OHR Local News Issues, 10 July 1997

Prijedor – An SFOR operation to arrest war criminals began this morning. Former police commander in Prijedor, Simo Drljaca was killed in this operation because of his resistance to the arrest. Milan Kovacevic, former Municipality Executive Board president was arrested with no resistance. Both Drljaca and Kovacevic are the subjects of Sealed Indictment announced by the Hague Tribunal. Several press agencies reported another arrest East of Sarajevo, between Pale and Han Pijesak. However, this information has not been confirmed yet. NATO sources confirmed the start of the arrest operation. NATO Commander for Europe General G. Joulwan spoke in the name of NATO Secretary General Solana, and confirmed Kovacevic's arrest that occured at 9:30 this morning. In the separate action of the arrest of Drljaca , Joulwan said that Drljaca opened fire at SFOR soldiers who returned fire and killed him in self-defence. OHR official S.Haselock said that this morning's operation may be confirmation that the IC has found mechanisms for arresting the war criminals, as previously suggested by the OHR. US President Clinton approved this action, and the White House spokesman McCurry said that President Clinton was satisfied with the courage of the action. During the day, the arrested Kovacevic was extradited to the Hague.
6'00"

Mostar – In the presence of representatives of the IPTF Commissioner and the US Embassy in Sarajevo, the agreement on the establishment of mutual Police Forces in this canton was signed, after many failures. In the statement, Seitner said that the IC has the promise from local authorities, that this agreement will be carried out. He also hopes that the implementation of agreement will begin as soon as possible. US

Embassy representative, Beecroft said that the agreement was signed in its original form. However, the amendments on the agreement weren't signed today, since they have no influence on it's application.
2'00"

Bruxelles – At a meeting behind closed doors, 19 EU commissioners are discussing the term of the Donors Conference. As the Chairman Van den Broek insisted, this decision must be made today, because of the forthcoming meeting in Strassbourg on the 16th of this month, where EU expansion will be discussed. So far, there is no decision from this meeting, and according to the sources in the Van den Broek cabinet, it should be announced in the morning.

Sarajevo – BiH Co-President Silajdzic held a press conference today, although the scheduled CoM did not take place. The reason for this Silajdzic was the unexplained absence of the Croatian representatives. Silajdzic also commented on this morning's events in Prijedor, and said that the CoM that there can be no real progress with the DPA implementation as long as the war criminals are pulling the strings in that entity. Silajdzic also considers that the intensive implementation of the DPA is the right way to reveal the right intentions. The intention of Pale is not DPA implementation. The false implementation does no good for BiH.
3'00"

Budapest – US Defence Minister W. Cohen made an official statement regarding the SFOR operation from this morning. After the SFOR action, the accused war criminals received a warning that they will not remain free for too long. Cohen said that all of those who are accused of war crimes have to know that in they will all soon face the justice. This action is not a direct result of the Nato summit in Madrid from where the warning came for all sides to respect the DPA. Cohen said that he believs that this action has nothing to do with the Madrid Summit.

2’00”

Bruxelles – In a special statement from the NATO Secretary General Solana, it was specified that today the SFOR had the assignment to arrest two persons accused of war crimes. Solana added that SFOR acted in accordance with the mandate. The statement also says that Drljaca and one of his escorts were killed when an SFOR soldier opened fire in self-defence.
1’30”

Banja Luka – RS President Plavsic firmly protested against today’s SFOR action, demanding the release of the innocent men immediately. She reminded about the current situation in the RS. Plavsic also said that she will not take responsibility for, as she said, the unpredictable reaction of the people. Plavsic went to Bijeljina today, for regular consultations with the RS Army Commander Gen.Colic. As for Plavsic’s decision to dismiss the Parliament, the RS Constitutional Court of Law suspended this decision.

Summary SRT TV News

The Constitutional Court of RS, while considering the constitutionality of the RS President decision regarding her instructions for the dissolution of the National Assembly, has issued temporary suspension measures. The ruling was signed by the President of the Court, Gaso Mijanovic. The ruling instructs suspension on the realization of all acts coming from State Institutions, legal Bodies and Organizations, the implementation of which could bring about irreversible consequences.
02.00
PRIJEDOR– SFOR action today in this town caused the death of the Simo Drljaca, who was killed in an extremely brutal way. The RS President Cabinet has issued a telegram message to his family expressing deepest sympathy regarding the “uncivilized execution of your husband”. The telegram was signed by Mrs.

