OHR BiH Media Round-up, 24/7/2002

Headlines in Print Media

Oslobodjenje: The BiH Election Commission decides – Fikret Abdic a candidate for the BiH Presidency; the BiH Federation Parliament – the veteran's law withdrawn from the procedure

Dnevni Avaz: The SDP BiH General Secretary requests responsibility – Miro Lazovic stands by Sejfudin Tokic; Veteran's law: Mehmed Focic says the veteran's association to consult with Ashdown on the law

Jutarnje Novine: The employees from waiting lists to start receiving severance pays as of September 1; OHR on the withdrawal of the draft veteran's law – the only reasonable option

Dnevni List: The BiH Trade Unions Association – next autumn brings strikes; The Mostar Hospital – one of the twins died, the physicians are fighting for the life of the second one

Vecernji List: The audit of the Federation Budget reveals a number of irregularities – office abuses in 24 ministries and offices

Glas Srpski: The RS universities – Fees for part-time professional engagement eat millions

Nezavisne Novine: BiH Election Commission – Fikret Abdic may run in the elections; Milorad Dodik, SNSD – the Ministers fixes Ceko's report; Mirko Sarovic for Nezavisne – SDS wins at all levels in BiH; the Kostajnica bo0rder line uncertain

Euro Blic: Citizens of Kostajnica do not want a border crossing in the centre of town; Abdic candidate for BiH Presidency; IPTF removed three policemen; Mladen Ivanic: The main aim is a modern and European Srpska

Nedeljni Telegraf: NATO soldiers in civilian clothes in Serbia look for Mladic: the aim is to catch him alive; Del Ponte claims: General is in Valjevo

Veteran's law withdrawn from the parliamentary procedure

Munir Karic, a deputy to the BiH Federation House of Peoples, on Tuesday withdrew his draft veteran's law from the parliamentary procedure thereby removing an obstacle to signing of a new stand-by arrangement with the IMF. Karic called on the Government to by the end of its mandate offer *"an acceptable text of the law on veteran's rights."* (Oslobodjenje – p 7, announced on the front page, Dnevni Avaz – p 4, Jutarnje Novine – p 8, Dnevni List page 6, Slobodna Dalmacija page 14, Blic p 11)

"The Office of the High Representative welcomes a decision by the BiH House of Peoples to withdraw the draft veteran's law from the parliamentary procedure considering it the only reasonable option," an OHR Spokesman, Mario Brkic, told FENA news agency. (Oslobodjenje – p 7, Dnevni Avaz – p 4, Jutarnje Novine – p 8, announced on the front page)

"The Association of the Demobilized Soldiers still believe that the Karic-proposed draft veteran's law may serve as a good basis for making the final version of the document stipulating the status of this population," the Association President, Mehmed Focic, told Dnevni Avaz (p 4, announced on the front page). He added that the additional consultation on the issue would be held with the High Representative Paddy Ashdown and the US Embassy to BiH.

*"It is not true what Karic told the BiH Federation House of Peoples on Tuesday that he made the decision to withdraw the draft veteran's law with prior approval by the veteran's associations,"*Zahid Crnkic, the President of the BiH War Invalids Association, said for Jutarnje Novine (p 2, announced on the front page). He said that the veteran's associations were embittered with Karic's decision and that he had been clearly told at a meeting on Monday not to withdraw the draft.

"Once again on Tuesday, the victims of the politics – demobilized soldiers, war invalids, families of the killed

soldiers – remained without their law. This time they were betrayed by their own representatives," Asaf Becirevic wrote in the Oslobodjenje In Focus editorial (p 2).

BiH/Croatia relations – the Kostajnica border crossing issue

"The Croatian leadership is not satisfied with the positions of the BiH Council of Ministers related to the dispute over the opening of the previously agreed common border crossing between Croatian and Srpska (Bosnian) Kostajnica. The BiH Council of Ministers' conclusions do not contribute to the resolution of the border issue in accordance with the signed international contracts between the two states," the Croatian Foreign Ministry said in a diplomatic note delivered to the authorities in Sarajevo (Oslobodjenje – p 3, announced on the front page).

