OHR Local News Issues, 24 June 1997

BiH Press news agency reported that Bosnia and Croatia managed to get included into the “European Traffic Corridors”. The conclusion come at the meeting of the European Ministers of Traffic in Helsinki. For constructing of the corridor that will go through those two countries, both states will get loans. BiH and Croatia are placed into Corridor 5, which is the route from Ploce, Mostar, Sarajevo, Osijek, Budapest. In that way, Dalmatia is connected with other parts of Croatia through Bosnia, i.e. industrial “pools” in Sarajevo and Zenica.
2 min

At the Hague, the trial started against the HVO Commander, Tihomir Blaskic, who is charged with committing crimes against Bosniaks, mainly in the Lasva valley and in the village of Ahmici. Deputy Prosecutor, Mark Harmon, opened the trial by claiming that Blaskic “perfectly well knew about all the crimes committed by his soldiers and that they took place only 300 meters away from his HQ”. According to Harmon, Blaskic never punished or took disciplinary measures against his soldiers, who committed those crimes. In the afternoon hours, the security in the Hague arrested a 30 years old Croat, who wanted to protest against the Tribunal personnel. Another news attached to this one comes from the USA. Namely, the USA are planning to withhold the $30 million loan of the World Bank to Croatia, because this country did not fulfill its obligations envisaged by the DPA.
5 min

The issue of war criminals was the main theme at the meeting between the Chairman of the BiH Presidency, Alija Izetbegovic, and Chargé d’Affaires of the American Embassy, Robert Beecroft. Others items on the agenda were further establishing

of the police structure in BiH and ways to make them more efficient in securing communications and full freedom of movement.
President Alija Izetbegovic also met with the UN Secretary General Special Envoy, Kai Eide. They discussed the situation in Brcko. President Izetbegovic emphasized problems and mistakes being made in the registration process that could lead to legalization of the expulsion of Bosniaks and Croats, who made up almost 80% of the Brcko population according to the 1991 census. In Rogatica, Izetbevoic said, a surplus of 20 % of voters registered so far was observed. Another issue discussed was the formation of the Joint Police in the Federation, specially in Mostar, that is ongoing with the help of the IPTF.
3 min

Presser in Mostar: The main focus was on the statement made by the former Chief of Police in West Mostar, Marko Radic. Alex Ivanko at the press conference in Sarajevo that Marko Radic had recently said that ‘there are some people that cannot live without Chetniks (Serbs) and Baliyas (derogatory term for Muslims), they are visiting them and I heard that they are even giving some money to our assassins. Others are striving for the Federation and want to live with Muslims. I told them that it would be better if they wouldn’t be born at all, instead of being such degenerates and traitors’. On behalf of the UN Ivanko expressed detestation with regard to such a statement. Radic is currently deployed in the capacity of advisor to the Minister of Interior of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, Valentin Coric. Sir Martin Garrod announced the session of the HN Cantonal Assembly for tomorrow, where the most important item will be adoption of the amendment to the Cantonal Constitution that will define the organization of the city of Mostar. The OHR Principal Deputy Michael Steiner will also attend the session. Garrod said it is very unfortunate that when things are getting better, someone is trying to undermine and ruin what has been achieved (referring to

Radic's statement). The UNIPTF Spokesman announced that today, an Operational Department of the HN Cantonal Police should start its work until the cantonal police is established in all municipalities.
6 min

Yesterday, 19 months after the DPA was signed, the realization of the Stolac Pilot Project started with 5 Bosniaks families returning to their homes. 180 Bosniaks families are foreseen to return. So far, 8 familes went back, and that gives us hope for some 8.000 people to make their dreams of getting back home to come true.
3 min

The Human Rights Working Group, based in Banja Luka, expressed their deepest concern because the RS Police did not reinstate 38 Bosniak and Croat families in Banja Luka. The Federation Ombudsman stated already back in April that the RS Authorities are obliged to implement the decisions of the Banja Luka Courts and to bring those families back to their homes, said OHR Spokesman Michael Maclay at the Press Conference in the Holiday Inn. According to him the Authorities in Banja Luka should allow those families to return.
2 min

