OHR SRT News Summary, 2 March 1998

A JAT airplane landed at Mahovljani airport in Banja Luka at 10:55 hrs this morning. The first commercial flight since the beginning of the war officially opened the Banja Luka-Belgrade air service. A delegation of FRY business people led by the Federal Prime Minister, Milovan Sainovic, arrived on the plane. RS President Plavsic, RS Prime Minister Dodik along with the RS Minister of Traffic and Communication, Marko Pavic, met the FRY delegation at the airport. Prime Minister Dodik today stated in Laktasi that he had had discussions with the FRY delegation on the opening of a local RS air carrier. The Director of Mahovljani airport, Milanko Kovacevic, announced that airplanes would start flying in to Banja Luka from Zurich this Saturday. Minister Pavic expressed the hope that the first commercial flight from Belgrade would mark the beginning of the process of establishing closer links with neighbours, such as the RY, the other entity and with the rest of the world. Pavic added that the airport had been given temporary permission to fly civilian airplanes in the next 6 months, but he hoped that this permission would become permanent.
2:40

The eighth regular session of the RS Government took place in Banja Luka today, with Prime Minister Dodik in the chair. The session discussed, amongst others, the draft RS Amnesty Law and the draft law on mines and explosive devices in private ownership. The session also discussed the Prime Minister’s report on the recent visit by an RS delegation to Washington. A proposal was made to relocate the seat of the RS PTT to Banja Luka. The session also made a decision removing a previous decision to allow the undue cutting down of woodland.
1:11

Members of the Serbian Ministry of Interior, in a swift and efficient action today, prevented an attempt by Kosovo Albanians to organise demonstrations in the central part of Pristina. When Albanians first started to gather yesterday morning, the police initially warned that no demonstrations had been announced beforehand and appealed to those gathered to disperse. Demonstrating citizens then started to throw stones at the police and the police repelled them with water canons and tear-gas. A high-level NATO official last night stated in Brussels that NATO member states were currently in consultation on what should be done to prevent the situation in Kosovo getting out of control. The NATO official claimed that Milosevic could not view the current situation there as just a Serbian internal matter, as it threatened to spread. The scope of the recent violence there showed that this problem should rather be regarded as an international problem. In the next two days, the NATO Council, along with the NATO secretary-general, Javier Soloana, is expected to review and discuss the current situation in Kosovo in order to determine actions to be taken there to prevent armed conflict from spreading.
1:11

The German Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel, has condemned the violence and terrorist action that recently took place in Kosovo. Recalling the joint position taken by the EU, the U.S. and Russia on the matter, Kinkel stated that the issue should be resolved through political means and supported the territorial integrity of the FRY. The Austrian Foreign Minister, Wolfgan Schuessel, sharply condemned terrorist attacks by Kosovo Albanians against the police. “The only way out is to hold an urgent meeting between the Belgrade Government and leaders of Kosovo separatists”. The French Foreign Ministry today sharply condemned all violence in Kosovo and supported the idea of a peaceful and political solution of the issue. A similar position was today expressed by the respective Greek and Italian political leaderships. The

European Commission expressed regrets over the loss of people’s lives. The European Commissioner for International Relations, Hans van den Broek, announced that the EU political committee would meet tomorrow to discuss the current situation there, prior to the planned visit by the respective German and French Foreign Ministers to Belgrade scheduled for 19th March.
2:34

Exhumation works at the Carevo Polje mass grave location, containing bodies of about 80 Serb troops and civilians who were killed during the fighting that took place in the area in late 1995, started today in the vicinity of Jajce. 15 bodies have so far been exhumed.
0:34

The Banja Luka-based Serb Intellectual Forum today addressed a sharp warning to the IC regarding the fact that nothing has yet been done to prevent Serbs from Eastern Slavonia from leaving the area. While the IC keep verbally condemning Croatia, they still maintain three flights per week taking Serbs to Norway. The Forum requested that its representatives should meet with the respective Ambassadors of the United States and Germany in Croatia and BH, as well as with Jacques Klein, on the matter. The Forum signaled that there would be no return to the RS, unless the current ethnic cleansing in Eastern Slavonia stopped.
2:00