

Statement: Joint statement by EU Presidency, US Embassy, NATO and OHR with regard to events in Manjaca and Bileca at the occasion of taking solemn oath

We condemn the incidents during the military induction ceremonies in the RS on April 16. These events have to be taken very seriously as they indicate a deeper problem within the RS. As BiH approaches crucial decisions on the country's Euro-Atlantic future, both at the NATO meeting in Vilnius on April 21 and with regard to the impending European Commission decision in May on Stabilization and Association negotiations, this could not come at a worse time.

The RS must realize that it is an entity and not a state and can only exist within BiH and as part of BiH.

These events are therefore serious, not just for what they say about some in the RS who have not yet put the past behind them, but also for what they say about BiH to the wider world, and especially to those in NATO and EU who will judge the country's readiness to move forward in the coming weeks.

Coming as this does within days of the decision taken by the EC to allow Serbia and Montenegro to proceed towards SaA negotiations, this attitude can only lead to isolation and exclusion for BiH.

These events also raise serious questions about the RS Ministry of Defense and underline the need identified by Carla Del Ponte and NATO to eliminate systemic weaknesses in the security structure of BiH, including entity ministries of defense.

The response so far given to these events by RS PM Bukejlovic and RS Minister of Defense Stankovic are wholly inadequate.

We expect RS Minister of Defense Stankovic to make clear his unqualified condemnation of the events and to initiate an immediate inquiry and report to Defense Minister Radovanovic. We expect the report to identify those responsible for the incident and detail further actions to be taken by 19 April in time for NATO consideration at the Vilnius meeting.