

Transcript of the International Agencies' Joint Press Conference

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NATO HQ, Derek Chappell

OHR

HR in USA

In Washington last night the High Representative met the President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn. Today, the High Representative will be taking part in a conference on peace implementation and effective governance organized by the US Institute for Peace. This evening he will travel to New York , where he will brief the UN Security Council tomorrow morning.

In the afternoon, the High Representative will return to Washington , where he will meet senior State Department officials on Thursday.

In his conversations with US and UN officials, the High Representative will emphasize the need for effective and rapid reform of the police and defence structure in BiH if the country is to move forward with Euro-Atlantic integration. The High Representative will also brief US officials on the International Community's unanimous view that Croat Member of the Presidency Dragan Covic must step down in order to defend himself from criminal charges, so as to preserve the integrity of the office he holds.

Commission for State Property

As you know, the High Representative acted over the weekend to protect BiH assets, by temporarily freezing the sale of public property so that the State Property Commission, established by the BiH Council of Ministers in December last year, can do its work.

This Commission, comprised of expert representatives from the Entities, Brcko and the State institutions, is the body responsible for recommending administrative and legislative steps that the authorities must take in order to ensure that state property is dealt with in a manner that is equitable and efficient.

In his Decision, the High Representative specified that the Commission must present its report to the CoM by 30 November this year.

The Commission, though it was established nearly four months ago, hasn't met yet. The OHR urges the Council of Minister to act without delay to make this Commission operational.

OSCE

OSCE to release the first war crimes trials monitoring report

On Wednesday, 23 March at 12:30 , Ambassador Douglas Davidson, Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina , will hold a press conference to release a report on war crimes trials before the domestic courts of Bosnia and Herzegovina . With the establishment of the War Crimes Chamber of the State Court of BiH this past January, Ambassador Davidson looks forward to the opportunity to draw attention to the efforts proceeding before the cantonal and district court. Since 1996, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina has monitored over 100 war crimes cases, at various states of proceedings. The Report

highlights the efforts of some courts and prosecutors in bringing those accused of war crimes to justice. The Ambassador will discuss findings and recommendations from the Report.

All journalists are invited to attend this press conference on Wednesday, 23 March at 12:30 at the amphitheatre located in UNITIC tower in Sarajevo .

EUPM

EUPM and OHR continue public information road show on police restructuring

The EUPM and the OHR are satisfied with the results so far of the ongoing police restructuring road show. The public meetings have proven to be successful in explaining the benefits of police reform to the public of BiH and have seen good participation and lively discussions and debates.

This week will see two joint EUPM/OHR Teams travelling throughout BiH. The schedule is as follows. The teams will be in

- Mostar today at Hrvatski Dom “Herceg Stjepan Kosaca”
- Bugojno today at the Town Hall

Tomorrow, March 23, they will be in

- Trebinje at the Town Hall.
- Jajce at the Town Hall

On Thursday, March 24 meetings will be held in

- Nevesinje at the Town Hall
- Kiseljak at the local Cinema “Hrvatski Dom” next to the Town Hall.

All meetings start at 1800 hrs.

One of the purposes of the meetings is to deconstruct the myths linked to police restructuring. Police restructuring is not about abolishing the entities, or the Entity Ministry of Interiors – it's solely about creating an professional police service, accountable to the citizens and effective in fighting crime.

Each public meeting will focus on answering questions from members of the public.

EUFOR

No formal statement.

NATO HQ

Statement by the Commander of NHQ Sarajevo

I am concerned about recent signals from the SDS-led government in Banja Luka that suggest it is opposed to required defence reforms and Bosnia and Herzegovina's aspirations to join NATO. Last Friday, the Republika Srpska (RS) National Assembly adopted conclusions which seem to challenge the constitutional role of the BiH Presidency to set foreign and defence policy for the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The conclusions also seem to preclude RS members of the Defence Reform Commission from helping to develop proposals to transform the functions of the RS Ministry of Defence and General Staff into new BiH personnel, training, and logistics commands and develop a single defence budget.

Also of concern is the intention of the RS Army to conduct an Article 4 inspection of the Federation Army from 17 to 23 April. Although such inspections are technically permitted under Article 4, the idea that one component of the Armed

Forces of BiH would conduct an arms control inspection against another component is hard to understand considering the Parties previously agreed to end such internal inspections under Article 2.

As Dr. Gregorian informed the RS National Assembly last Friday, NATO is prepared to work with entity defence institutions only to help them with the transformation process. As it is unclear whether the RS representatives to the DRC will participate fully in its work, I have ordered the NATO Liaison Officer in Banja Luka to return to Sarajevo for consultations. We will carefully review the actions of the RS government with respect to its participation in defence reform before submitting a report to NATO in advance of the 20-21 April NATO ministerial.

I hope that the position of the RS government with respect to the DRC will be clarified as soon as possible. It is important that the voice of the RS be reflected in the proposals of the DRC, which will be sent to the RS National Assembly in May. I wish to stress that the work of the Defence Reform Commission will continue unabated, as will NATO Headquarters Sarajevo's close relationship with the BiH Ministry of Defence, Joint Staff, and Operational Command.

Q&A

Journalist #1:

The OHR was evacuated, the OSCE was evacuated, the British Culturalit was closed, and cars were lined up outside the UNDP last week, for fear of a truck bomb. One week on was there a truck bomb or did everybody overreact? OHR?

OHR:

You know very well the policy that we don't comment security

matters, and I'll have to disappoint you and stay with this.

Journalist #1:

The problem is if there's a truck bomb traveling around Bosnia do you not think there's strong public interest and people's safety is affected? Was there a truck bomb?

OHR:

We were acting in accordance with the instructions from the local police, they were responsible and we thank them very much for the excellent performance for the overall security, so for these information's I would advise you to contact MUP.

Journalist #1:

But I understand the information came from EUFOR about the truck bomb?

OHR:

Well, I don't know if EUFOR has anything to say?

EUFOR:

Well, obviously we wouldn't have taken any action had there been no information, but I am not also privy to the intelligence sources from which this was gathered, until I am unable to help you further.

Journalist #1:

Just as a general question, what level of terrorist threat is there in Bosnia at the moment? EUPM or NATO?

Derek Chappell, NATO:

Counter-terrorism is one of the three responsibilities of NATO. At the present time our role is to support the local institutions in preventing the use of Bosnia and Herzegovina

as a base for any sort of terrorist activity. We have no information that there is an ongoing threat, our actions are in support of local law enforcement institutions and agencies, and I would rate the threat as very low at the present time.

Journalist #2:

A question for EUFOR. Is there any evidence that Croatian General Gotovina has been seen in Herzegovina territory in the last weeks?

EUFOR:

I'm unaware of that. What I'm aware of is that the apprehension or the surrender of Gotovina is very important to Croatia's future in the EU.

Journalist #2:

Would EUFOR act if you had evidence? Would you try to arrest him?

EUFOR:

EUFOR is constantly looking for any person indicted for war crimes and it remains one of our principle activities and without doubt if there was sufficient information available EUFOR would act to apprehend PIFWICs.