

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

Subject: JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 25 March 2003

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Thursday 25 March 2003:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Mario Brkic	• BiH Parliaments meet with Bulldozer Committee
b. OSCE	Henning Philipp	• Mr. Beecroft guest speaker at the convention of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Belgrade.
c. EUPM	Jon Oskar Solnes	• Positive structural law enforcement developments • Successful raids in Republika Srpska
d. ICTY	Refik Hodzic	• Termination of proceedings against Mehmed Alagic • Rejection of Knezevic's motion for provisional release
e. SFOR	Captain Dale MacEachern	• United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) releases the findings of their investigation into depleted uranium (DU) in BiH

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

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

Mario Brkic – OHR

For the first time ever, members of the parliaments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the two Entities and Brcko District Assembly will meet in joint session. The object of this historic meeting is for the Bulldozer Committee to discuss its 50 recommendations for immediate economic reform with parliamentarians and businessmen from every part of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

These recommendations will produce a marked improvement in the business environment, which will in turn create a positive investment climate that can be translated into jobs.

The presentation by the Bulldozer Committee will focus on four areas: Enterprises, Labor, Trade and Registration. There will be a panel discussion with parliamentarians and businessmen on these topics.

Representatives of the media in BiH may cover the whole event at – the National Theatre in Sarajevo from 15.00 on Tuesday 25 March 2003. OHR Principle Deputy High Representative, Donald Hays, will address the parliamentarians at 18:00.

Henning Philipp – OSCE

The Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Robert M. Beecroft, was a guest speaker at the convention of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Belgrade last Saturday. His speech was about the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a specific reference to the problems of regional co-operation in the Balkans.

The Ambassador addressed a variety of issues, among them education, refugee return, and defence reform.

Talking about education reform in BiH Beecroft emphasised that schools continue to suffer from poor infrastructure, outdated

teaching methods, wasteful and duplicative use of resources, student apathy and, worst of all, segregation based on membership in one or another community.

“Education is”, added Beecroft, “the key to the future. It is what provides future opportunities to the next generation, and, most important, it is what will determine and define the future itself.”

On the issue of defence reform, the Ambassador stressed Bosnia and Herzegovina needed a modest but viable and coherent defense structure. There was no place for a security vacuum in the Balkans. He welcomed Bosnia and Herzegovina’s commitment to establish comprehensive, effective and transparent parliamentary oversight over state-level defense institutions. This and an effective civilian command over the Armed forces could place Bosnia and Herzegovina in a more favorable position to eventually join Euro-Atlantic security structures, beginning with the Partnership for Peace (PfP).

Addressing refugee return Beecroft said that for the past year, the OSCE Missions in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Montenegro have been co-operating through a Joint Action Plan. It aimed at ensuring that all constituent peoples throughout the region are able to return, reclaim, repossess or be compensated for private and socially owned pre war property. He emphasised that full implementation of property laws was in the best interest of long-term stability in the Balkans.

Before heading off to the meeting of the Peace Implementation Council on Thursday, OSCE’s Head of Mission will on Wednesday address a conference of the Center for Security Studies (CSS) and the Inter-religious Council. He will talk about defence reform and reform of education.

Jon Oskar Solnes – EUPM

Friday, 21 March, FBiH Minister of Interior Halilovic and all

ten Cantonal Ministers of Interior signed a document stating the engagement of the use of joint police forces within the Federation and the exchange of information on public security in the Federation. To do so, they committed themselves to create a joint database that will stipulate the method of reporting. This is a very positive initiative launched by the local authorities and strongly encouraged by the EUPM Commissioner Sven Frederiksen. This is also a very significant step in achieving structural reform within the BiH police co-operation.

The same can be said of the SBS that is in the process of further developing co-operation structures with the local police in relevant geographic locations.

Last weekend saw a significant number of operations throughout Republika Srpska where night bars and clubs were raided. Substantial quantities of firearms and other weapons were seized. These are, of course, weapons that should not be around in the hands of citizens, by any European standard, that is; machine guns, anti-tank mines and hand grenades, just to name examples.

Furthermore, the police found two alleged Human Trafficking victims in a nightclub in Banja Luka. Importantly, not just the females who have admitted to prostitution and customers have been taken to questioning. More significantly, the owner of the nightclub has been arrested and will be imprisoned for 30 days following a court order.

