

OHR BiH Media Round-up, 18/7/2002

Print Media Headlines

Oslobodjenje: Graphic Workers to go on general strike

Dnevni Avaz: Crisis in relations between BiH and Slovenia almost caused cancellation of Kucan's visit

Jutarnje Novine: Refugee associations say Dodik's concept of non-return being completed

Dnevni List: Federation Parliament – vigorous discussion about mortars

Vecernji List: SFOR raids HVO's intelligence unit

Glas Srpski: Two sides of the same coin – new ID cards; Sarajevo: Kostunica targeted by Hamas?

Nezavisne Novine: Why has the Tiumen Oil Company given up on Oil Refinery Brod? – Naphtha clans pushed Russians away; **Svetozar Mihajlovic**, BiH Minister for Civil Affairs and Communications: CIPS project to be revised;

Financial Scandals

CIPS

The **BiH Printers' Trade Unions** and the BiH Employers' Association held on Wednesday an emergency session at which they decided to initiate a general strike, block institutions and demand that the people who have contributed to the current problems in the CIPS [Citizens Identity Protection System] project be brought to account. *"At the session of the main committee today we decided to launch a petition in which citizens of BiH will say whether they want their identification papers and ballot papers to be printed by neighboring states for which they would pay a lot of money compared to the printing industry which in BiH is dying a slow*

death, because it is losing business,” Union’s president, **Amer Toskic**, told the press. After his meeting with the BiH Presidency chairman, Beriz Belkic, Toskic explained that the printers will remain on strike until all responsible officials working on the CIPS project resign. (**Oslobodjenje** f.p. by V. Zivak and A. Omeragic, **Dnevni Avaz** p. 2 by Sead Numanovic and Edina Sarac, **Nezavisne Novine** f.p., **Glas Srpski** p. 3, **Slobodna Dalmacija** p. 19, **Vecernji List** f.p., one of the leading items on the **BHTV 1**, **FTV**, and **RTRS** prime time news)

At a press conferences in Sarajevo, the BiH Minister of Civil Affairs and Communications, **Svetozar Mihajlovic**, rejected allegations of irregularities in the CIPS project, however conceded that the selection of the company for its implementation (i.e., Siemens) was not fully transparent. *“The tender process was conducted by the OHR, which awarded this job to Siemens...Perhaps, this tender was opened in a hasty fashion, as there were no talks with domestic companies,”* said Mihajlovic, adding that the OHR did so because BiH did not at the time have a Law on Public Procurement. Commenting on the involvement of a CoM Minister, **Jadranko Prlic**, in this affair and the fact that Prlic’s wife is one of the co-owners of a company which is designing software for the project, Mihajlovic said that he does not have any official information about this. He pointed out that he would demand an audit of the entire process of the CIPS project implementation. *“We will do so with regard to Mr Prlic, as he is a member of the Council of Ministers and because he himself stated that his wife was a co-owner of one of the companies involved in the implementation of this project. The relevant authorities will look into that and there is nothing anyone can do about that. I will personally see to that the investigation is fully carried out.”* (**Oslobodjenje** f.p., one of the leading items on the **BHTV 1**, **FTV**, and **RTRS** prime time news)

In a statement for **Oslobodjenje** (p. 5), the deputy BiH Minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, **Jadranko**

Prlic, said he has not been engaged in any irregular activities in connection with the CIPS affair and stressed that he would not resign despite the insistence of Sead Avdic, the deputy chairman of the BiH Parliament's House of Representatives. *"Never and in no way – as member of the commission which was set up by the Council of Ministers or as a member of the Council of Minister – was I involved in any discussions about any firms which should carry out any jobs relating to the CIPS project. It is completely clear that on that basis – neither in line with the Law on the Conflict of Interest nor in line with common sense – can I be in any way held responsible for any firm being given the job"* said Prlic. *"I am just being a collateral damage in a dispute between two political parties."* (**BHTV 1**, **FTV** also carried this item)

Dnevni Avaz notes that that Lagumdzija, indeed, is sacrificing Prlic in order to protect the business interests of his best men, Mirko and Milan Skrbic.

