

OHR's BiH Media Round-up, 12/6/2002

Print Media Headlines

Dnevni Avaz: Haris Silajdzic: I was persuaded that I was needed; Nikola Grabovac: I am not a crook and will not resign; Delimustafic trial

Oslobodjenje: Grabovac asks two customs inspectors to resign because of AM-SPED; Delimustafic trial

Jutarnje Novine: Federation President: I am waiting for Behmen to ask Grabovac to resign

Nezavisne Novine: Paddy Ashdown: I expect decisive moves by Grabovac and Vracar

Glas Srpski: Unrevealing network of terrorism in BiH; Tihic's candidacy for the Presidency

Vecernji List: Mostar – Mortars were stored for the war against Croats; Grabovac: I stepped on power mongers toes

Dnevni List: Bosniak leaders obstruct investigation of mortar rounds in Mostar

AM-SPED Affairs in the Federation

Oslobodjenje (front page by **Azhar Kalamujic**) reports that the investigation into the AM-SPED Affair is entering its final phase. According to preliminary results, **Mirko Anic**, the director of AM-SPED company, has received 1,75 million KM of customs deposit [approved by the Ministry] via the Univerzal Banka, urgently withdrew 800,000 and transferred the remainder of the funds abroad. For this reason, notes the daily, the Federation Finance Minister, **Nikola Grabovac**, asked on Tuesday the Federation Prime Minister, Alija Behmen, to remove the head of the Financial Police, Zufer Dervisevic, and his deputy, Miroslav Vidovic and name different officials to these posts.

Minister Grabovac, who is himself in a delicate position and is facing the likely removal, also filed on Tuesday before the

Cantonal Court in Sarajevo criminal charges against Dervisevic, Vidovic and his deputy, Sefika Hafizovic, accusing them of conspiracy. *Oslobodjenje's* writes that senior International Community officials, however, will back the three in order to ensure the unobstructed resumption of work of the Financial Police. (**Vecernje Novosti** p. 13 and **Nacional** p. 8 also report on this item)

In a statement for **Dnevni Avaz** (front, p. 9), **Miroslav Vidovic**, the head of the Financial Police, dismissed Grabovac's allegations and stressed that the Finance Minister was fully informed about the ongoing investigation on AM-SPED four months before he approved the paying of 1,75 million deposit. *"Unlike his deputy [Federation Finance Minister] Sefika Hafizovic, who never contacted us by phone about this case, Grabovac and his assistants made frequent calls to me and my colleagues inquiring about the case...All this proves that the Minister knew in time what was happening."*

Dnevni Avaz also writes that despite pressures coming from the OHR, the Federation government will not meet this week to discuss **Grabovac's** dismissal and he, himself, will not resign. *"I am not a crook and I will not resign. I repeat once again that I was not informed about all relevant facts in the AM-SPED case. Naturally, the OHR can remove me if it wishes to do so, but I will prove that I am not responsible for the paying of 1,75 million KM."* Grabovac also stressed that although in the countries like Great Britain, it would be normal that Finance Minister resigns in the wake of a financial scandal, but added that *"this is not Great Britain. If we wanted to be consistent, nearly half of the Federation government would have to resign now. Criminal charges have been filed against Alija Behmen, Mijo Anic. Hasan Becirovic, Mijat Tuka, Ferid Buljubasic, Sefika Hafizovic and Enver Ajanovic."*

In an interview with **Nezavisne Novine** (front – right below Ashdown's interview), Grabovac reiterated similar position, saying that it is clear that Ashdown has started his fight

against corruption from the entity Finance Ministers without being properly informed. *"I have been on this post for only one year, and he [Ashdown] does not understand that 98% of what has happened, has happened before my mandate. In this region, we interpret resignation as an act of pleading guilty. I do not feel guilty or responsible in this case."*

Jutarnji List (front, p. 4) reports that in a letter sent to the new High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, Grabovac elaborated on all details pertaining to AM-SPED affair and reiterated that the entire case is a result of a conspiracy by the aforementioned individuals. *"For this reason, I will not resign,"* he said. In an accompanying article, the daily notes that Grabovac is under pressure also because he criticized the OHR and the **Provisional Administration in 'Hercegovacka Banka'** for freezing 17 million KM of pension fund money. *"I spoke frankly from the beginning that the audit in one bank cannot last for longer than a year and that it cannot be conducted with tanks. I also pointed out to some companies that deal with oil trade and that obviously was a reason for this framed political affair."* Commenting on the speculations that the NHI will withdraw from the Alliance, Grabovac said: *"It is true that I did not get support from my political partners, but I was not expecting any. In this whole case it is not me who is important but the question which it raises: Who and from which political circles of Croats will be acceptable for BiH authorities and International Community."*

