

Supervisor Appoints Brcko Police Chief

The Brcko District Supervisor, Henry L. Clarke, today appointed Milenko Milicevic as Chief of the Brcko District Police. Mr. Milicevic has been appointed for a four-year term, which can be extended by one additional four-year term.

Mr. Milicevic was unanimously proposed for this post by the Independent Selection and Review Board. The Board comprises the President of the Judicial Commission of Brcko, the Chief Prosecutor, senior police officials from Bijeljina, Orasje and Tuzla, the Head of the Mental Health Section of the Brcko Department of Health, and a representative of the Supervisor. The Commander of the Brcko European Union Police Mission participated as an observer. The Board reviewed 30 applications, and selected four candidates for interview. Mr. Milicevic proved to be the best qualified, and his name was sent to the Brcko Assembly for approval.

Following attacks in the press against Mr. Milicevic's conduct during the recent war, the Brcko Assembly delayed its vote. Serb councilors met with the Supervisor, and several expressed a concern that Serbs in Brcko would not support Mr. Milicevic, regardless of whether the press stories were true. At the Supervisor's request, the Assembly invited Mr. Milicevic to a working meeting at which councilors had an opportunity to question him. Mr. Milicevic rejected the accusations against him; no evidence was presented to confirm these accusations. Mr. Milicevic had been certified by the International Police Task Force and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia reported no negative information..

Nevertheless, in the Assembly vote on 7 February Serb

councilors withheld their approval. He received 15 out of 28 votes, not enough for a 3/5 majority.

The Independent Selection and Review Board met with the Supervisor on 14 February and again strongly recommended Mr. Milicevic as by far the best qualified candidate. They declined to recommend an alternative. Members of the Board, and the Supervisor, agreed that if the Assembly had presented serious evidence against Mr. Milicevic, this would have been reviewed, but it was agreed that the Board's decision should not be changed on the strength of unsubstantiated press speculation.. Consequently, the Supervisor appointed Mr. Milicevic as the new police chief.

Supervisor Clarke had the following comment: "Brcko District badly needs an experienced professional police chief. Mr. Milicevic clearly meets that standard. The Assembly approval process was intended to broaden the review, and open the process to public comment. Such a democratic process will not work, however, if members of the legislature allow themselves to be turned against a candidate by unsubstantiated rumors and unfounded character assassination. On the contrary, like everyone else in the process, legislators must look for the truth. Their vote of approval was never intended to defeat the process of selecting a nonpolitical, professional police chief.

"Brcko cannot afford a second-class, politicized police force. It takes expertise, not politics, to defeat organized crime and to uncover serious economic crimes. We must have a police force with professional standards high enough to support our professional, independent judiciary and to enforce our modern laws.

"Brcko District is ready for the next step beyond the multiethnic police force – a community in which every citizen or resident is treated with the same dignity, regardless of ethnicity or political preference. And I expect everyone to

approach members of the police force, from the new chief down to the youngest officer, in the same way."