OHR BiH Media Round-up, 25/12/2003

CROAT RADIO HERCEG-BOSNA (18,00 hrs)	**BH TV 1** (19,00 hrs)	**FED TV** (19,30 hrs)	**RT RS** (19,30)
Severe weather	Presidency on Aluminium	Storms in Hercegovina	TV subscription
Vezir linked to Al-Qaida	SFOR released Zitouni	December pensions	Budget adopted
Presidency on Aluminium	Reactions of GSM price	Extradition of Sacirbegovic	BiH Presidency session
Presidency on Vezir	Mad cows in US	Presidency on Aluminium	

Oslobodjenje	Cigarettes will become more expensive without agreement from RS and Brcko; Aluminij has to have an electricity
Dnevni Avaz	Exclusive interview: Cardinal Vinko Puljic: We are tired playing games on someone else's account; American troops staying in BiH till the end of 2004
Glas Srpske	Storm in some parts of Republika Srpska: Two-metres high snow
Nezavisne Novine	Catholic believers celebrate Christmas: Christmas – the holiday of peace; OBS of Republika Srpska monitored activities of the Hague Tribunal and SFOR in BiH; Shareholders of Telekom Srpske: Procedure for election of new Telekom management launched

NOTE: There was no Croatian and Serbian press today.

Economic and social issues

BH Presidency demands ensures electricity supply to Aluminij	CRHB, RTRS, Dnevni Avaz pg 2 'The cooperation with Germany cannot be in question due to case Aluminij' – BiH Presidency requested on Wednesday from the FBiH Government to without delay ensure normal supply of electric power to the Mostar combine Aluminij. At the session, in considering the reasons for terminating the contact between BiH Elektroprivreda and German Debis, BiH Presidency concluded that the price of electric power must be defined by the FBiH Government together with the sides interested. Following the session, the Chairman of the BiH Presidency Dragan Covic said that these conclusions have sent a clear message to the German Government that nobody can bring into question the level of up to now realised economic co-operation. The Presidency will also inform the German Ambassador to BiH on modalities of protecting the present and stimulating of new investment projects. BHTV 1 – Chairman Dragan Covic: "Our intention was to protect Aluminij Mostar from political games as one of the most important companies in BiH. Government of FBiH can provide energy for Aluminium since Elektroprivredas are state-owned companies. Nobody has a right to market energy before satisfying needs of domestic industry and population." Oslobodjenje cover, pg 6 'Electricity for Aluminij must not be shot down' – 'The international contract with Germany cannot be put into the qiuestion. There is a clearly signed protpocal in which BiH Presidency is also included. We have to intensify the cooperation with German government on further investments, and not to prevent it.' – stressed Covic. FTV – Presidency also decided to send a letter to German Ambassador to BiH in response to terminated contract between Elektroprivreda and Daimler-Chrysler. FBiH Minister of Energy, Mining and Industry Izet Zigic commented: "Offers are very different in terms whether price should be determined according to political or market principles. It is necessary to respect valid regulations of Federation and BiH state."

Meeting on Aluminij dispute fails	Dnevni Avaz pg 2 ‘The price of the electric energy still disputable’ – The meeting held on Wednesday between all parties in Aluminij issue failed to reach an agreement on the issue. The meeting was held in the presence of the Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays, Chairman of BH Presidency Dragan Covic, BH Civil Affairs Ministers Safet Halilovic, FBIH Prime Minister Ahmet Hadzipasic and his deputy Dragan Vrankic, and FBiH Minister of Energy and Industry Izet Zigic. ‘Ambassador Hays [who initiated the meeting] did not asked anything concrete from us. The discussion was led in the direction of needing to create pre-conditions for normal development of the agricultural relations in BiH for new investments, and to avoid politicising economic issues’, stated Dragan Covic on the meeting.
Former workers of Aluminij blame Mijo Brajkovic	Dnevni Avaz pg 2 ‘Paradox is to cheaply sell electricity to private company’, Oslobodjenje pg 6 ‘Mijo Brajkovic is guilty for everything’ – Syndicate branch of Aluminij, which gathers former workers of this combine, warned FBiH Government not to ‘give up before the blackmails, as that would also mean legalization of the discrimination and breaches of the human rights.’ Workers, who were fired, reminded of the a number of warnings on the ‘robbery of century in Aluminij, and obvious discrimination on the base of nationality’. Workers also emphasized that Alumunij also had about 76% of its shares in private ownership, and therefore said that it was appropriate for private company to be subject to benefits in paying for the electric energy. In addition, former workers accused current director Mijo Brankovic ‘of all events that took place around Aluminij in last few years’.

