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

Subject: **JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 4 March 2003**

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Tuesday 4 March 2003:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Mario Brkic	• OHR on security incidents • HR in Brcko • HR meets Croatian FM Picula • PDHR to hold presser on Audit of EPHB • Liberalisation of utilities services
b. OSCE	Emir Salihovic	• Bombing incident in Mostar • Conscientious objections to military service • Meetings with newly elected officials • Deadline for the Education Media Award competition
c. EUPM	Jon Oskar Solnes	• Bombing in Mostar
d. UNHCR	Bakir Jalovcic	• No Statement
e. SFOR	Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier	• Mr. Cavic's accusations of misconduct by members of the Italian Carabinieri • Mr. Tihic's note of displeasure to the Minister of Internal Affairs

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

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

Mario Brkic – OHR

The High Representative welcomes yesterday's statement from the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency condemning the horrific incidents that have occurred in recent months. The High Representative yesterday expressed his condolences to the family of Smail Hrnjacic and his hope that his son Arman will have a full recovery.

This incident and the other recent explosions have had an effect on everyone in Bosnia and Herzegovina, no matter where they live.

The High Representative fully supports the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency's call for a full and through investigation of each individual case, which will result in those responsible being brought before the courts.

Proper investigations are essential – whilst there is no statistical evidence to show that incidents related to return are on the increase – the OHR view that even one incident is one too many. In this regard the OHR is far from complacent and is following these cases and the investigations very closely.

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will visit Brcko on Wednesday 5 March 2003. During his visit the HR will outline the importance of the full support to the Annex 7 of DPA and once more impulse the much needed economic reforms through discussions with the local politicians and business community representatives. During his visit the HR will visit local community and returnee family, local business people and customs office.

More details on his schedule you can find in the MA that will come out sometimes during the day.

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will meet today Foreign Minister of Republic of Croatia, Mr. Tonino Picula, to discuss Croatian role in peace implementation and overall European integration processes developments in the region. At the beginning of the meeting there will be a photo opportunity **at 18.00.** Immediately after the meeting, there will be a short statement at **18.45 at the OHR, Sarajevo**

The Principal Deputy High Representative (PDHR), Donald Hays, will present the findings of the Special Audit of Electroprivreda Herceg Bosna tomorrow at 10.00 at the OHR. The PDHR will set out the main conclusions from the audit, from which it is clear that Electroprivreda Herceg Bosna is not being run in the interests of the citizens, but of a small group of people in and connected to Electroprivreda HB.

Following the roundtable on utilities liberalization held in Sarajevo two weeks ago, and the Elektroprivreda audits, there has been a considerable amount of reporting in the press about the utilities liberalization debate. One report last week quoted a power-workers' union leader saying that the proposed restructuring of Elektroprivreda Bosnia and Herzegovina and Elektroprivreda Herceg-Bosna would make 50,000 workers jobless. Since the total number of workers employed by all three Bosnia and Herzegovina Elektroprivredas put together amounts to fewer than **15,000**, the prospect of 50,000 job losses as a result of liberalization is clearly fanciful.

Another piece, on liberalisation of the telecom sector, reports that telephone calls from Croatia to Germany are 12 percent more expensive than telephone calls from Germany to Croatia even though the same operator, Deutsche Telekom, provides both services. The argument is that foreign companies manipulate prices just as unscrupulously as Bosnia and Herzegovina companies. What the article doesn't mention is

that BH Telekom calls from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Germany are 68 percent more expensive than calls from Germany to Bosnia and Herzegovina; while and HPT Mostar calls from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Germany are 300 percent more expensive than calls from Germany to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The rationale behind utility liberalisation is very simple – it improves services, lowers tariffs and creates jobs. Corruption-free Elektroprivredas will reduce consumers' electricity bills. As the Bosnia and Herzegovina power-supply system becomes more profitable and internationally competitive it will generate more employment not less.

Emir Salihovic– OSCE

The OSCE mission joins in the call for a thorough and impartial investigation of the bombing incident in Mostar on Friday. The OSCE is monitoring the case closely.

The OSCE mission welcomes positive developments in the last days regarding the right to conscientious objections to military service in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The reported intention of the Federation Ministry of Defense to create a commission to select social service institutions that would employ those doing civil service instead of military service would be an encouraging step towards full implementation of the right to conscientious objection. In addition, the opening of a Service Centre for conscientious objectors yesterday in Sarajevo by the "Campaign for Conscientious Objection in Bosnia and Herzegovina" is another positive move towards informing conscripts of the possibility for alternative service.

The Mission remains concerned about the fact that legal deadlines to apply for conscientious objection remain in place in both Entities despite the general failure of either Entity to systematically inform all candidates for conscription about their rights. It is imperative that this problem be addressed

by ensuring that deadlines to apply for conscientious objector status only apply after conscription candidates have been informed of their right to apply for this status.

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The OSCE Head of mission, Ambassador Robert M. Beecroft, is continuing his meetings with newly elected officials. As we speak, he is meeting with the President Lozančić, Vice President Džihanović and Vice President Radivojević of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Tomorrow, he and other representatives of the international community will participate in a meeting with the ministers of education. Following the meeting a press conference will be held at the Federation ministry of education. A media advisory is on the table outside.