So far, in BiH and abroad, 2,700,000 voters have been registered. At the PEC meeting today, Mr. Frowick said that as of June 18 to date, 5.000 people had registered in the Brcko area.
2 min

Summary SRT News

Banja Luka – HR Deputy Steiner paid a farewell visit to the RS President Plavsic. The two of them were optimistic with regard to the future of the RS and Croat-Muslim Entity as a part of the European integration, as well as the implementation of the

DPA and its segments such as economic reconstruction and return of refugees. Plavsic said that Steiner had realised that nothing can be done without equal treatment of both sides, and the same applies to the international community, for which it took a long time to understand this. She expressed her hope that Steiner will relate his experience and knowledge to his successor. 'I think that we need to continue this road,' Steiner said. 'What would be necessary is that we have the step-by-step democratisation of BiH and the two Entities. We need help of the international community to produce economic recovery.' On one of the journalist's conclusion that he was often blamed by both Serbs and Croats to have supported the Muslims and the question whether he is leaving with an impression that he has done more for one nation and less for the other two, Steiner said: 'In that sense, of course, I was not neutral because I wanted this as quickly as possible against all odds to be implemented on the ground.' Although he didn't admit it, it is true that Steiner was impartial. He supported the Muslim side which criticised him the most and will probably never forget the incident when they attacked him.
4:00

Pale – RS Foreign Minister Buha met the Italian Ambassador to Sarajevo and discussed bilateral relations between the RS and Italy. They also discussed the return of refugees. The Italian Ambassador expressed his hope that the RS and Federation will be equally treated at the next donors' conference and agreed with Buha that the process of refugee return will take time and patience.
3:00

Pale – RS Government Vice-president Ostojic and the Minister of Education, Stevic met the UNESCO representatives and talked about the reconstruction of schools in the RS. The RS offered various projects and made a list of schools which need urgent reconstruction. These projects will be offered to WB at the donors' conference, and UNESCO will certify the need for financial resources in this field.
3:00

Pale – The RS Media Monitoring Council held its first meeting after its establishment at the last RS Government session. The Council agreed on its Rules of Procedure and discussed other issues related to media monitoring. The Council confirmed that it doesn't have any executive powers over the media, as well as that all media in the RS territory are obliged to be at service to the vital interests of the RS. The Council agreed that the so-called alternative media will be taken care of by the responsible ministry and that all media will have access to the local elections, although the SRT will have the priority. Ostojic said that the RS will support open media in line with the DPA, Special Parallel Ties with the FRY, and the Sintra Declaration.
3:00

Flash news:
Le Monde quoted the famous French writer Volkov who had said that the RS should protect itself from the invasion of Muslim refugees supported by the USA, which will be organised prior to the local elections. ANSA reported that the US presidential candidate Dole had had a strong anti-Serb position until his recent visit to Bosnia. He said that the Muslim influence has increased at the expense of the Serb minority whose representatives are not even allowed to represent their people in the Government bodies anymore.
2:00

Vienna – As of recently, the RS representative is allowed to monitor the registration of voters at the main OSCE office in Vienna. According to his reports, 250,000 refugees have been registered abroad, excluding the FRY [where 73,000 people registered] and Croatia [61,000]. About 36,000 people were denied the right to register due to certain problems such as inadequate documents, misspelled names, etc. The RS monitor will soon receive a complete list of all voters sorted by respective municipalities, which will prevent any possible manipulations.

3:00

Banja Luka – The RS Vice-president opened a furniture fair, SAN ’97, prior to the Serb Orthodox festivity of Vidovdan, and said that ‘now that we have established our fatherland, we shouldn’t avoid hard work in order to rebuild it and show to the world our prosperity and democracy’.
2:00