In a statement for **Jutarnje Novine** (front page), the Federation President, **Safet Halilovic**, said that he expects Prime Minister Behmen to officially propose Grabovac's dismissal in the coming days. *"Since I have not received any official note on this, I did not start the procedure. However, I must say that the behavior of officials charged in the AM-SPED case is quite immature... It is absurd that these officials appointed by the Parliament are consulting with their respective political parties on this and unnecessarily*

politicize this matter...I hope, however, that Prime Minister Behmen is a reasonable man and that he will make the right moves."

In an interview with **Nezavisne Novine** (front page), the High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, stressed, once again, that he expects the entity finance ministers involved in the customs affairs to resign. *"We will give them some time to think about this. This is about a new concept. This is not about individuals, but about setting standards. Perhaps, there is also some understanding for this, however, we will not give them too much time."* Ashdown said that Finance Ministers have a special responsibility to the people, as they are the ones controlling citizens' money –pensions, education funds, etc., and are therefore *"responsible to preserve the reputation of this country abroad and ensure that assistance continues coming to BiH."* (**Vecernje Novosti** p. 13 and **Blic** p. 11 also quote Ashdown)

Speaking about the same issue, OHR Chief Spokesperson, **Julian Braithwaite**, said at yesterday's press conference that Ashdown expect direct resignation of Minister Grabovac, as *"the affair in which he is involved is not a matter of his guilt or involvement in corruption."* *"This is about political responsibility. If BiH is to become a part of Europe, then it needs to adopt these sort of European standards."*

Dailies nearly unanimously conclude that it will be politically quite difficult for the Federation government to remove Grabovac, and argue that the final move will indeed have to be made by the OHR.

Sead Numanovic in an editorial in **Dnevni Avaz** notes that Ashdown's promises of the fight against corruption have materialized soon after his speech before the BIH Parliament. *"Ashdown's decisive move and a blow straight into the heart of the irresponsible authority who is acting as if it does not truly care that millions of KM are going into the pockets of*

mafia bosses instead to the people."

Customs Affair in the RS

Nezavisne Novine (p. 3), **RTRS**, **Jutarnje Novine** (p. 4), **Vecernji List** (p. 4) extensively quote OHR Chief Spokesperson, Julian Braithwaite, as saying that Paddy Ashdown believes that RS Customs Administration scandal is as serious and raises the same implications for ministers. *"Let me repeat this, this is about standards, not personalities. Tens of millions of KM of customs duty that should have gone into the RS budget for schools, hospitals and pensions are not being paid. RS government needs to clean up the RS customs and not just talk about it, and that the Minister of Finance needs to take responsibility for what has happened in his department under his supervision."*

In a statement for the **RTRS** and **BHTV 1** last night, RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, said that no one will be exempted from political responsibility for the possible abuses in the RS Customs Administration, including himself. Ivanic also said that the full investigation about the work in the RS CUS will last for months. *"If it turns out that there were criminal elements in it, all responsible institutions will be engaged and will ensure that those responsible for it are detected."*

Ivanic also said that that because of the tremendous pressure coming from the OHR, he will meet on Thursday with the head of the OHR Anti-corruption team, Mafred Dauster. *"Dauster and I will tomorrow issue a statement about the thus far revealed results of the investigation. My impression is that that should go faster than it is and that International Community are procrastinating with it."* (**Vecernje Novosti** also report on this item)

Haris Silajdzic: I was told I was needed

In an exclusive interview with **Dnevni Avaz** (front), the founder of Party for BiH and its candidate for the Bosniak member of the Presidency, **Haris Silajdzic**, said that his return to the political scene in BiH is a result of his talks

with party colleagues and citizens who persuaded him that he was needed. Speaking about the fact that SDP's founder, **Nijaz Durakovic**, will be leading the Party for BiH candidates' list for the BiH Parliament, Silajdzic said that he and Durakovic were always on the same political platform. *"Nijaz Durakovic have always been on the same political platform – preservation of the BiH state and working for prosperity of its people, regardless of their national affiliation. I have always claimed, and stress this now, that Durakovic is politically most educated man in BiH."*

On **Ashdown**: *"It is certain that Paddy Ashdown spent some of the most difficult days with us and that, in the British Parliament, he always advocated protection of human rights. As far as his program is concerned, there is nothing to be added, or nothing to be taken off of it. Already in 1996, this was the program of the Party for BiH and all those who advocated democratic and multiethnic BiH. I believe that with the new High Representative, we will have easier time reaching our strategic goal – joining the European integration processes,"* said Silajdzic, adding that it is his impression that Ashdown will not indeed have any political favorites at the upcoming elections.