Reactions on CoM decision regarding GSM licence	BHTV 1 – After BiH Council of Ministers made decision estimating that the value of GSM licence was 420, therefore instructing each of three mobile operators to pay 140 mil KM for 15 years long licence, GSM operators complained the price is too high and that it represents huge burden for their operation. Director of RS Telecom Zeljko Jungic: "We already have commitment to allocate 5% to post service and state should provide some kind of stimulating conditions for telecom operators." Director of Eronet Bozo Knezevic: "The price is unusually high." BiH Minister of Transport and Communications Branko Dokic: "It is not surprise that GSM operators may complain, but this solution is unbiased, so all three operators are in equal position." Oslobodjenje pg 8 'Third licence waits for the end of conflict around Eronet?' – The Director of BH Telecom Hamdo Katic commented that the company was satisfied with the solution, and that this was the decision which will lead towards single economic market. Nezavisne Novine pg 3 'Authority gave GSM licence', Oslobodjenje pg 3 'Scandalous present from CoM' – SDP in BiH believes that the CoM decision on a 140 millions KM licence each for mobile operators in BiH was scandalous: 'That decision is a key evidence that authorities in BiH are people who take more care of the interests of war-time tycoons and their foreign patronages than about BiH and its citizens.'

CRA: Third GSM licence to be issued after holidays	Dnevni Avaz pg 10 ‘Decision on third GSM operators after the holidays season’ – The Communications Regulatory Agency will establish the procedure for issuing the third GSM licence, at the price of 140 millions KM as determined by the Council of Ministers. CRA Spokeswoman Amela Odobasic explains: ‘Firstly, we have to wait for the official note on the decision by the Council of Ministers, which we still did not receive, in according to which we will develop the procedure to award third GSM licence taking into the account that both HT Mostar and Eronet applied.’ Deputy BH Minister of Traffic and Communications Haris Basic confirmed that now none of the operators are in the 100% of the state ownership, the Telecommunications Sector Policy will have to be changed as it talks about 100% state operators who were free from paying a licence. Oslobodjenje pg 8 ‘Third licence waits for the end of conflict around Eronet?’ – BH Transport and Communications Minister Branko Dokic said that there was ‘a request to award this licence only after the end of the litigation’ [between HT Mostar and Eronet, as HT Mostar claims that it Eronet, previously held by this company, was illegally sold to private companies]. Dokic further explains that due to such and other demands of similar nature, CRA was given 6 months deadline to issue a licence, however stressing that the Council of Ministers will not interfere with the work of the Agency. Nezavisne Novine pg 3 ‘Third GSM licence in BiH to be shared by “Eronet” and HT Mostar’ – NN yesterday learnt from its source at BiH Council of Ministers that the licence for third GSM operator in BiH will be given to a company, which should represented a unified Eronet and HT Mostar. The Chairperson of BiH Council of Ministers, Adnan Terzic, says that CRA is to set conditions, under which the third licence would be allocated.