"The CIPS project is fully transparent because the Office of the High Representative has been involved in its implementation from the very beginning and because all financial transactions are made through the treasury of the BiH institutions," **Mirko Skrbic**, director of the Directorate for the Implementation of the CIPS Project, told the **BHTV 1** last night.

S.Numanovic and E.Sarac in their prominently placed article in **Dnevni Avaz** (p.2) write that the BiH Minister of Civil Affairs and Communications, **Svetozar Mihajlovic**, never denied or rejected allegations concerning the CIPS project put forth by this paper in the past week.

BHTV 1 reported last night that the **Federation Financial Police** has received three audit demands from the Sarajevo Cantonal prosecutor. The first demand concerns the investigation of the financing of the project of protecting the personal data of citizens, better known as CIPS, while the

second refers to the control of arms sale via the INTRADE company, which was conducted by the Federation Defense Ministry. The finance police was also asked to audit the BH Telekom, the postal service and the postal bank. BHTV 1 notes that the request particularly asks for an investigation of the legitimacy of business practices in the BH Telekom, the postal service and the postal bank conducted with companies outside BiH, i.e., with the Strom company based in Prague. According to **Dnevni Avaz**, this company has been entrusted with one aspect of the implementation of the CIPS project.

At yesterday's meeting with the High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, the president of the SDP, **Zlatko Lagumdžija**, expressed his full support for a prompt investigation of the alleged irregularities concerning the CIPS project. According to **Dnevni Avaz** (p.2) and **BHTV 1**, Lagumdžija also asked Ashdown to secure a full involvement of the OHR in resolving this affair.

Vecernji List (page 4) carries an editorial on the coming elections written by Suzana Mijatovic, a journalist of **Slobodna Bosna**. Mijatovic argues that financial and political scandals, which have been revealed during the last few days, show that we shall be witnesses of the most primitive political showdown. She wonders as to why somebody did not reveal these irregularities before, but rather opted to wait for the pre-election time. The editorial concludes that voters will not have a lot of choice at the coming elections because they have to choose between current political leaders and their predecessors who might take us back to the situation whose consequences we still suffer.

BiH Foreign Relations

Dnevni Avaz on its front page reports that the planned visit of the Slovenian president, **Milan Kucan**, to the BiH capital was nearly cancelled yesterday because of the fierce dispute between the two countries over the unpaid old foreign currency

savings of BiH customers in Ljubljanska Banka. According to the daily, the final conformation of today's visit was proceeded by a vigorous diplomatic communication between the BiH Foreign Minister, **Zlatko Lagumdžija**, and the Slovene ambassador to BiH, **Tadej Labernik**. During the talks, Lagumdžija expressed his concern with Labernik's statement comparing the Federation government with the former Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic. *"Hasty statements from either side will not lead to the resolution of open issues. In the light of this, the visit of the President Kucan to our country gives rise to the hope that constructive dialogue can be achieved,"* said Lagumdžija.

"I will be visiting Sarajevo with joy, clear conscience and with hope that we will be able to resolve all open issues through a dialogue and create conditions favorable to new agreements between the two countries," **Milan Kucan** told the Slovenian news agency **STA**. (**Dnevni Avaz** also carries this statement, **Oslobodjenje** p. 4 and 5 also covers the issue)

In an editorial in **Vecernji List** (p. 2), Srecko Stipovic argues that **Sefika Hafizovic**, the Federation Deputy Minister of Finance, was the first one who dared to call on Slovenians for the old foreign currency savings of BiH citizens with **Ljubljanska Banka**. Stipovic criticizes domestic authority who do nothing to make possible that BiH depositors get back money from this bank.

Vecernji List (page 8) and **Slobodna Dalmacija** (p 16) report that an agreement on delivery of construction material to Homeland War victims from Herzegovina-Neretva Canton was signed in Mostar on Wednesday. The material worth some 40 million Kunas (approx. 10 million KM) was provided by the Croatian Government. Federation Deputy Minister for the Defender's issues, **Dobrica Jonjic**, pointed out that the material would be given only to those whose housing problems were not resolved and who so far have not received any help and posses legally valid documentation on allocation of the land for the construction of house. The President of Mostar HVIDRA, **Ivica Kolobara**, stated that signing of this agreement

is of great importance due to evictions of defenders on daily basis. During the signing ceremony it was stated that the material is located in Odzak and the delivery is expected to start in one month and that another donation of 15 million Kunas for the victims of this Canton is also expected.