Mostar mortars

Vecernji List and Dnevni list (both front pages) report that Faruk Balijagic, defense attorney for the second charged in the case of recently discovered secret weapons warehouses in eastern Mostar, announced that he would demand that charges be pressed against former logistics chief in the BiH army Halid Cengic and his son Hasan Cengic, the former deputy defense minister in the Federation. The Cengics are allegedly responsible for weapons valued at over 5 million euro remaining in the Mostar warehouses, Balijagic told HINA. According to Balijagic, former assistant BiH defense minister Husein Galijasevic and former assistant federation defense minister Mustafa Nusic knew about the warehouses.

Balijagic said that the first indictee, Mehmed Bajgoric, in his statement before the Municipal Court in East Mostar on Monday [10 June] stated that the former city authorities in

Mostar also knew about the secret warehouses. *"I am going to request that the High Representative transfers this case from Mostar to the Supreme Court because the prosecution in Mostar is not capable of charging the former most powerful officials in that town,"* Baliagic said.

RS National Assembly discusses jurisdiction over defence, army issues

At an extraordinary session held on Tuesday, the RS National Assembly rejected *"all attempts of unconstitutional transfer of jurisdiction in the area of defense and armed forces from the entities to the state institutions."* In the adopted consultations, the RS NA said it supported efforts that all issues pertaining to the field of defense and armed forces at the state level will be dealt with in a functional manner through the SCMM (Standing Committee on Military Matters), its Secretariat and the Joint Military Commission and in accordance with constitutional provisions and powers. The Assembly also tasked the RS representatives in the joint BiH institutions not to accept any debate on defense and armed forces, except in the aforementioned bodies.

The RS President, **Mirko Sarovic**, said that he is against the idea of demilitarization, advocated by some political parties. He emphasized that even if the RS Army has only one hundred soldiers, it will nevertheless, exist. *"The autonomy of the RS is more important than any European integration."* **Glas Srpski** (p. 3) quotes Sarovic: *"The RS still supports the idea of BiH joining 'Partnership for Peace' but participation in such projects is only possible through an agreement and with no impositions."* The RS Prime Minister, **Mladen Ivanic**, briefed the delegates in the RSNA on the RS Government stand about the Decisions imposed by the former High Representative, **Wolfgang Petritsch**, whom he accused of misuse of authority entrusted to his position. Ivanic called upon the RSNA to take a clear stand on Petritsch's Decisions, adding that acceptable ones should be forwarded to the regular RSNA procedure, while the unacceptable Decisions should be forwarded to the Peace

Implementation Council and other authorized international institutions for further consideration. Ivanic called for the RSNA to appeal to the new High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, to postpone the implementation of the Decisions until the competent institutions in BiH and abroad establish whether they are in line with the Constitution. The prime minister proposed *"setting up a team of experts in order to investigate the legality of Petritsch's decisions before the Peace Implementation Council"*. He recalled that the RS had embarked on judicial reforms, that a number of necessary legal solutions had been adopted and that independent councils for judges and prosecutors had been set up with the right to nominate and dismiss judges and prosecutors. *"It is true that more needs to be done and we were prepared to adopt many laws regarding the judiciary and to carry out the necessary reforms,"* Ivanic said.

He also expressed hope that Ashdown will show understanding and undertake measures which will protect the interests of the RS. (**Blic** also reports on this item)

Dutch Prime Minister visits BiH; refuses to apologize for Srebrenica massacre

Outgoing Dutch Prime Minister **Wim Kok**, who resigned over his country's failure to prevent the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, told BiH citizens on Tuesday they should blame Bosnian Serbs for the slaughter and not his people, **Reuters** reported (Nedim Dervisbegovic) (also see **AFP**, **Oslobodjenje** – p. 3 and **Dnevni Avaz** – p. 2) *"We are no murderers, we were there as part of the international community in order to safeguard security and safety, which proved to be impossible,"* Kok said after a meeting with **Beriz Belkic**, the BiH Presidency Chairman. *"The blame is to (be) put on those who were really responsible for what happened seven years ago in Srebrenica. It was not the Dutch,"* he told reporters in a clear reference to the Bosnian Serb forces who took the enclave in 1995, notes the agency.