Telekom Srpske publishes vacancies for new management	BHTV 1 – At the session in Banjaluka, shareholders of Telekom Srpske concluded that the new steering and supervisory boards of Telekom Srpske will be selected upon vacancy announcement within 60 days time. Representative of state shareholder in the RS Telecom, RS Communications and Transport Minister Dragan Solaja he announced: "Deadline for selection of new governing broad and management is 60 days." Current management believes they have a good chance for re-appointment. Previous report of RS governments found that losses of 38 million KM were caused by bad management and poor tender procedures implemented. RTRS, Nezavisne Novine cover, pg 2 'Procedure for election of new Telekom management launched'; Glas Srpske, pg. 3, 'First vacancy, then the seat' – The worth of Telekom has increased for BAM 136 million. Banjaluka Basic Court passed the ruling and Commission for Securities recognised this increase of capital of Telekom Srpske. Zoran Vujanovic, President of Telekom Steering Board, said that the current members of Boards of Telekom would also apply to these vacancy announcements, because they share the view that they are not responsible for mistakes performed in Telekom. Zeljko Jungic, Telekom Srpske General Manager, also announced he would apply to the vacancy.
RSNA adopted budget for 2004 of 1.72 billion KM	RTRS – At its session, which adjourned late last night, Republika Srpska National Assembly adopted the budget for 2004 amounting to 1.72 KMs billion. Additional resources from the budget have been allocated to the most vulnerable categories of people. The resources intended for the families of the fallen soldiers have been increased for 8.9%; for Pension and Insurance Fund 24.8%. Branko Krsmanovic, RS Minister of Finance: "This budget is orientated towards the social needs." Following Laws were adopted: Law on changes and addenda to the Law on privatisation of state owned apartments, Law on addenda to the law on citizenship, changes to the Election Law (provision referring to election of Mayors).

Farmers will not protests on 28 December	Oslobodjenje pg 7 ‘Fire extinguishing measures’, – The BiH Farmers Association postponed announced protests of the border crossings due to postponement of the Free Trade Agreements with the neighbouring countries in regard to the agricultural products. Protests are prolonged for another three months in order to enable authorities to raise the level of competition for the local products, confirmed Ranko Bakic, president of the Farmers Association, however confirming that those will take place if the Association was not satisfied with the measures carried out to protect local production. Dnevni Avaz pg 9 ‘Farmers gave up on 28 December’s blockade of the border’ – ‘We cannot say that we are entirely satisfied with these decisions, as they are short-term measures’ – says Ranko Bakic. However he added that he was aware that further postponement of the Free Trade Agreements could have some negative consequences, as Croatian Economy Minister criticised the decision by the Council of Ministers by saying that BiH had three years for transitional period which it did not use to prepare its economy for FTA implementation.
Dzaferovic urges adoption of ITA law	Oslobodjenje pg 8 ‘Delegates have seven days to get serious’ – Sefik Dzaferovic, Deputy Speaker of BH House of Representatives, stated for Oslobodjenje that unless Commission in charge of harmonizing draft Indirect Taxation Law by the end of this year, country will feel catastrophic consequences. He stressed that not only European Commission will cut its assistance in value of 15 million dollars to set up IT Agency, but such failure would make BiH step further away from admission to EU. OHR refuses to revel what could be actions by the High Representatives in case the Commission fails to reach an agreement and the Law was not passed by the end of the year. Daily further reads that the main issue which prevents harmonization of the Law on ITA is consistent insisting of the RS delegates, Zoran Spasojevic from SDS and Tihomir Gligoric from SPRS, for Brcko to be a fifth regional centre.

