novine, p 3, Oslobodjenje, p 4)

Hercegovacka Bank	

Cropress on the issue	Vecernji List (front and page 3, by Zoran Kresic, "Hercegovacka bank into receivership, Toby Robinson home") learns from an anonymous official of OHR Sarajevo that the High Representative for BiH will most probably take decision regarding the Hercegovacka bank by end of the year which would include the end of mission of the Provisional Administrator Toby Robinson. According to the same source, the bank will be transferred to the competence of the Federation of BiH Banking Agency, after which it would, according to the already prepared scenario, appoint a public receiver for the bank, most likely a Croat. The source goes on to say that the bank will most likely not be liquidated and that restarting or selling of the bank after the receivership has been completed are being considered as options. VL reads that the bank could be working again and that unofficial information say that the bank will rent a building in Mostar on Biskupa Cule Street for 25.000 KM a month. Slobodna Dalmacija (front and page 17, by Miroslav Landeka, "Hercegovacka bank was crushed by – politics") says that the preliminary report that was handed out by the Provisional Administrator Robinson can be labeled as – much ado about nothing. In that context, the author says that even 20 months after the raid into the bank, the investigation has not proven that it was necessary to barge into the bank with tanks. Landeka says that Robinson contradicted herself when she first said that the Hercegovacka bank would self-destruct because it was insolvent only to deny herself by praising the bank when Robinson allegedly said that the Hercegovacka bank was the most progressive bank in the BiH banking system with the best network of branches. Dnevni List (front and page 8, "Bank for needs of privileged individuals) carries part 1 of Preliminary Report of the Provisional Administration for Hercegovacka bank. The daily will continue to cover the most important parts of the report in days to come.

Oslobodjenje: Money was controlled by Jelavic, Prce, Rojs	Oslobodjenje, p 7, announced on the front page, carries excerpts from the report and claims that the disputed (illegally spent) money was controlled by former high-ranking Croat officials in BiH and the BiH Federation including Ante Jelavic, Miroslav Prce and Ljubo Cesic Rojs.

HVO veterans protests

CRO Press on the issue	Slobodna Dalmacija (front and pages 15 and last page), Vecernji List (front and page 2) and Dnevni List (front and page 5) carry that HVIDRA and Croat Associations resulting from Homeland war blocked again the roads and border crossings all over the BiH Federation yesterday. Andjelko Barun, President of HVIDRA of Herceg Bosnia, stated: “There are abuses, and we personally experienced that Suada Hadzovic, Federation Minister for Defenders’ Issues, is our persecutor and not our Minister.” Barun added that that they (Croat victims and veterans) want to continue resolving of this problem with the OHR because it is obvious that this cannot be resolved with the current authorities that are not well intentioned towards Croats. Zdravko Beslic, Head of the Office for Defenders’ Issues in the West Herzegovina Canton, stated that they do not want to be characterized as non-cooperative saying that they are willing to hand over disputable lists but only to the OHR because they do not trust Minister Hadzovic. Dobrica Jonjic, Hadzovic’s Deputy, stated for DL that the Financial Police made the first, preliminary inspection of the Office for Defenders in Zepce, and the Head of the Financial Police stated that the teams of the Financial police will be soon in all other Offices and Ministries for Defenders. (Oslobodjenje, p 3, Nezavisne Novine, p 5)

OHR on Hadzovic/HVO veterans dispute	“Minister Suada Hadzovic is rights because she does not want to pay invalid pensions on the basis of such, inadequate lists prepared by the Cantonal Administrations. Those Administrations are actually bearing responsibility for the resolution of this problem and they should submit correct lists as soon as possible,” Chief OHR Spokesman Julian Braithwaite told Dnevni Avaz, p 10.

Trials; affairs	

Plavsic trial – second day	Former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said before the Hague Tribunal at a hearing to determine the sentence for Biljana Plavsic that Plavsic played a key role in implementing the Dayton Accords despite the fact that she was involved in "horrendous" things during the war in BiH. "She did what she promised to do, she was a women of her word and supported the Dayton Accords confident that the Dayton process can achieve in a democratic way what she thought was good for the Serbs", said Albright, who was called by both sides to testify. Carl Bildt, the former High Representative, spoke before the ICTY in the Hague about the unchanged position of Biljana Plavsic in favour of the Dayton Accords. "Immediately after the Dayton Accords, she had taken a position that was different from the position of authorities in Pale", said the Swedish diplomat, who was questioned by the defence of Biljana Plavsic. Talking on negotiations that led to the Dayton Accords, Bildt said that Plavsic was never a member of Serb delegations. "She was not a significant figure of the Serb leadership", he said. Former Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic said before the Hague Tribunal that her wartime actions were driven by "blinding fear" that Serbs would become victims. "But in their defensive zeal," she said, "the Serbs became the "victimisers". Talking about atrocities committed by Serb forces, Plavsic said that the main reason was their fear that Serbs would again become victims as they did during the II World War. She confessed that several thousands of innocent people were victims of a systematic effort to persecute Bosniaks and Croats from territories Serbs thought belonged to them. "Results of their work are evident; graves, bitterness, isolation of an entire people," Plavsic said. "I accept responsibility for my part in it. This responsibility is mine and mine only," Plavsic concluded. (Nacional p 4 headline "Albright: Plavsic was not my marionette', Vecernje Novosti p 10 headlines 'Appraisals to repenter' & 'I am guilty – not people', Blic p 17 headline 'Plavsic was not a marionette', Glas Srpski, p 3, Nezavisne Novine, front page, p 4, Headline: Plavsic seeks justice for herself and innocent victims of war, Oslobodjenje, p 6)

