

Transcript of the International Agency's Joint Press Conference at CPIC

Subject: JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 06 February 2003

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Thursday 06 February 2003:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Mario Brkic	• VAT and Customs • HR in Travnik • HR with CSA
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	• OSCE in Travnik
c. EUPM	Jon Oskar Solnes	• Returnee safety a key issue for EUPM • Operation Stolen Cars a success
d. UNHCR	Bakir Jalovcic	• No statement
e. ICTY	Rafik Hodzic	• The Goran Jelusic Case
f. SFOR	Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier	• No statement.

2. Twenty members of the media including two television crews attended the conference.

3. The transcript of the questions and answers is attached.

Mario Brkic – OHR

As you know, Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays was in Banja Luka on Tuesday and yesterday. He had very constructive talks with RS President Cavic, Prime Minister Mikerevic and RSNA Speaker Kalinic. At the conclusion of the talks, Prime Minister Mikerevic, speaking on behalf of the RS leadership, made a clear commitment to the EU VAT and customs standards set out in Chris Patten's Letter to Entity and State Prime Ministers of January 21st, 2003.

- The International Community is united in calling for the establishment of a single customs administration and countrywide VAT system in Bosnia and Herzegovina to meet these standards.

- Discussions with representatives of the RS and the Federation will continue so that a clear mandate and clear terms of reference can be drawn up for the experts' commission that will take VAT and Customs reform into the legislative phase.

The High Representative will join OSCE Head of Mission Robert Beecroft to Travnik tomorrow, where they will participate in a meeting with young entrepreneurs. The object of the meeting is to identify ways of encouraging investors to set up the new businesses – because small and medium sized businesses are the future of the Bosnia and Herzegovina economy: this is the sector where jobs are going to be created.

The High Representative will emphasize the crucial importance of reforming the economy and eliminating the bureaucracy and obstacles that scare off investment and prevent new jobs created. Urdur will provide more details about the conference.

Later this morning, the High Representative will today address members of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Civil Service Agency and guests at a ceremony marking the start of the Civil Service Agency's work.

The Civil Service Agency will promote the development of a

professional, independent, efficient, apolitical and merit-based civil service through the full implementation of the Civil Service Law assisting elected representatives in implementing the reforms that lie ahead.

The High Representative will point to the fact that patronage and politics have been too closely connected in Bosnia and Herzegovina for much too long. This is a totally unacceptable state of affairs and could not be allowed to continue. Hence the establishment of the Civil Service Agency, which is likely to be a significant step toward eliminating unacceptable patronage from politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The ceremony will take place today at 12.00 at the Joint Institutions Building in Sarajevo.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

As Mario just said, the High Representative and Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft, will be meeting with a group of 17-25 year olds at an entrepreneurship seminar in Travnik tomorrow. The seminar is organized by the OSCE, and is a part of our ongoing activities to encourage young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina to be actively involved in shaping their own future. The entrepreneurship seminars are a concrete way to address this by focusing on basic skills necessary for setting up small businesses. Participants are led through a series of exercises before drafting their own business concept. By the end of the seminar they will present their business concepts to the High Representative and Head of the OSCE Mission. You are all cordially invited to cover the visit of the High Representative and the OSCE Head of Mission. It starts at 15:00, Friday February 7, at Bosanski Kulturni Centar, Skolska 23, Travnik.

Before heading to Travnik, Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft, Head

of the OSCE mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, will meet with Mirsad Kebo, Minister of Human Rights and Refugees. As the lead international agency on human rights issues, OSCE seeks to continue its constructive partnership with the Ministry. The importance of human rights and returns issues were further emphasized at last weeks Peace implementations council meeting in Brussels, which called for redoubled efforts to complete property law implementation. In a meeting today, Ambassador Beecroft will talk about the Bosnia and Herzegovina state obligations to protect and promote human rights under international conventions and treaties. He also intends to discuss repossession of property and other human rights issues related to the return of refugees and displaced persons such as equal access to education, employment and security. He will mention the bad situation of Roma communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was the subject of a recent conference on Roma here in Sarajevo, and discuss the follow on actions, agreed upon at the conference. Lastly, as OSCE is widely represented in the region, Ambassador Beecroft will discuss regional return issues between Bosnia and Herzegovina and its neighboring countries.

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Yesterday's command post exercise, which was held in the Northeastern part, was successful, says General Claudio Zappulla, who organized the exercise together with the Joint Consultative Commission. The exercise simulated a natural disaster along the inter-entity boundary line. General Zappulla, who is the OSCE's personal representative for Annex 1B of the Dayton Peace Accord, noted the reasons for the success that:

- It was the first such exercise in over ten years
- All levels of the state, entity, cantons and municipalities were actively engaged in the preparations leading up to this event and in the exercise itself.

– And the level of co-operation between the entity armed forces and Civil Protection Agencies was particularly noteworthy.

General Zappulla hopes to follow this Command Post exercise with a Field

Training exercise later this year. Press release later today

And lastly, The OSCE mission is sponsoring a one-week training trip for three Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly Committee Secretaries to the Scottish Parliament, in the period from 1-8 February 2003. This follows the successful training by experts and the exchange of knowledge with committee staff from the Northern Ireland Assembly, facilitated by the Mission, which took place in December 2002. The training will consist of a series of practical workshops and meetings, with detailed presentations on overall committee work and special emphasis on efficient internal and external liaison with other committees and levels of government. One day will be devoted to educating the Committee Secretaries on how the Legal Office functions in the Scottish Parliament, given plans by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly to establish such an office. As Bosnia and Herzegovina is at the beginning of a new parliamentary mandate, PA Committee Secretaries welcome support in their efforts to help MPs in their work with committees and all assistance by experts from more mature parliaments is therefore much appreciated. Following the study trip, all three Committee Secretaries are expected to share the lessons learnt with their colleges in the Secretariat and committee members.