FBiH Government may increase tax on cigarettes	Oslobodjenje cover splash, pg 7 ‘Cigarettes will not get more expensive without agreement with RS and Brcko’ – FBiH Government proposed the increase of the excise on cigarettes in order to protect domestic manufacturers, stated Assistant Finance Minister, Hajrudin Hadzimehanovic, for Oslobodjenje. He also said that the proposal has been sent to the Council of Ministers for adoption. ‘This proposal is the part of urgent reforms at the level of Council of Ministers, aimed to protect domestic production. At the BH market, imported cigarettes are most often cheaper than in the country where they are being produced. That brings local manufacturers in bad position,’ – explained Hadzimehanovic, adding that such decision can be made only if Brcko and RS also agree to it.
Pensions in FBiH	FTV – Pensioners in Federation will receive December pension before New Year eve, but one half of late salary from 2000 will be paid out only in the next year. According to the FBiH Ministers for Social Issues and Labour Radovan Vignjevic, government’s budget for 2003 is not sufficient for payment of an additional pension: “New budget will be discussed in next government session and hopefully both Houses of Parliament will pass the decision very soon”.

Oslobodjenje editorial on return	Oslobodjenje pg 2 ‘Refugee story’ editorial by Gojko Beric – Referring to opening of the first regional centre for refugees by BH Minister for Human Rights and Refugees Mirsad Kebo and PDHR Donald Hays, author writes: ‘I understand Hays’ satisfaction, as he transferred responsibilities for return to domestic authorities with this act, and with that he practically freed the Office of the High Representative from the hardest and most difficult job from Dayton package. I less understand the reasons which made Minister Kebo satisfied, unless the man enjoys plenty of obligations for which he knows in advance that his ministry was not ready to fight. Minister Kebo knows better than all the other what is the real picture of return: percentage of claimed property is perhaps satisfying, but the percentage of those who returned into their pre-war homes is still discouraging.’ Article is further critical of the IC stand on the return and it concludes: ‘Ethnic picture of our cities, all of them, is not recognizable. The first ones to give up on return were politicians, public prosecutors and highly educated persons, who sold or exchanged claimed property. That was their contribution to division of BiH.’

Security and intelligence issues

SFOR released Zitouni after 3-day interrogation	FTV, RTRS, CRHB, Oslobodjenje pg 3 'Now evidences to prove threatening', Dnevni Avaz pg 2 'SFOR released Muhamed Zitouni Perenda', Nezavisne Novine pg 2 'SFOR released Zitouni' – SFOR released last night M'hamed Zitouni, who was arrested on December 21, was released from SFOR custody on Tuesday night. According to their statement, with the cooperation of the suspect the investigation has been completed. He was released from custody last night in from of the police station in Travnik. This operation falls under the legal mandate of SFOR and OHR's efforts on maintaining a safe environment. However, SFOR has again not confirmed reports that the arrested man was an Algerian national, Mohamed Zitouni Perenda, born in 1972 and with residence in Travnik. BHTV 1, Oslobodjenje pg 3 'I have no connections with Al-Qaida', Dnevni Avaz pg 2 'For investigators, Travnik is the main place for terrorism and Al-Qaida' – After he was released, M'hamed Zitouni Perenda denied all allegations on his activities against security and peace in BiH or any alleged connections with Al-Qaida. He also explained that during three days of being held in SFOR premises, Zitouni was not allowed to contact his wife or lawyer.

BH Presidency on security	CRHB, RTRS, FTV, BHTV 1, Dnevni Avaz pg 2 'The cooperation with Germany cannot be in question due to case Aluminij' – Following the session of BH Presidency, which also discussed issue of Verzir company from Travnik, Chairman of the Presidency Dragan Covic commented on the recent decision by US administration suspecting non-governmental organization Vezir' for terrorism stressing that BiH was not a core for terrorism actions: "It is more of a case, and certainly there will be some more, which demonstrate a need to have full functional state institutions to fight terrorist threat inside the country and abroad." Oslobodjenje pg 3 'BiH is secure country' – Covic underlined that the efficient fight against terrorism and any crime required operational state border service and police that would cooperate with the international elements in searches. In addition, he also said that BiH is one of the most secure countries in the region.

Vezir blacklisted	CRHB – USA and Saudi Arabia requested from the UN to list the NGO from Travnik Vezir as terrorist supporting and its representative to be placed on the list of people connected with Al-Quaida. Vezir is suspected to be the new name for the Saudi Arabian banned humanitarian organization known as El-Haramain. The change came in 2002 after it was marked as organization linked to Al-Quaida. Saudi Arabia requested also that the president of Vezir Safet Durguti, is on the list of people connected with Al-Quaida.