Dnevni List (front and page 2) carries an article in which Federation Deputy Minister for Veterans issues, Dobrica Jonjic, confirmed that all contracted invalids have valid building permits. Jonjic also stated that the Draft Law on Rights of Defenders, proposed by **Munir Karic** from Party for BiH, is only a colorful lie in pre-elections game. *"The first reason why I rejected this Draft Law is because it is unrealistically expensive. Similar objections came from International Community, OHR and IMF. Croat defenders really have no reason to be worried. Even if this law is adopted, it will be postponed for a certain period. That means, its regulations would not be implemented for at least nine months to a year"*, concluded Jonjic.

Military scandals

Vecernji List (page 2 and front page, signed by Zoran Kresic) reports that **SFOR** units raided yesterday the premises of the 88th military-intelligence battalion of the Croat component of the Federation Army, located in the Mostar settlement of Rodoc. **Major De Lambert**, the SFOR Spokesperson, said that SFOR soldiers were checking the 'possible, illegal, anti-Dayton activities'. The SFOR Spokesperson could not confirm yesterday afternoon whether the soldiers really revealed some illegal activities because the action was not completed at that time. The article notes that people from HVO believe that yesterday's action was just a preparatory action for the second SFOR operation, which might take place today.

Dnevni list (page 3) carries report from yesterday's session of the Federation House of Representatives which discussed the controversial sale of weapons to Israel, the discovery of the weapons storage in Mostar, the arrest of senior AID officials and the suspension of Federation Army's General **Sulejman**

OP-Ed/articles on OHR activities /Ashdown

Glas Srpski carries a commentary on its cover page (signed by initials R.J.) arguing that Paddy Ashdown personally rejected allegations by RS newspapers according to which the name of the RS was erased from the new design of ID cards, saying that they were nothing else but a lie told for political purposes. Ashdown said that the name of the RS will remain on the ID cards and that the changes were made together with the representatives of the RS and BiH Federation, after the instruction received from the Council of Europe, according to which some data that are not in line with European standards cannot remain on ID cards. Ashdown explained that the name of BiH will be displayed on the ID cover page and on the second page, Ministries of Interior of RS and BiH Federation will be mentioned as the institution issuing the ID. The author concludes: *"With no intention to enter discussion on the essential difference between the name of RS and the stamp of one of the Republic's institutions, the release and the decision of the High Representative leave no space for dilemmas: thanks to his decision, the name of the RS cannot be displayed on the cover page of new IDs"*.

In an editorial in **Vjesnik** (p. 4), Ivan Sabic writes that although **Paddy Ashdown**, the High Representative for BiH, is *"trying to be original and different from his predecessor Wolfgang Petristch, he still draws most of the attention with his decisions on removals of BiH officials and judges."* Sabic notes that Petritsch and his predecessors have not done a great deal in the sphere of cooperation with the ICTY. *"There are so many unresolved problems in BiH and even Ashdown's successors will have a great deal of job to do – with regard to the problems of economic recovery, employment, corruption, illegal immigrants..."*

Both Banja Luka dailies report that the High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, will address the delegates of the RS National Assembly at the session scheduled for 25th and 26th July (**Glas**

Srpski, p. 3, Nezavisne Novine, p.5). *"We expect Ashdown's visit and address to the National Assembly to strengthen a partnership relation that should be created between the representatives of the international community and representatives of RS people and citizens,"* said Dragan Kalinic, the chairman of the RS National Assembly.

At a press conference in Mostar, OHR spokesperson **Avis Benes** rejected allegations presented by **Vecernji List** in an article titled "OHR preventing the reconstruction of a synagogue in Mostar". Benes stressed that, on the contrary, the OHR supports the construction and accused Zoran Mandelbaum, the former head of the Jewish Community in Mostar, of misinforming the public on this issue. *"Putting blame on OHR for non-completion of this project is an incorrect attitude on the part of Mr. Mandelbaum who did not fairly represent all the facts, together with a journalist who omitted some crucial information that were given to him. Hopefully a constructive approach will be taken and this project will come to its realization. OHR fully supports the construction of a Synagogue in Mostar which was expressed on more than one occasion to the official representatives of the Jewish Community in Mostar".* (**Vecernji List** p. 6)

In a separate commentary, the Jewish Community in Mostar informed the public that **Zoran Mandlbaum** has no authority to speak on behalf of the Jewish community. *"Everything that was published in the article was Mandlbaum's personal opinion and the Jewish Community is distancing from it. We would also like to stress that the OHR did not ask for money from the Jewish community for the construction of the Mostar synagogue",* concludes the letter published by **Vecernji List** p. 6.