A common border crossing between BiH and Croatia in Kostajnica is expected to be opened in 15 days, the Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers Dragan Mikerevic and the Deputy Croatian Foreign Minister Josko Paro informed journalists on Tuesday following their meeting in the town. (Dnevni Avaz – p 2, Oslobodjenje – p 3, Nezavisne Novine, p 2)

Jutarnje Novine also reports on the Kostajnica issue (p 4, announced on the front page).

In an editorial in **Nezavisne Novine** (p 2), Dragan Jerinic writes that if the border in Kostajnica is moved to Uncica river, life of Kostajnica citizens who are used for a decade to treat Una as a natural border between two states, will be additionally complicated. Jerinic says that Croatia has a legitimate right to claim that its policemen control the 42 acres of land between Una and Uncica. The author recalls that the agreement signed by BiH authorities in 1999, even though not ratified by the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, exists. Jerinic concludes that the problem is not Croatia's wish to move its police to the right bank of Una river but unwillingness of BiH authorities to fulfill what they signed.

Glas Srpski's (p 5)journalist Milenko Sajic analyzes the situation in Kostajnica and writes that if AVNOJ boundary lines are respected, the RS would loose around 45 acres of its territory. Sajic writes that the strict respect of AVNOJ borders would bring Kostajnica into a very difficult position, due to the fact that apart from the land, private property and access to Una, it would also loose some of its population settled in the disputed area. The RS experts claim that the Dayton Agreement defined Una as the only reasonable solution for the border between Croatia and RS (BiH) in Kostajnica.

Slobodna Dalmacija (pages 14 and last page), **Jutarnji List** (page 7) and **Vjesnik** (front and pages 2 and 4) carry respective articles on the **Kostajnica issue.**

Slobodna Dalmacija carries a UNMIBIH spokesperson **Kirsten Haupt** as saying that the NU Mission in BiH commends a decision of the BiH Council of Ministers to maintain the current situation at the border between Croatia and BiH and keep working on a solution which would be acceptable to both sides. Haupt added that until that happens members of BiH State Border Service would maintain their current location. The same daily reads that the Chair of Council of Ministers **Dragan Mikerevic,** accompanied by the CoM's Minister for Civil Affairs and Communications **Svetozar Mihajlovic** and RS Minister of Interior **Dragomir Jovicic** is visiting Kostajnica where he is to meet with the Head of Kostajnica Municipality **Drago Bundalo** about the situation surrounding the border crossing between Croatia and BiH.

Jutarnji List carries the Croatian Foreign Minister **Tonino Picula**: *Our position regarding the problem with border crossing in Kostajnica is not questionable. We have clear arguments on our side and we will defend our interest by calling upon the signed agreementon borders.* Picula added that he hoped that the problem would be solved in the next few days and that Croatia would not be blackmailed. The same daily reads that the Croatian Foreign Ministry yesterday protested

against the BiH Council of Minister's decision to come up with a new annex to Agreement on Joint locations of border crossing saying that the joint expert groups has almost harmonised a proposal of an annex which would exactly define the location of a joint border crossing.

Vjesnik (by Marko Barisic) carries on the same issue that the Badinter rule should be applied in the Kostajnica case, the rule which says that borders between former republics of former Yugoslavia, as they were on June 25 1991, should be recognised as international borders and protected by international law. In relation to that, the daily reminds of a High Representative and SFOR's operation at Martin Brod when SFOR was establishing AVNOJ borders (Yugoslav inter-state/republic borders from 1945). *Now they are not as resolute as back then, although Ashdown could, like his predecessor, easily spot where the Avnoj border is. Unless that's a problem for him because he would have to see it on a proper map and not on some sort of "napkin".*

A high-ranking official of Croatian Ministry of Interior Affairs said that the Croatian police forces were ready to cross the river Una and took over the agreed joint border crossing in Kostajnica, but they would not do that without a prior political decision and an order of the Government (**Blic** p 11). He said that in any case hasty decisions must not be made due to the sensitivity of this problem, particularly after RS Premier **Mladen Ivanic** issued an order to his Interior Minister that in case Croatian police cross the Una, he should return the situation as it was within one hour.