NN: OBS monitored SFOR and ICTY	Nezavisne Novine cover, pg 5 'OBS of Republika Srpska monitored activities of the Hague Tribunal and SFOR in BiH' – NN holds possession of a document of 24 July 2001 issued by RS OBS (Intelligence Security Service), which proves that this service was monitoring activities of ICTY and SFOR in BiH and forwarded them to the most senior officials of RS at that time. And those were: RS President (Mirko Sarovic at that time), RS Prime Minister (Mladen Ivanic at that time) and to RS National Assembly if necessary. Sarovic confirmed he had regularly received reports from OPBS, nothing that none of them had included any information that would have proved OBS had monitored SFOR and ICTY. On this he says: "ICTY officials may have provided these information to OBS." NN collocutor from the Hague Tribunal says that it is impossible that ICTY officials were providing some information to OBS. Mladen Ivanic, currently BiH Foreign Minister, says that he had never seen a report, which would say that OBS monitored the work and activities of ICTY and SFOR.

Political and judiciary issues

BH Presidency discusses Ivanic's trip to Israel	CRHB, Dnevni Avaz pg 2 'The cooperation with Germany cannot be in question due to case Aluminij', Oslobodjenje pg 3 'Nowhere without attitude of Presidency', Nezavisne Novine pg 3 'Mladen Ivanic in Israel did not present debatable stances', Glas Srpske, pg. 2, 'Nothing disputable in Israel'– At the session held on Wednesday, BH Presidency members discussed much disputed visit to Israel carried out by the BH Foreign Minister Mladen Ivanic. According to Chair Dragan Covic, Presidency concluded that Ivanic did not present any debatable stance during talks with Israeli officials. The Presidency has requested that all future possible inconvenient visits for BiH should be first discussed at the Presidency session, especially if it is requested by one of the members of the Presidency.

Tihic met Bond	Dnevni Avaz cover, pg 2 ‘US troops staying in BiH by the end of 2004’, Oslobodjenje pg 6 ‘Possible engagement of BH companies in Iraq’ – The U.S. troops will remain in BiH until the end of 2004, and all future changes in this domain will be conducted in consultations with the European Union, NATO, USA and BiH, said on Wednesday the U.S. Ambassador to BiH, Clifford Bond, in a meeting with BiH Presidency member Sulejman Tihic, was announced by BiH Presidency. Tihic and Bond also discussed reform of the defence system in BiH, as well as the possibilities for participation of BiH companies in the reconstruction of Iraq. Ambassador Bond reiterated that the current list of countries that will participate in the recovery of Iraq is not complete, and that possibilities exist for engaging of BiH companies. Tihic raised concerns about the inequitable treatment of Bosniacs in the judicial and police sectors, stressing that the Bosniac side will insist on obeying the Constitution and the law, i.e. abolishing of unconstitutional and illegal decisions.

Interview with Cardinal Vinko Puljic	Nezavisne Novine cover, pg 8 ‘Love will win over hatred’ – In a page-long interview to Nezavisne Novine on the occasion of Christmas, Cardinal Vinko Puljic expressed concern over recently frequent blockades at border crossing points, which prevent Croats from coming from abroad to celebrate Christmas at their homes. According to NN inset, Cardinal also said that: “There were some international officials who systematically obstructed returns of Croats. I hold evidence for such activities. I did not go in public with them, but I did tell some people I was aware of it. Consequently, returns programmes have bypassed Croats in BiH.” Dnevni Avaz cover splash ‘We are tired of playing the game for someone else account’, pg 5 ‘It is not crowdie in Bosnia, but there is not real political good will’ – Cardinal Puljic also gave an interview to Dnevni Avaz along the same lines, repeating his stand on the international community. In addition, Cardinal Puljic was asked to comment position of Croats in BiH: ‘In media in Sarajevo, how many positive things are said about Croats? We are pressured constantly to feel collective guilt. After some articles, we only expect reactions, provocations, assaults, incidents. We are tired of having only minors to be guilty of so many strange things which we experience, and who is behind those minors? When we want to obtain some administrative things, that is a ‘crusades road’ of going from doors to doors. So many times we experienced insults and humiliation in the offices when they read out Croat or Catholic name.’