State leadership agrees to adopt all imposed EU Road Map laws

All media in the Federation report that the most senior leadership of the BiH state finally agreed at a session held in Sarajevo on Tuesday to urgently adopt all remaining laws from the EU Road Map. Presidency chairman, Beriz Belkic, said after the meeting that the BiH Presidency will ask the Council of Ministers to assume a more active role in resolving these issues. *"We have also concluded that there are no more political obstacles to adopt the remaining laws."*

Numerous internal SDP candidates for the Presidency

Dnevni Avaz (p. 3) reports that the SDP Presidency recorded ten names of the potential party candidates for the posts in the BiH Presidency. According to the article, Zlatko Lagumdžija, Alija Behmen, Nijaz Durakovic, Selim Beslagic are selected as potential candidates for the Bosniak post, while Jozo Krizanovic, Karlo Filipovic, Ivo Komsic, Gradimir Gojer and Zeljko Komsic have been nominated for the Croat member of the Presidency.

Dnevni Avaz and **Jutarnje Novine** (p. 7) write that it is still not certain what will be the fate of Nijaz Durakovic. In a statement for the later, SDP's vice president, Sead Avdic, said that the SDP Main Board will decide on this issue at a session scheduled for June 22. *"However, it is already clear that if Durakovic confirms that he is leading the S BiH candidates' list, he could not be an SDP candidate, although some municipal boards proposed him as a candidate for some important posts, such as the Presidency."* Avdic stressed that if Durakovic maintains his position and decides to lead the S BiH lists, he could even be *"erased from the SDP registry."*

Ashdown meets Izetbegovic

Oslobodjenje (p. 4) and **Dnevni Avaz** (p. 2) report that the new High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, met on Tuesday with the founder and the former president of the SDA, Alija Izetbegovic, who expressed his ultimate support for Ashdown's priorities.

Croatian-BiH relations

Slobodna Dalmacija (p. 13) carries an editorial by **Dino Mikulandra** in which the author renders the issue of BiH-Croatia relations, especially in the light of the latest statements regarding the Ploce Port and Croatia-BiH Interstate Council meeting which is to be held in Sarajevo on Monday, June 17. Mikulandra's suggests that the Sarajevo meeting will probably bear no fruit because of the *dis-empowered presidents* (Belkic and Mesic) and that the only concrete result might be a couple of good jokes and the usual diplomatic speeches by Ambassadors Vrbosic and Dizdarevic. Mikulandra argues that all contentious issue between the two countries will be put on hold until October 5 and BiH elections when Croatian PM Racan will host new negotiators.

NATO's special units for Balkans

Nedeljni Telegraf (p. 5) reports in a three-page article that the NATO will form special units for the fight against the organized crime, which would initially be introduced in BiH, Kosovo and Macedonia. The official Brussels argues, notes the daily, that the only likely cause of a potential new crisis in the Balkans could be the organized crime. *"There are even indications that connected criminal structures from Croatia, BiH, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania might go to war against NATO. According to some information, within the next year, there could be a real war between Mafia and the authorities in BiH, while Al'Qaida-organized terrorist attacks are also expected."*

Initially, writes Telegraf, these units will logistically support police forces, but in the second phase they might get broader responsibilities.

Electronic Media Headlines

BHTV 1

- Dutch Prime Minister visits BiH, to meet with Srebrenica survivors
- Refugees living in difficult conditions in the RS
- Top BiH leadership agrees to adopt EU Road Map laws
- Customs scandlas in the Federation, RS/Ashdown's

comments

FTV

- Dutch Prime Ministers visits BiH, to meet with Srebrenica survivors, says he will not apologize for the massacre
- Top BiH leadership agrees to adopt EU Road Map laws
- RS NA rejects discussion on defense, joint army at the state level

RTRS

- RS NA rejects discussion on defense, joint army at the state level
- RS Prime Minister says government to discuss investigative report on Customs affair
- AM-SPED affair/Grabovac says he will not resign