And while the official Zagreb thinks the decision of Council of Ministers is unacceptable, RS politicians think it is acceptable until a final decision is made, agreeing that river Una should be a natural border between two states. Exception is DNS – its president **Dragan Kostic** said he had expected that the Council of Ministers would fight for the RS border, i.e. border of BiH.

All three Yugosalv dailies (**Vecernje Novosti** p 4**, Blic** p 11 **and Nacional** p 11) carry **Milorad Dodik's** statement about Kostajnica: "*The issue of defining the border between BiH and Croatia in the Kostajnica region needs to be resolved by reaching a compromise between the two countries and it is inappropriate for any representative of the international community to get involved in issues concerning relations between BiH and some other country. BiH State Border Service (SBS) Director Slavisa Vukovic should resign after SBS withdrew from a bridge in Kostajnica following IPTF orders.*"

Nacional (p11) carries a statement of Rada Peric, a member of the SPRS Main board, who said that the SPRS thought the Kostajnica issue had been raised by Croatia in order to divert the public attention in Croatia from unsolved interior problems, and only a few days after Croatian President said that Croatia did not have any territorial claims on BiH. "*The SPRS appeals on BiH leadership to solve the Kostajnica issue, because the RS territory is much less than 49% guaranteed by the Dayton Peace Accord.*"

Croatia, BiH sign a changed version of the agreement on investments protection

Jutarnji List (page 6), **Slobodna Dalmacija** (page 10) and **Vjesnik** (page 9) report that Croatian Minister of Economy (in resignation) **Hrvoje Vojkovic** and Minister of Foreign Trade in the BiH Council of Ministers **Azra Hadziahmetovic** have yesterday signed changes to Agreement on stimulation and mutual protection of investments between the two countries. The agreement extends the application of the agreement to the whole territory of BiH including the RS which was not the case before.

Ballots printing, CIPS

At its session in Sarajevo on Tuesday, the BiH Election Commission rejected an appeal lodged by the Sarajevo-based

ARKA Press company sticking to its previous decision that the ballots for the October elections are printed by the Croatian company Zrinjski from Cakovec. (Oslobodjenje – pages 4-5, Dnevni Avaz – p 12, Jutarnje Novine – p 6)
"Mr. Ashdown, the time has come for you to stop economic destruction of BiH. As liberals, we are from market liberalization, but under equal conditions. The bids of the domestic graphic firms were cheaper and better," the BiH LDS said in its letter send to the High Representative with regard to the BiH Election Commission's decision on the issue of ballots printing. (Oslobodjenje – p 4)

"We shall not give up easily," Zahid Crnkic, the president of the BiH Graphic Workers Trade Unions, told Dnevni Avaz (p 12). The Trade Unions have organized signing of a petition in Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Zenica, Tuzla, Mostar, Bihac and other major towns in the country in which citizens request that the CIPS documents and the ballots are printed by the domestic companies. (Jutarnje Novine – p 6, also reported on the petition signing)

The Director of the BiH Federation Privatization Agency, Resad Zutic, denied the information about the secret negotiations on the sale of the BH Telecom at a press conference in Sarajevo on Tuesday. The BH Telecom came into the focus of the public attention following media speculations that it will be bought by the Czech STROM Telecom, founded in 1994 by the BiH citizens Nihad Hurem, Miodrag Skrbic and Mirko Jelicic. The name of the company has also been brought into connection with the CIPS project implementation and the Postanska Bank privatization. (Oslobodjenje – p 9)

Ashdown in a new mission

Dnevni Avaz (p 2) reports that the judicial and economic reforms are the topics during a new High Representative Paddy Ashdown's tour through some of the PIC member countries' capitals. *"In the focus of our talks with the political representatives of the PIC member countries will be wider*

implications of the reforms in the judiciary and economy. These reforms are necessary if we want BiH to move forward towards the European integration," said Julian Braithwaite, the Chief OHR Spokesman.