The EUPM is pleased to see the Bosnia and Herzegovina police take a pro-active initiative towards increasing the security in Bosnia and Herzegovina and at the same time taking on organised crime. This, along with structural improvements in Bosnia and Herzegovina police co-operation, are the needed steps to strengthen the Rule of Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Refik Hodzic – ICTY

On 21 March 2003, the Presiding Judge of Trial Chamber II, Judge Schomburg, issued an order terminating the proceedings against Mehmed Alagic. This follows the death of the accused on 7 March of this year in Sanski Most and the filing of the Death Certificate by his defence on 14 March.

The proceedings against his co-accused, Enver Hadzihasanovic and Amir Kubura, continue.

In the case against Zeljko Meakic, Momcilo Gruban, Dusan Fustar, Predraga Banovic and Dusko Knezevic, accused of committing crimes against non-Serb inmates of the "Omarska" camp near Prijedor, Trial Chamber I rejected Knezevic's motion for provisional release.

In his motion, Knezevic cited his cooperation with the Tribunal and voluntary surrender as factors in favour of his provisional release. He also claimed that the reason why he surrendered only seven years after the indictment against him was issued was the wrong date of birth and some other detail on the first "Wanted Poster" issued in 1996.

Trial Chamber I rejected this claim and state it was not satisfied that the accused would, if provisionally released, appear before the Tribunal when called.

Captain Dale MacEachern – SFOR

Good morning, I have one point for you today.

As you may be aware, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) released the findings of their investigation into depleted uranium (DU) in Bosnia and Herzegovina at a press conference here in Sarajevo earlier today.

While the use of ammunition containing DU in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not directly an SFOR matter, SFOR takes the concerns of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina very

seriously. Consequently, SFOR extended significant assistance to UNEP in the conduct of their investigation in the form of providing Mine Awareness Training, EOD support, guides, maps and other technical support.

SFOR welcomes the results of the investigation and notes the report's conclusion that the recorded contamination levels are very low and do not present an immediate risk to the environment or human health.

For further information on UNEPs report or NATOs position regarding this matter, it is recommended that you check the UNEP and NATO websites.

Thank you.

Questions and Answers

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic – Reuters

Jon, can you tell us anything more the media said about the recent brief detention of 2 Iraqis by the Federation Police? They were subsequently released. Why were they detained; are you aware of that and why were they released?

A: Jon Oskar Solnes – EUPM

This happened what on Thursday last week; I think it was? I'll tell you what some of you journalist phoned me on Saturday asking about this matter. I have to confess here; that I was in Brussels at the time and I was also in Brussels on Friday. So I don't have any details on it but you can contact me in the afternoon if you want some more details. Simply what I heard was that they were checked, then released and for me it may not be surprising considering what kind of situation we have in the world at this moment. You all know what's happening down in Iraq and also the security situation has been somewhat troublesome in Serbia of course following

the incident there. So I think it's natural that in this region that checks especially at borders, are being enforced in a more strict manner than we would see if the situation was more stable. But please contact me in the afternoon and I'll find out more for you if there's something.

Q: Gienger Viola – Cox Newspaper

Regarding the weapons that were found in the raids on the bars in the Republika Srpska, is it typical to find that many weapons of that type on a bar premises?

A: Jon Oskar Solnes – EUPM

The thing is that of course SFOR has been conducting its Operation Harvest and has found numerous weapons and the positive thing is that the local police is increasingly going into places trying to locate weapons. Alas I have to say that we have seen a number of raids in the last few weeks with the police and they are finding weapons of this sort and you can also recall that we had the shooting incident up in Pale I think was 2 weeks ago where the police acted in a very swift manner finding the perpetrators and then they searched a number of buildings in that area and they found a surprisingly high number of weapons and ammunition. So, I have to say for myself after having seen the results from the last 2 weeks this does not surprise me. When you take into account that they raided about 80, I think 80 premises. It shows like a jolt here in the last 2 weeks that this is a problem everybody has to try to tackle, the local authorities, the local police, SFOR and all of us.

Q: Gienger Viola – Cox Newspaper

Do you have any indication that these weapons have been used for practice recently or they just seem to be stored there since the war?

A: Jon Oskar Solnes – EUPM

No I don't have any details on that, if you want details on that I suggest you simply contact the police in Banja Luka and ask them for details, they should be able to tell you.