Jon Oskar Solnes – EUPM

First I would like to express the EUPM's satisfaction with the fact that according to the UNHCR the returnee process is moving forward uninterruptedly in the entire Bosnia and

Herzegovina and the number of returnees is increasing. The EUPM, as you know, has stated that one of its key concerns is the security of returnees, so it is watching the returnee process carefully.

Regularly the Media will report on incidents concerning the security of returnees. We at the EUPM will always check the background of such stories. This we are in a unique position to do, through our co-location system which sees EUPM officers deployed along with Bosnia and Herzegovina police at mid to senior levels all over the country. This structure of our mission gives us, through close monitoring, a wealth of information which we check thoroughly.

Through this assessment of information and intelligence, I have been able to inform you recently, from this podium, on the true facts regarding highly visible incidents in the Media. Some of them have been claimed to represent a threat to the security of returnees, notably in the recent weeks, the assault in Ahmici, which however, did not even occur in Ahmici but in the neighbouring Santici, and the Srebrenica incidents, which as it turned out, did have little or nothing to do with returnee safety.

So I urge you to be careful when reporting on such matters and I am sure you will do it in a professional manner. Coming back to the main point, for us the EUPM returnee safety is at the top of priorities.

Establishing a dialogue can be very important, and we know that following the EUPM commissioner's visit to Prijedor/Kozarac meetings are being held concerning the security situation, including representatives of respective religious faiths and the local police. A meeting of the EUPM Chief co-locator with the RS Minister of Interior and the RS Police Director and including the local Imam, was held in Banja Luka yesterday.

I furthermore welcome reports I saw on agency wires yesterday, where the head of the Municipality of Glamoc, Rade Gvero, stated that he feels that security in the municipality has improved markedly with the arrival of EUPM in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the last few days, an ongoing operation has been conducted all over Bosnia and Herzegovina in an unprecedented manner, in scope and scale, Operation Stolen Cars.

Let me give you a few facts and figures on the operation, which is ongoing in most PSC's, Canton's and Brcko district.

1200 Bosnia and Herzegovina police have taken part in the operation and have set up 284 check points countrywide. EUPM has been monitoring the whole operation.

In a sweeping manner almost 6.000 vehicles have been checked. 31 vehicles have been seized due to suspected theft.

During the operation, the Bosnia and Herzegovina police has been available to check instantly with the Interpol database on stolen cars. This new approach has already revealed four stolen vehicles on the Interpol list that have been immediately identified.

I have told you before, that for the EUPM, the conclusions from the first FIGHT operations have been that the Bosnia and Herzegovina police is moving forward through a new level of operational co-ordination and co-operation. That is the most important thing for us in the first weeks of the mission. The same can be said of Operation Stolen Cars. The fact that on the first try of such a massive police operation, never seen before in this manner in Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than one thousand police officers have been able to co-ordinate their efforts in a highly successful way, tells us that we are on the right track. The use of intelligence sources such as the link with Interpol has not been done before in operations of this kind in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The EUPM is very pleased with the co-operation with the Bosnia and Herzegovina police regarding this operation. Final assessment will take place when it is finished, but I am not at liberty to tell you when that will be.

Bakir Jalovcic – UNHCR

No statement.

Refik Hodzic – ICTY

Good morning,

In view of the recent press reports and subsequent reactions regarding the case of Goran Jelusic, which claim that a court in Italy reduced his sentence by ten years due to domestic legal provisions, I would like to clarify several points:

- After pleading guilty to crimes against humanity and war crimes, which included murders, torture, cruel and inhumane treatment of Bosniak and Croat civilians in Brcko, Goran Jelusic has been sentenced to 40 years by the ICTY. His sentence has not been reduced. Only ICTY can determine the sentence of individuals accused before it and no other legal body, national or international. The claim that Jelusic's sentence has been reduced is absolutely false.

- Goran Jelusic has not been transferred to Italy. He is still in the ICTY Detention Unit in The Hague awaiting transfer to a country where he will serve his sentence. Contrary to the article published yesterday in the Oslobodjenje daily, it is not up to Jelusic or any of the accused to choose where they will serve their sentences. The ICTY's President determines this.

In bilateral agreements with countries where convicted serve their sentences, ICTY has the power to intervene if a decision of a domestic authority contradicts ICTY's judgement. So, it cannot happen that a convicted person is released upon arrival

at the country's airport because of the domestic law provisions, or that an accused is held in conditions contrary to international standards governing enforcement of sentences. If this should occur ICTY has the power to intervene and change the country where the accused is serving the sentence.

Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

No statement.

Questions and Answers

Q: Zeljko Tica – FTV

A question for the OHR, do you believe that the High Judicial Council breaks the law, breaks the decision of the Supreme Court because the constitution says that the Prime Minister must be confirmed first?

A: Mario Brkic – OHR

Well the interpretation of the constitution was provided by the constitutional court. So for any further clarification you should speak to them.

Q: Zeljko Tica – FTV

What about the six crucial functions in Republika Srpska and will it will be done in accordance to the constitution and the administration amendments that are the same in the Republika Srpska as in the Federation?

A: Mario Brkic – OHR

This is also in accordance with the constitutional amendments and the same provisions, I think, are in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.