

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

CPIC/Media Conferences

Subject: JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE –6 March 2003

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Thursday 6 March 2003:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Verdan Persic	• Meeting in Banja Luka with the directors of the leading banks in Republika Srpska
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	• Meeting of newly appointed education ministers
c. EUPM	Jon Oskar Solnes	• Vandalism in Cemetery Condemned • Mostar explosion still being investigated • Successful weapons search
d. IOM	Haris Kaljanac	• No statement available.
e. SFOR	Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier	• No statement.

2. Eleven members of the media attended the conference.

3. There were no questions for today's conference.

Verdan Persic – OHR

The OHR put out the following statement at 10.30am on Friday 7 March:

Principal Deputy High Representative Donald Hays held a meeting today in Banja Luka with the directors of the leading banks in Republika Srpska.

He informed them of the measures the international community was taking today against key individuals whose criminal activities were supporting indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic. He also set out the actions that the banks would be obliged to undertake.

Further details will be available at the press conferences being held by Ambassador Bond in the US Embassy at 11.30, and by the High Representative in the OHR at 13.00.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft, Head of the OSCE mission, welcomes the outcome of yesterday's meeting of newly appointed education ministers, which confirmed a full support for the education reforms, that local and international stakeholders have moved forward in the last few months.

At the meeting reform goals including state-level education law and common core curriculum were discussed. It was decided that a common core curriculum steering board be established immediately which will oversee the process of harmonising curricula across Bosnia and Herzegovina in time for the next school year.

The meeting was held exactly one year after the signing of an Interim agreement for education of returnee children. The participants noted some achievements in the hiring of returnee teachers and the teaching of national subjects at the request

of returnee parents, for instance in Bratunac, Srebrenica, Petkovici, Bosanski Petrovac, Ljubuski and Kotor Varos to name a few. The Education Ministers acknowledged that even though these were positive steps, much more needed to be done to ensure that a greater numbers of returnee children can attend school closer to home next year. That means also putting and end to the widespread phenomena of bussing children to mono-ethnic schools long distances from their homes.

Furthermore, tomorrow morning, Ambassador Beecroft will be meeting with the new Federation Prime minister, Ahmet Hadzipasic, where I suspect education will be one of the main things on the agenda.

Jon Oskar Solnes – EUPM

Last weekend, several graves and tombstones in the old Bosniak graveyard in Gorica, in the vicinity of Trebinje, were damaged by unknown perpetrators. This is a particularly shameful act of vandalism that puts an embarrassing spotlight on the community in Trebinje. It raises the question of what sort of message the hooligans committing this cowardly crime are trying to get across, or if it is only just another spectacular act of senseless criminal behaviour as too frequently noted in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The good news is that the regional principals agree upon how distasteful such acts of vandalism are, and have all condemned them. Yesterday, the orthodox bishop of Trebinje strongly condemned the vandalism in Gorica. Previously, the Mayor of Trebinje had stated that the criminal act not only inflicted damage on the tombstones and graves, but on the whole town as well, condemning the incident. The Chief of PSC Trebinje has also condemned the vandalism and has called upon the citizens of the municipality to come forward with any information that may help the investigation and identify the perpetrators.

The local police is continuing its investigation which is

monitored by the EUPM. The EUPM further welcomes the strong condemnation of such cowardly vandalism as stated by the local principals.

It is still unclear exactly what happened in the Mostar explosion last Friday, killing a father and seriously injuring his son as they were renovating an apartment owned by a Bosniak residing in the US. As I told you last Tuesday, the fact remains that the explosion was caused by a hand grenade, and it is indeed troublesome that the security pin has not been found.

The EUPM looks very seriously into all security issues related to ethnic minorities and returnees. As the deceased was a Bosniak and given the location of the apartment on the West bank of Mostar, we cannot rule out that there were ethnic motives behind the explosion. The truth of the matter, however, is that the investigation is still ongoing so other information may come up that could shed a totally different light on the incident.

The EUPM will continue to monitor the case and so should you.

The awful incidents last weekend underscore the fact that there are simply too many weapons and explosives around in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I hope you, the Media, will raise the awareness of the public about this. I told you last Tuesday, that local authorities will have to assume more responsibility in this matter.

Therefore, we at the EUPM are pleased when we note successful police operations rendering fine results. To name but one, a few days ago the Bosnia and Herzegovina police raided a café/discotheque in Busovaca in Canton 6. There they found 200 rounds of ammunition, 9 explosive devices and 8 rockets. You could do a lot of damage with this equipment and the sooner more of such weapons are confiscated by the police, the sooner the security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina will improve.

Haris Kaljanac – IOM

No electronic statement available.

Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

No statement.