15 Zenica judges complain against HJPC decisions	FTV, Dnevni Avaz ‘16 judges demand publicizing of the reasons they failed’ – Fifteen judges from Zenica, not appointed by the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council, sent an open letter to the High Representative Paddy Ashdown and HJPC requesting detailed explanations for rejecting their applications. Letter further stressed that without any arguments they felt publicly insulted and their integrity was ruined. HJPC explained they do not need to provide reasons for rejection of an applicant, but immediately following the interview all candidates received explanation why they were not appointed. Spokeswomen of HJPC Sanela Tunovic: “All judges were told what were reasons for rejection. Some of judges expressed preferences for appointment in other courts, so they may be appointed there since appointments for other courts is still underway.”

Mostar prosecutors complaining over HJPC decision	Dnevni Avaz cover ‘Actions by Oja’s Council are strike on the state’, pg 4 ‘Resulovic: Actions by Oja’s Councils are strike on the state and evil for which we will pay’ – Mostar Cantonal Chief Prosecutor Mirsad Resulovic will today send a letter to the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council on behalf of the Mostar Prosecutors expressing dissatisfaction with the work of this institution and explanations given when rejecting appointments. Resulovic, who also failed to gain appointment by HJPC, said that he assumed that the interests of the political circles was to bring younger staff to their positions who will not be able to commence with dangerous investigations: ‘I think that HJPCs actions are strike on the state… Politics certainly got involved in judicial appointments… and that is the first sign of catastrophe.’

RTV subscription

PBS, RTRS and Telekom Srpske sign contract on collection of RTV subscription	CRHB, RTRS, Dnevni Avaz pg 8 ‘RTV fees with January Telekom Srpske’s bills’, Oslobodjenje pg 2 ‘RTV subscription with telephone bills’, Glas Srpske pg 3 ‘Fees to make accounts bigger’ – General Directors of PBS, Telekom Srpske and RTRS signed today an agreement on payment of TV fees of 6 KM along with the phone bills. Dragan Solaja, Republika Srpska Minister of Traffic and Communication stated that this is first time that stabile communication of public services. Dragan Davidovic, General Director of RTRS, stated that this Agreement will provide financial stability to RTRS and will provide for protection of the interests of citizens through the program of RTRS. Zeljko Jungic, Director General of Telekom Srpska: ”we have incorporated the recommendations of EU to strengthen the public services.” Drago Maric, Director General of PBS: ”This is the first step to full fill the requests from the Feasibility study and for accession of BiH to EU.” The first bills will be sent in January 2004.

Brankovic and Durakovic on collection of subscription	Dnevni Avaz pg 8 ‘Contracts with BH Telecom and HT Mostar by 31 December’, Oslobodjenje pg 4 ‘Soon, through BH Telecom and HT Mostar’ – FBiH Minister of Traffic and Communications Nedzad Brankovic and General Director of RTV FBiH Jasmin Durakovic reached an agreement on Wednesday on realization of conclusions of the Peace Implementation Council dating from December 17 regarding the steps to ensure long-term sustainability of independent RTV system in BiH in both financial and editorial aspects. The December 31 2003 deadline for signing of contract with BH Telecom and HPT Mostar will be obeyed, by which the legal obligation of paying TV subscription would be conducted via the telephone bills. It has also been arranged that representatives of RTVFBiH actively engage in the FBiH Government’s activities on designing the new law on RTV FBiH.