Pre-election news – Fikret Abdic allowed to run for the Presidency

The BiH Election Commission announced its decision to approve the candidature of **Fikret Abdic** from the BiH Democratic People's Union (DNZ) for the Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency. Abdic's candidacy has been disputed because criminal proceedings are underway against him before the District Court in Rijeka, Croatia, for the violation of humanitarian law. The Election Commission had no evidence that before the arrest Abdic had been served a summons to which he failed to respond, whereby the principal condition for his candidature has been fulfilled: voluntary surrender to trial **(Oslobodjenje –** front page, pages 4-5, **Dnevni Avaz** – p 8**, Jutarnje Novine** – p 7, **Blic** p 3**, Vecernje Novosti** p 9).
Dnevni Avaz reports (front page, p 3) that the SDP BiH General Secretary, Miro Lazovic, announced he would request at the next session of the party's Presidency the opening of a debate on the appointment of certain directors without prior consultations inside the party. Lazovic supported Sejfudin Tokic in his position that the SDP personnel policy cannot be conducted through personal links and without any knowledge of the party's leadership.

In an interview to **Nezavisne Novine (**p 4**),** the SDS candidate for Serb member to BiH Presidency, **Mirko Sarovic,** stated that it would be impossible to create future of BiH without SDS as it is certain that SDS will win at all levels, due to the fact that the party is stronger than ever. Sarovic added that there are several priorities which he would address if elected. According to Sarovic, it is about time that Serbs in BiH Foreign Ministry begin to create BiH Foreign policy and its priorities.

The leader of SNSD, **Milorad Dodik,** accused the RS Chief

Auditor, **Bosko Ceko,** for being politically manipulated and that he allowed some Ministries to change documents during the revision for 2001 (**Nezavisne Novine,** p 5**).** Dodik emphasized that the top officials of the RS are involved in the RS Customs Administration scandal and that the current Government and its Prime Minister are not strong enough to solve the problem.

Nacional (p 11**)** also reports about yesterday's press conference of **Milorad Dodik**, leader of SNSD, in Banja Luka. He announced that his party would ask the BiH Parliament to adopt all laws imposed by former High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch. *"After that we will launch an procedure for changing parts of the laws that are not in the RS interests. We think that is the only way to change these laws,"* Dodik said. About the current situation in the RS Dodik said that ruling parties only creating affairs on the entity and the state level in order to conceal the difficult situation in the RS. He demanded a moratorium on privatisation of state capital in the RS until the elections are over.

Audit of Federation budget detects many irregularities, other Federation-related issues

Vecernji List (front and page 3 by Zoran Kresic) reads that the Office for Audit of the Federation budget has carried out an audit of work of 35 Federation ministries and offices for the year 2001 and detected irregularities in 24 ministries and offices. The report that was sent to the Federation Parliament is, according to VL, full of irregularities especially when it comes to unauthorised spending of the budget money. The most common violations are in the areas of execution of budget, failure to register incomes and outcomes, lack of internal controls, transfer of money without the knowledge of the competent ministry, surplus of workers etc. It is worth noting that the Financial Police has, according to VL, stimulated its workers with 450.000 KMs that have not been foreseen and that the tax Administration of the Federation of BiH has 1143 employees instead of 880 and that 1145 persons were on its

payroll.

Slobodna Dalmacija (page 15) carries an interview with **Bozo Misura**, an acting Head of the Federation Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, who reiterates again that **Mirza Ceric**, a Manager of company Zippo that offers information service to this Fund, threatens that he will not deliver checks for the payment of pensions. Misura claims that Ceric robs pensioners and that the pensioners pay Ceric 3, 6 million Marks per year for alleged services that he cannot justify. Misura says that together with **Sead Zeco**, **Nadir Kovacevic** and **Bahro Lagumdzija**, members of a former leadership of State Fund PIO BiH, Ceric obstructs integration of two funds in order to cover up many illegal activities that they committed. Misura also says that they do this under patronage of **Husein Vojinovic**, a leader Pensioners Party.

Vecernji List (page 5) carries that unidentified perpetrator(s) broke into the seat of the Cantonal Office of the BiH Federation MIO/PIO BiH in Sarajevo two days ago. The article says that there is suspicion that the this incident is closely related to verbal conflicts caused by the personnel reorganization and integration of company Erc-Zipo into the Federation Bureau MIO/PIO and that this incident was a signal sent to Bozo Misura, who stands for the integration. VL says that the investigation is underway.

