

# Transcript of the Press Conference in Mostar

	Spokesperson	Topic
OHR	Avis Benes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reminder of briefing on PIC Steering Board Political Directors meeting</li></ul>
OSCE	Richard Medic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No statement</li></ul>
SFOR	Capt. Magistretti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MNB SE operation in Prozor-Rama</li><li>• Joint Military Conference</li><li>• Update on destruction of the seven bombs found in Mostar</li></ul>

## **Avis Benes – OHR:**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and welcome to today's press conference of the International Organizations seated in Mostar.

On behalf of the OHR I have only one point for you today. Namely, as you could see in the media advisory OHR Director of Communications, Julian Braithwaite, will brief members of the press on what will be happening in the next three days, i.e. the Peace Implementation Council Steering Board meeting at the level Political Directors, which will be extremely important for BIH. He will say more about it today in Sarajevo.

## **Richard Medic – OSCE**

Nothing from the OSCE today.

## **Capt. Magistretti – SFOR:**

Ladies and Gentlemen good morning. Today, I have few points for you.

First I would to say couple of words about the operation MNBSE troops conducted in Rama few days ago. Operation in Rama was a regular planned operation that was carried out within the framework of SFOR mandate in BIH. Our soldiers deployed in Rama were performing their duty professionally, without using violent approach. We had our check points where cars and passerbyes were searched, and that is one regular routine procedure that we had been doing since our engagement in BIH. During these searches we detained and handed over one person to local police for illegal possession of fire arms. Also during our operation in Rama no private premises were searched. In regard to the writing of some media about the monastery in Scita I would like to say that SFOR members had asked the monastery guardian for approval to enter and search the monastery, but they receive negative respond. SFOR members decided to respect their decision, even though SFOR according to its mandate does not need search warrant or anyone's approval to search any of the premises. As I had already stressed on more than one occasion, as well as our Brigade Commander, Brigade General GM Chiarini stated during his addresses to media – and that is that SFOR is conducting its operations randomly, without announcement so you can expect to see us at any place at any time. Stabilisation forces do not favour any of the ethnical groups in BIH, and all our activities are equally carried out in our area of responsibility.

As a second point on behalf of our Commander and our soldiers, I would like to thank once again to the Population of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the kindness and understanding they had been showing for the whole week during our Operation Joint Resolve. Our troops were always welcomed for the people who had nothing to hide. After the end of this Operation, supported by the good results I gave you with Monday's Press Release, I can say that SFOR proved once more its will and capability to help the populace anyhow and anywhere.

The second point is the Joint Military Conference which was held yesterday in Sarajevo chaired by MNB SE Commander, Brigadier General Gian Marco Chiarini. Representatives of the local Armed Forces from both entities took part in conference by giving presentations about the units under their command: Major General Lalovic, Brigade General Sesar, Colonel Cikotic, Colonel Andric, Brigade General Music, and Colonel Hrustic with their assistants .

They all agreed that BiH needs to create a unified defence system at a State Level with joint command and control capable of joint deployment and action. Although it might be a challenge, an affordable AFBiH is the only way to meet the international requirements and to become member of Partnership for Peace (PfP).

The last point for today is the destruction of the seven bombs found in Mostar two weeks ago. This story has come to an end. The last two World War II bombs were destroyed on Saturday.

And the last thing I would like to say today is about the little informal event we are organising in our base. We would like to invite all journalists and media representatives to come to our base in Ortijes on Tuesday, 17 of June at 9:30 and have an informal meeting with a coffee, with MNBSE Commander, Brigade General Chiarini.

That would be all for today's press conference. Thank you.

**Avis Benes – OHR:**

Thank you SFOR and now your questions please.

### **Questions:**

**Q: Faruk Kajtaz (Youth Radio X):** It is very inconvenient to speak about "what could happen" but according to my sources the proposal for Cantonal Government's composition will not be

adopted at today's session. Allegedly, the Bosniak side is not prepared to support it. When can we expect the OHR, i.e. Ashdown's, reaction and what is to be expected? Will it be immediately after the session? Was the OHR in any way involved in the negotiations?

**A: Avis Benes:** You're right. As far as Cantonal Assembly session is concerned it is not wise to speculate on it as it is in progress as we speak. What I can say is that this morning we received a list of candidates for Ministers signed by both Mr. Colak and Mr. Tihic. This is actually what we have asked for, however, as far as details of our stance are concerned I do not want to give any further comments. Julian Braithwhite, Director of Communications and OHR Spokesperson, will tackle this issue at the press briefing today in Sarajevo at 13.00 hrs. As to whether the OHR was involved in the inter-party's negotiations, no we were not.

**Q: Faruk Kajtaz (Youth Radio X):** Question for SFOR – is it an accident that SFOR's search for General Gotovina coincided with his interview published in Nacional? Are SFOR troops still deployed in this region?

**A: Capt. Magistretti:** For the first question, I think we cannot answer to this question because you probably have to ask Mr. Gotovina why he was giving this interview. We did not release any interview about that. SFOR troops of course will fully support ICTY in their aim to do their job in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Q: Nermin Bise (Oslobodjenje):** Another question for SFOR – did you have any indications or classified information suggesting that Gotovina was located in that region?

**A: Capt. Magistretti:** For security reasons, I do not want to speculate on information and our sources. Of course, our operations are always ????

**Q: Denis Vila (RTV Mostar):** I would like to hear a comment

from OHR and OSCE on the following. Yesterday, Serb Civic Council issued a press statement protesting against the appointment of the Serb representative in the Cantonal Government without the consultations with them. It is a little peculiar that the representative of the Serb nation is elected by the other two nations or one of the other two nations. What is the OHR view on this?

**A: Avis Benes:** Unfortunately, such a development has already happened in the Federation Parliament. Here in this canton, this question should be addressed to the PM designate. Simply, in accordance with the Constitutional changes, which guarantee the equality of all nations, according to the last agreement that we were informed of, he will decide on it or has in some way already decided or it was agreed upon by the parties. That is all on behalf of the OHR.

**Q: Denis Vila (RTV Mostar):** What is your view on that as the OHR representative – is it discriminatory?

**A: Avis Benes:** I have already explained OHR's view. I am not sure if OSCE would like to say something...?

**A: Richard Medic:** OSCE do not have anything to add – the question should be directed to Mr. Coric, not to OHR or OSCE.

**Q: Denis Vila (RTV Mostar):** I was not able to conclude from your answers whether this was just or unjust, fair or unfair?

**A: Avis Benes:** The OHR is not here to say what is just and what is not just but to make sure that the laws and Dayton Agreement are respected. If any law was breached, then, of course, it is not all right.

**Q: Denis Vila (RTV Mostar):** Are the laws breached?

**A: Avis Benes:** You should check out the laws for yourself.