PDP on RTRS-related developments	Glas Srpski (p 2) carried a press release, issued by PDP on Tuesday, which states that PDP is dissatisfied with recent developments in RTRS and calls for OHR to explain to the public why it does not react to unprofessional and non-transparent work of RTRS Steering Board. PDP stated that policy of the RTRS Steering Board is detrimental and it has been ruining the RTRS. PDP especially underlines the fact that Zeljko Kopanja, the owner of Nezavisne Novine and NES Radio, is at the same time a RTRS Steering Board member, which is a sheer example of conflict of interests. PDP thinks that OHR should explain why this direct conflict of interests is being tolerated. PDP statement says that this maybe is good for Kopanja and his newspapers, but certainly is not very good for RTRS and RS citizens. Nezavisne Novine reported on the same issue (p 7, Headline: PDP requests OHR's intervention in RTRS).
VAT	

Mladen Ivanic on VAT	Both papers quote RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic as saying on Tuesday at a meeting with the representatives of the RS Craftsmen's Chamber, Association of private entrepreneurs and RS Chamber of Commerce that he is not against the introduction of VAT in BiH, but that he does not support the idea that all the revenues collected from VAT are being paid to one account and then distributed to the entities. "Regardless of huge technical problems that will follow the introduction of VAT, the VAT has no alternative", said Ivanic stressing that all the neighbouring countries have already introduced VAT. He said if BiH wants to be a part of the region and an EU member then it has to introduce this type of tax. He said that BiH might face political debates as to how much revenue belong to which entity if the revenues collected from VAT are to be collected at one account. According to him, in that case BiH might face catastrophic consequences for economic and political stability of the state and there may be some debates and arguments that one entity is exploiting another. He said that the technical solution advocated by the RS envisages that VAT is divided in a way that each entity receives the amount of money that it collects. Ivanic stressed that VAT system is not simple at all and that entrepreneurs knew it would cost them a lot. According to him, with the application of VAT everything has to be paid in advance and entrepreneurs get paid only after they sell their goods. "This will be a big shock for the economy and I believe that this technical aspect of VAT was not properly discussed", said Ivanic. He said that the RS Government thinks that during introduction of VAT, one single tax rate has to exist and there must not be too many exceptions. "In the beginning, the tax rate must not be high and there has to be the same calculation system and payment patter in both entities", said Ivanic. Glas Srpski, p 2, Headline: Tax on additional concern, Oslobodjenjue, p 3: "VAT has no alternative", Blic p 7 headline 'Without fight because of VAT')

Sarovic: Introduction of VAT a test of respect for legality in BiH	Dnevni List (page 7, by D.L.) reads that the Chair of BiH Presidency, Mirko Sarovic, stated on Tuesday that the issue of introduction of VAT and reform of customs is a test of respect of legality in BiH, something that everyone, representatives of the IC in particular, advocate for. “According to the Constitution, revenues and their collection belong to entities and reform solutions can be built only within such constitutional arrangement”, said Sarovic. He also stressed that the approach by the RS Government in the issue is the only acceptable approach and added that the RS NA is the only place where appropriate solution based on the Constitution should be taken.

Establishment of the new authorities

BiH CoM Chairman	Nezavisne Novine quotes (p 7) BiH Presidency member Dragan Covic as saying that the BiH Presidency will most probably on Wednesday nominate Barisa Colak new CoM Chairman. He said that a final agreement has been made. He said they agreed that each member of the Presidency hold separate consultations with its own party, that is with SDA, HDZ and SDS. Covic said that consultations should be held today and added that he has a feeling that the majority accepted this nomination. As for distribution of positions in the CoM by ethnic criterion, Colak said that Serbs will get ministries of foreign affairs, justice and communications, Bosniaks will get ministries of foreign economic relations, finance and security, while the position of prime minister and ministries of human rights and civil affairs would go to Croats. Oslobodjenje, p 3, and Dnevni Avaz, p 2, report that late on Tuesday the SDA and HDZ representatives were discussing the candidates for the BiH PM designate. "It is still not excluded that Haris Silajdzic accepts the candidacy for the post," Safet Halilovic told Oslobodjenje.
Ashdown: It is not my job to select the prime minister	"They told me that the name of the BiH PM designate will be announced today. Let us wait and see. The lateness is not so disastrous, it is just about a day, although even this is not a good message to be sent by the BiH authorities. We, this country simply cannot afford further waste of time," warned the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown in an interview with Dnevni Avaz (front page, p 5).

