

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

Subject: **JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 29 May 2003**

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Thursday, 29 May 2003:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Vedran Persic	• Decision on intelligence reform • PDHR in Banja Luka
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	• BiH armed forces financial difficulties • School enrollment
c. EUPM	Alun Roberts	• No electronic statement received
d. SFOR	Captain Dale MacEachern	• Harvest focus

2. Seventeen members of the media attended the conference.

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

Vedran Persic – OHR

In a televised address marking one year of his mandate in Bosnia and Herzegovina the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, emphasized that the time has come to clean up and professionalise the BiH intelligence services. “Everyone knows the security apparatus in BiH needs reform,” he said.

“Now it is going to happen.” He added that thorough reform has the support of the professionals within the intelligence services themselves. The High Representative will lay out his plans for forming an ‘Expert Commission for Intelligence Reform’ and will introduce the international Chairman of this Commission, Kalman Kocsis, former Hungarian ambassador to BiH, who worked on the intelligence reform in its own country. Press conference will be today at 13.30 at the OHR, Sarajevo.

Today is the second day of PDHR, Donald Hays two-day visit to Banja Luka. He held the meetings with RS officials and today he’ll chair a round table on economic reform. At 13:45 he’ll visit TOP Company, and there will be media opportunity at 14:45.

Alun Roberts – EUPM

No Electronic Statement Received.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

Media reported this week about financial difficulties the Armed Forces in BiH are currently facing. In this context the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina notes that there are in fact grave and acute problems in financing the Armed Forces. Already now both armies have fallen behind their financial obligations towards their soldiers. Soldiers of the Federation Army have only received their salaries for January, February and March. VRS soldiers have only received payment for the first two months of this year. The budgets allocated for this year are almost entirely eaten up by personnel costs. There is virtually no money left for training, equipment, and maintenance of material. A further reduction of the personnel strength of the Armed Forces is required. OSCE experts have calculated that only with an overall number of about 9500 professional soldiers the Armed Forces could survive financially. Only then would the personnel costs be affordable and would amount to about 60% of the military budgets, which

is comparable to other countries in the region, such as Slovenia. BiH authorities state in the Defence Policy document that by 2005 60% of the total defence budget should be allocated to personnel cost. Serious and urgent action is necessary to prevent financial collapse in the armed forces of both Entities by August/September this year. OSCE stands ready to advise and continues to work with the armed forces in both entities, but the decision as to what and when to take action lies entirely with the authorities. The Presidency, the Entity Governments and Parliaments have been aware of the urgency of the situation since the beginning of 2002, when the OSCE published the results of the Defence Expenditure review. If the BiH authorities are serious in their efforts for BiH to join PfP programme by mid-2004 they must take the necessary steps to make the Armed Forces affordable.

As we are approaching the new school year enrollment period and as we are seeing increased return taking place throughout the country, OSCE calls upon all parents, and in particular returnees in both Entities, to enroll their children in their areas of return. The Interim Agreement on education of returnee children, signed by both entities, ensures them equal right to education. OSCE commends the schools who have made significant effort, in cooperation with our field staff, to make sure that the doors of schools are open for all children and that the needs of the returnee children are accommodated. We call upon all parents to think primarily about the future of their children and importance of their education, in that respect.

Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

Good Morning, I have one point today pertaining to hand grenades. As you are aware SFOR conducts ongoing harvest operations in an effort to remove illegally held weapons, munitions and warlike-materials from circulation. Grenades are particularly nasty weapons. They are very volatile and can easily be accidentally detonated by people with no

training or experience in the use of them. They maim and kill indiscriminately. They are a very real and very significant threat to children. Over the next three weeks harvest operations will be focused on grenades. SFOR calls upon the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to make a concerted effort to remove grenades from society. If you have any grenades or are aware of the whereabouts of any grenades take action and turn them in. Every grenade removed from circulation makes this country a safer place to live. I would like to emphasise that this grenade-focused harvest does not replace or preclude normal harvest operations. Normal harvest operations are still ongoing. SFOR will still accept any type of weapon or ammunition at any time. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

Q: Fedad Forto – FENA

Vedran, bearing in mind that the High Representative is also the Special Representative of the European Union for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the BiH Presidency received a harsh warning from Brussels yesterday that BiH could be exposed to sanctions in case the parliament ratifies the agreement with the United States about the nonextradition of its citizens. Is the High Representative going to take a stance in order to resolve this situation?

A: Vedran Persic – OHR

This is a matter for BiH as a sovereign state and it is not up to the OHR to comment on this.

Q: Fedad Forto – FENA

So you will not include yourself in the process at all?

A: Vedran Persic – OHR

No.

Q: Amra Kebo – Oslobodenje

Mr. Roberts, you are probably aware that lawyers of Sarajevo policemen complain to the Secretary General of the UN. Is Mr. Frederiksen aware of this and what is the answer?

A: Alun Roberts – EUPM

Please clarify for me if you could precisely what this letter was.

Q: Amra Kebo – Oslobodenje

Twenty Serb policemen of special forces six months ago were decertified so their lawyers complained to Secretary General of the UN. Mr. Ejdon said he's not the person who can help them. Mr. Frederiksen said it's not his duty. So who is responsible for it?

A: Alun Roberts – EUPM

Well it's curious always I think why the media come back to the case of the twenty- two police officers actually. There was a decision taken by previously IPTF and the twenty two had appealed, information was reviewed, the appeals were flatly turned down. I think the view of the EUPM Commissioner is there will be no reconsideration of this matter. We'll see what response may come back from Europe but I think that's the view of the EUPM is a full stop.