Lastly, the deadline for the Education Media Award competition, launched by OSCE late last year, will be extended until March 31. We anticipate a lively media activity regarding education issues in the coming weeks and want to give opportunity to more journalists to present their works. The media awards are not the only activity related to education at the moment. We are currently going over 200 contributions from Bosnia and Herzegovina schools to a competition for 12 to 16 years old students of how they envision a better school. The results of that competition are expected towards the end of the month.

Jon Oskar Solnes – EUPM

You all know the general situation about the bombing in Mostar on Friday, which killed a Bosniak and severely injured his son, as they were going about renovating an apartment. In conjunction with this, the EUPM would like to make a number of observations.

- At the moment the Bosnia and Herzegovina Police is investigating this incident which entails many unclear

factors that have to be examined thoroughly. However, the crime investigators in Canton 7 believe the explosive device was a hand grenade that most likely did not have a security pin.

- It is still unclear who put it in the flat and how long it had been there.
- The owner of the flat lives in the US and had not been reached for comment in the latest reports available to me.
- The flat was apparently being renovated before it was going to be sold.
- The police authorities in Canton 7 must push for a swift and thorough investigation of this case and the findings must be made available to the family of the victims and to the local community.
- There is nothing at this moment that decisively points towards this explosion being ethnically motivated or returnee related.
- Just as in many incidents this year, it has been tempting to jump to conclusions and label this tragic explosion as a hate crime. It may possibly turn out to be one, but at this moment we have no specific indications for this being the case.
- The EUPM will obviously monitor the development of the investigation closely. So I hope, you will, the media, but we are not there yet to make a final assessment of the case.

Nevertheless, there is one thing the EUPM can say at this point with certainty. There are still too many explosives around in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an unfortunate legacy from the past. That is why Sfor’s efforts to collect them should be assisted in every possible way by responsible local authorities. In the end, the responsibility is mainly one of Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities, although the IC is still helping to alleviate this situation.

Bakir Jalovcic – UNHCR

No Statement.

Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

Good morning, I have two points for you today.

My first point deals with Mr. Cavic's recent accusations of misconduct by members of the Italian Carabinieri during an operation in Ljeskare on 20 February.

SFOR conducted an internal investigation of the events surrounding the operation conducted by members of the Italian Carabinieri and found no evidence of wrongdoing.

Reports that SFOR mistreated in any way Mr. Rabe Bilbija in his residence in Ljeskare are simply not true. SFOR is a professional military force and it's members do not resort to gratuitous violence in the execution of our mandate. The investigation found no evidence to support allegations of abuse or misconduct by SFOR troops. Indeed, it was the Carabinieri personnel conducting the search who helped Mr Bilbija's sister when it became apparent that she was unwell.

All actions undertaken by SFOR troops during this search were carried out within the SFOR mandate, and were consistent with the circumstances as part of our continued efforts to create a stable environment and better future for all residents of Bosnia and Herzegovina. SFOR will continue carrying out similar operations in the future in order to ensure compliance with the Instructions to the Parties (ITP) and to help promote a stable environment.

My second point concerns Mr. Tihic's note of displeasure to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr. Halilovic, with regards to COMSFOR, LGen William Ward's personal security detail's actions during a recent visit to the Tri-Presidency building.

Although Mr. Tihic's letter was not personally addressed to

COMSFOR, allegations were made in the letter which have since been widely reported and exaggerated in certain media to discredit SFOR's attitude towards the institution of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Let me be very clear, COMSFOR and SFOR's commitment and respect towards the institution and citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a matter of public record. Since the beginning of our mandate, we have worked tirelessly along with other members of the International Community to strengthen these institutions and to ensure a better and safer Bosnia and Herzegovina for people to live in and prosper.

COMSFOR is protected by a highly trained and professional personal security detail; nothing that took place on the 17th of February was done any differently to the manner in which previous visits to the Tri-Presidency building have been carried out.

Difficulties such as this arise because there is no approved, constitutional and professional government security force. Instead, each member of the Tri-Presidency has his own, unaccountable protection team.

Members of the Tri-Presidency must stop using private individuals hired by political parties to act as protection personnel. The time has come for members of the Tri-Presidency and other government officials to comply with the High Representative's directive on close protection for members of the Presidency. Individuals assigned to close protection duties must meet the requirements of the Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Information and Protection. Only when this is carried out will COMSFOR and others have sufficient confidence in the levels of security provided by the Tri-Presidency to allow them to consider changing their own arrangements. In the meantime, COMSFOR's personal security detail will continue to operate as it has done in the past and in accordance with our mandate.

Questions and Answers

Q: Aleksandar Dragicevic – AP

Local newspapers reported recently that you asked for the Bosnian Presidency to give you a list of bodyguards that are working there; is there any progress and is it true? Will you give us some details?

A: Yes I understand we were; some of the….at the EUPM, the department is working with the developing CIPA wanted to know who these people are that are guarding the Presidents. It's a simple request because according to the law here, the CIPA should provide the security details for the Presidency. But of course, as all of you know, CIPA is not functional and cannot provide these security details at this moment. CIPA will be developed this year and the EUPM is assisting to develop CIPA and it will not be fully operational until at the end of the year. This means that at the moment we have a gap, CIPA will not be able to provide the security details but obviously we are interested in seeing who these guys are that are providing the security details at this moment and that is why the request was made.

Q: Fedad Forto – FENA

Mario would you like to answer the accusations awarded by the SDA Presidency according to which the High Representatives actually obstructing….

A: Mario Brkic – OHR

Of that, well everybody is entitled to his own opinion. I don't have any specific comments.