Plavsic and addressed to Mrs. Zdravka Drljaca from Prijedor.

The armed SFOR action was carried out with 5 helicopters and several APC's. After his brutal execution, Simo's son and cousin have been reported missing (they were last seen being taken away by helicopter, together with the dead body). Their whereabouts remains unknown. Simo Drljaca, the Police Chief in Prijedor, was killed in a brutal way. The Prijedor Police investigation has shown that this was a "classic terrorist action while he was on his way to his camp house". One unnamed witness to this event stated: " I was sitting down in one of the open garden cafes, when I heard someone calling Simo's name, and then I saw armed soldiers who opened fire. He was lying on his side, near the lake, when one more soldier approached him and fired one more bullet into his body."

On 10 July in the Medical Center at 1045hrs Dr. Milan-Mico Kovacevic was arrested by four SFOR soldiers (two of whom were armed), who got in using the excuse that they were delivering a Red Cross package from Belgrade. It is suspected that he is being detained at the base Ramici, near Banja Luka. Both events have caused fear among the people of Potkozarje. Protest meetings have been announced by the medical staff from Prijedor's Medical center.
01.00

With regard to today's action, the President of the Municipal Board, Mr. Milomir Sakic held a press conference in which he said: "Mr. Kovacevic was a specialist and a humanist, a heart disease sufferer too and Mr. Drljaca was killed in his swimming trunks, while SFOR say that he was killed in self-defense". Mr. Sakic today also met with SFOR representative Maj. Michael Livkov regarding this incident. Mr. Sakic said that it was not known where Mr. Drljaca's body was, or when it would be delivered to his family for burial.
04.00

The latest events in Prijedor have caused a reaction from the

RS President in the BH Presidency Krajisnik, who expressed astonishment related to these unauthorized actions of the foreign armed forces. His statement said: Those responsible for this crime committed by the Intl. Forces are to be immediately investigated so that these kinds of actions will never happen again. Undertaking those measures we can prevent the consequences of irresponsible adventurism, save the peace in this region and implementation of the DPA. It would be dangerous to use such events for some profitable goals and to jeopardize everything done so far this current political situation in RS. The Command staff on the ground should be more controlled" Mr. Krajisnik said in his message to the US that they should not again consider arresting people in the RS who ought to be tried elsewhere. RS authorities are capable and ready to send to trials those suspected of war crimes. The Intl. Community needs to consider its priorities – whether they wish to preserve the peace or to carry on with these actions.
06.00

RS President Plavsic sent a protest letter to SFOR Gen. Crouch in which she stressed that these actions will have consequences on the relations between the RS and SFOR. She asked for the immediate release of those arrested, since she fears that the reactions coming from the people of RS will be terrible. She said she could not take responsibility in that case.
04.00

BANJA LUKA – RS President Plavsic at a press conference held today said that she was astonished by the uncivilized behavior of SFOR, and that OHR was not informed about these events which took place in the RS today. Plavsic spoke with Montgomery from the Washington Office, asking him whether they were serious about the DPA implementation after these events. The RS President denied the information that she had meet with HR Carlos Westerndorp and SFOR Gen. Michael Crouch.

04.00

The head of the Red Cross Office for RS informed the President of the Red Cross Organization Mr. Cornelio Samaruga about the fact that SFOR forces used the symbols of that organization to arrest Kovacevic.
04.00

Sources close to Tribunal have stated that Kovacevic is in a prison near the Hague.
01.00

The RS Govt. Session have formed an expert team to monitor relations between the RS and OSCE, especially in light of yesterday’s offensive words and shameful statements by David Foley about RS representatives. The RS Govt. have sent a protest to the OSCE.
05.00

According to NATO sources, the action carried out today was carefully planned under the code name “Tango” following direct orders from Com. Joulwan and NATO Secretary- General Javier Solana. US President Clinton was also informed about the details of this action, for which US ground troops in the region provided logistical support.