PDP on forming new RS Government	Presidency of the PDP concluded that the future RS government should have the support of the Serb majority in the Assembly, although the concept of new executive authority should be supported by a number of representatives of other nationalities in the National Assembly. PDP announced that activities on forming a new RS government should be intensified over the next few days upon the return of PM-designate Dragan Mikerevic from the United States, where he held talks with representatives of the U.S. administration. PDP Presidency said that the session of Party's Main Board would be held next week to determine the concept and the basic programme goals of the new RS government. Concerning the establishment of the BiH Council of Ministers, the Presidency of PDP announced that the Party would reach a final decision on taking part in functioning of this BiH institution once it is introduced with the concept of candidates for CoM chairman. Rumors are that Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Interior Affairs will be given to the PDP (Milica Bisic and Sinisa Djordjevic will head them), although the SDA strictly said it would support Dragan Mikerevic only if it gets three ministerial posts (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of refugees and DPs and Ministry of Urbanism) and post of Government's vice-president. Milica Bisic denied such the rumours. According to some information the SDS will get Ministry of Industry and Technology and Ministry of Traffic and Communication. (Blic p 7 headline "Future government by the end of year')

RS Radio interview with Adil Osmanovic	RS Vice President In an interview with RTRS radio, the RS Vice President, Adil Osmanovic, said that SDA would insist on ministries of finance and interior, while on other two ministerial posts the SDS is ready to negotiate. Osmanovic said if PDP and SDS do not agree on these two ministries with SDA then SDA would no longer support PDP and SDS.

Mostar situation	

Interview with Neven Tomic	Vecernji List (front and page 5) carries an interview with Neven Tomic, the Mostar Deputy Mayor, who said that there are forces in Mostar that simply want to preserve the existing situation, according to which Mostar is divided in 6 “kingdoms” and added: “ Formally, these forces support the idea that Mostar becomes a unified city, however, when something personal should be contributed to the unification of the city, barriers are being erected or barbarism takes place such as burning down of the Nativity Scene in Mostar, and this is not acceptable.” Tomic explains that the OHR also bears a part of the responsibility, since in spite of constant inflammatory statements it did not react to prevent them. Asked whether it also seems to him that Paddy Ashdown, the High Representative, sympathizes the idea that Mostar becomes the Federation capital, Tomic says: “The High Representative is only a legalist. There is Madrid’s Declaration and conditions that Mostar becomes the Federation capital. Mostar has been a political means and not a goal to various parties in BiH for a long time.”

Bishop Peric reacts to burning of Nativity Scene in Mostar	Dnevni List (front and page 14) carries a press release by the Mostar Bishop Ratko Peric regarding the burning of Nativity Scene in Mostar that took place on Monday. Peric warns of inequality of Catholics and all Croats in the Federation and whole of BiH saying that Croats do not have either legal or State mechanisms to achieve their national rights and preserve themselves as a national entity and identity in the country, the situation for which the Bishop also accuses representatives of the IC, who the Bishop calls "world guardians of the Dayton peace".
Vecernji List: "Third time for Mostar?"	With regard to the incident that took place in Mostar two days ago when a Nativity Scene was burnt down, Vecernji List (page 2, by Gorden Knezovic) carries an editorial saying that this is not an accidental incident of three national or religious extremists, but a product of premeditated political acting, that has become a custom of both opposing parties during the last few years. The editorial also says: "This time the incident resulted from displeasure of Bosniak political power wielders, who dissatisfied with the fact that the parity of protected influences in the Canton and Mostar will be abolished soon, brought to life again the Coalition from the darkest post-war Mostar period – Coalition for Integrated and Democratic BiH."

BiH/NATO relations	
NATO delegation visits Sarajevo	Glas Srpski quotes (p 3) Chief of NATO Operations and Crisis Management Department Robert Serry as saying after a session of the Standing Committee for Military Matters (SCMM) that the SCMM agreed that a SCMM Secretary General attends sessions of the BiH Council of Ministers. Serry reminded that this is one of the things that NATO Secretary General George Robertson proposed in his letter to BiH authorities. “This decision practically means that the SCMM Secretary General will be allowed to attend CoM session but he will not have the right to vote”, said Serry, and added he would appreciate more if the SCMM Secretary General would be a minister with the right to vote. Nezavisne Novine reported on the same issue (p 5, Headline: Pocrnja at CoM sessions, as well as Oslobodjenje, p 6: “First step towards the state defence ministry”, Dnevni Avaz, p 2: “Conclusions on the defence institutions must be implemented”).

Ashdown on BiH and NATO	Nezavisne Novine quotes Paddy Ashdown (p 3, Ashdown on BiH and NATO) as saying that there is no defence ministry in the new CoM structure, because the formation of that ministry has to be a decision of BiH authorities and a result of BiH politicians' desire that BiH becomes a NATO member. "You do understand that NATO has rules as to how to become a member of this organisation. You just have to think whether NATO will change its rules or BiH has to change. The choice is yours", said Ashdown.