Dnevni List (page 2) carries a press release of the **Federation Ministry of Interior** in which the ministry denies claims of the **Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Ministry of Interior** according to which the Federation MoI did not co-operate with the Cantonal MoI in the investigation into the secret ammunition caches case. The press release says that the Federation MoI met its obligations towards the Municipal Prosecution of Mostar (II) and the Cantonal MoI on time and submitted all the documentation that it requested from the Federation Ministry of Defence. *After the HNC MoI sent an information on discovery of hidden shells, the Federation MoI sent its workers who*

carried out an insight and who were told that the case was not in the jurisdiction of the Federation Ministry of Interior.

FENA news agency reports that, on Wednesday, the HN Canton Governor **Dragan Vrankic** sent a letter to the BiH Federation Prime Minister, **Alija Behmen**, demanding that the Federation Government submits all the documentation relevant for the investigation into the illegal storage of arms in the Mostar region.

Vecernji List (page 2, signed by Robert Bubalo) carries an editorial, which says that NHI has been definitely tricked because NHI's candidate **Franjo Franjic**, who should come to the position of the Federation Minister of Finances, obviously will not be appointed to this position before the elections for many reasons. According to Bubalo, the main reason is that this position and the position of the Prime Minister suits **Party for BiH**. The editorial says that obviously this party has come to the most interesting positions in the Federation that belongs to the Croats in a planned manner. Bubalo says that the only chance to Franjic and NHI is **Paddy Ashdown**, the High Representative, who should remedy a wrong as soon as possible. Also, according to Bubalo, in future, the HR should leave removed politicians at their positions until their successors are appointed, because even if they appoint Franjic it is questionable as to who will hand him over a complicated Ministry.

The Croatian weekly **Nacional** (pages 60-63) published a story/chronology of the **AM Sped** case, with interviewing **Tino Bralo,** a person involved in the affair, who tells as to how he started with coffee business.

DNA laboratory opened in Banja Luka

Both Banja Luka dailies report (**Glas Srpski,** p 3**, Nezavisne Novine,** p 8**, Nacional** p 11**, Blic** p 10and **Vecernje Novosti** p 13)that the RS Prime Minister, **Mladen Ivanic,** Head of ICMP

Mission to BiH, **Gordon Bacon** and Chairman of the RS Commission for search for captured and missing persons, **Nedeljko Mitrovic,** opened a DNA laboratory yesterday in Banja Luka. This is the third DNA laboratory in BiH. The project was financed by ICMP with a goal to accelerate the process of identification of mortal remains of individuals who got killed in the war. Ivanic assessed that it is an obligation of all people in the RS and BiH Federation who have some information on missing persons, to forward that information to the authorized commission. The RS is still searching for 925 missing soldiers and more than 4000 civilians, said Mitrovic.

Headlines in Electronic Media

BHTV 1 (Tuesday, 1900)

- The International Monetary Fund could at the meeting of its executive directors approve the stand-by arrangement for BIH
- Deputy Munir Karic on Tuesday morning withdrew the disputable draft law on soldiers' rights from the agenda if the BiH Federation House of Peoples
- IMF expects the issue of timely payment of pensions in RS to be solved within the following three days.
- The BiH Foreign Ministry on Tuesday sent a response to yesterday's diplomatic note from the Croatian Foreign Ministry, informing it of the conclusions of the BiH Council of Ministers related to the border crossing in Kostajnica

FTV 1 (1930)

- Deputy Munir Karic on Tuesday morning withdrew the disputable draft law on soldiers' rights from the agenda if the BiH Federation Parliamentary House of Peoples.
- BiH Election Commission today confirmed the candidature of F. Abdic for BIH Presidency.
- Delegations of BiH CoM, BiH SBS and RS government are visiting Kostajnica, to discuss the border crossing issues.

RTRS (1930)

- The BiH Foreign Ministry on Tuesday sent a response to yesterday’s diplomatic note from the Croatian Foreign Ministry related to the border crossing in Kostajnica (2)
- UN Mission hails willingness of BIH CoM to maintain the status quo at Kostajnica border crossing. (1)
- Croatian president S. Mesic said the Kostajnica issue should be solved on the state level. (1)
- BiH Election Commission today confirmed the candidature of F. Abdic for BiH Presidency. (2.3)