The President of the Siroki Brijeg Municipal Court announced that workers and judges in the Siroki Brijeg Municipal Court welcomed the decision of the High Representative to remove Ivan Brekalo, their president. *"This decision is expected and justified because it is a high time to start a combat against*

corruption and abuse of office which have deep roots in this area.” **Slobodna Dalmacija** (p. 15 by Antonio Karamatic) notes that this is the first decision of the High Representative, which has not been condemned and disputed immediately after it was passed.

(**Slobodna Dalmacija** p. 15, signed by Antonio Karamatic)

In an editorial in **Dnevni List** (page 11), Ilija Sagolj writes that representatives of legislative and executive authority are well paid and have a special status in BiH, however, they are not doing their job. “Thanks to the assistance of the International Community, judges and prosecutors have high salaries, however, the efficiency of their work has not been improved and the last suspensions of judges in Capljina, Siroki Brijeg and RS illustrate this fact.” Sagolj also mentions ombudsmen and says that people have almost stopped addressing them because people realized that it is very difficult to achieve anything through this institution.

ICTY-related issues

In a statement for **Vecernji List** (front page and page 6) **Goran Mihaljevic**, the Croat liaison officer to the ICTY, comments on the recent statement by some Hague officials that Slobodan Milosevic will not be charged for genocide against Croats in BiH. “My personal opinion is that a genocide against Croats has been committed in some parts of BiH but the final decision will be made in The Hague. I believe that at least one person will be held accountable for the genocide against the Croat people in BiH (...) Still, a genocide is a criminal act that is very hard to proof so the prosecutors in the most cases give up on genocide charges rather going for breach of the Geneva Conventions or for crimes against humanity”.

Electronic Media Headlines

BHTV 1

- BIH Minister of Civil Affairs and Communications

Svetozar Mihajlovic tells the press he will demand the BIH Council of Ministers to conduct an audit of the final phase of the implementation of the CIPS project

- Jadranko Prlic on CIPS: I have never made any decisions on the CIPS, nor have I been involved in this project in any way
- At a meeting with the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, SDP leader Zlatko Lagumdzija asked for an OHR analysis on the CIPS issue
- BIH Presidency chairman Beriz Belkic meets with the Graphic Union workers to discuss the decision of the BIH Election Commission to award the job of printing ballots to a Croatian company
- Graphic Union workers' president says graphic workers to go on general strike unless the Council of Ministers does not re-consider the Election Commission's decision on printing ballots

FTV

- Financial Police receives request to investigate BH Telecom, Federation Defense Ministry and the CIPS project
- Federation Parliament's House of Representatives fails to confirm the appointment of the new Federation Finance and Refugee Ministers
- IPTF says it had information about the possible attacks on Croatian, Yugoslav Presidents
- BIH Minister of Civil Affairs and Communications Svetozar Mihajlovic tells the press he will demand the BIH Council of Ministers to conduct an audit of the final phase of the implementation of the CIPS project
- Jadranko Prlic on CIPS: I have never made any decisions on the CIPS, nor have I been involved in this project in any way
- Graphic Union workers' president says graphic workers to go on general strike unless the Council of Ministers

does not re-consider the Election Commission's decision on printing ballots

RTRS

- BIH Minister of Civil Affairs and Communications Svetozar Mihajlovic tells the press he will demand the BIH Council of Ministers to conduct an audit of the final phase of the implementation of the CIPS project
- Meeting on Kostajnica border scheduled for Wednesday cancelled because RS, Federation Prime Ministers had prior obligations
- High Representative Paddy Ashdown to address the RS National Assembly on July 25th
- RS Minister of Refugees Mico Micic removes members of Banja Luka commission for analyzing the legality of using apartments privatized after April 1