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

Subject: **JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE – 5 November 2002**

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 11:30 hours on Tuesday 5 November 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Julian Braithwaite	• Recent allegations made by Mr Munir Alibabic. • HRs programme over the next two days.
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	• Invitation to cover the second education forum.
c. UNMIBH	Kirsten Haupt	• Certification. • UN Building. • Political influence on police matters.
d. UNHCR	Bakir Jalovcic	• Latest returns statistics.
e. SFOR	Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier	• Sabahudin Fijuljanin detained and interviewed by SFOR at Eagle Base in Tuzla will be delivered today to Federation Ministry of Interior officials.

2. Thirty-three members of the media including five television crews attended the conference.

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

A. Ollivier
Col. (FR A),
Chief Operations and Plans

Julian Braithwaite– OHR

Good morning everybody. I would like to start by making one thing crystal clear for the record.

The recent allegations made by Mr Munir Alibabic, the former director of FOSS, including the allegations that the High Representative is protecting ICTY indictee Radovan Karadzic and conspiring with criminals to undermine Foreign Minister Dr. Zlatko Lagumdzija, are completely untrue. These allegations are in fact so absurd that they deserve no further comment. What they do make clear is that the more Mr. Alibabic says, the more he justifies the decision to remove him.

Let me turn now to the High Representative's, programme over the next two days.

Paddy Ashdown, has just attended the launch of the Business in my Street television documentary series, to underline his support for the development of the family business which are the future to better jobs and prosperity in this country. Said at the launch that he will do everything in his power to push through the economic reforms that are necessary to clear away the bureaucracy that holds back these businesses and prevents jobs in this country.

Today he will also be having lunch with the European Union Ambassadors, and the Ambassadors of the countries who are about to join the European Union.

He will say to these countries and I quote, "ten years ago you were starting your process of economic and political transition. Today you are on the threshold of the European

Union. Your success shows what can be achieved if the people of a country unite to push through difficult but necessary reforms. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a post-conflict country, but it is also a transition country. Your experience shows that Europe is not an impossible dream. I appeal to you to do everything you can to help us follow the path you have so successfully travelled."

Tomorrow the High Representative is meeting British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, who is paying an overnight visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina. He will brief him on the election results, and tell him that while they make reform harder, they do not make it impossible. He will say that all the political parties have publicly signed up to reform, and the protest non-vote in the elections was a sign of frustration at the lack of progress, not a vote for the past. However, he will say that the nationalist parties will need to work long and hard to demonstrate they are genuinely committed to reform. He will say what matters now are deeds, not words.

He will also dismiss the idea that we are back in a 1990 situation, Tudjman is dead, Milosevic is in The Hague, the military are bankrupt and the citizens Serb, Bosniak and Croat alike, are fed up with politics and just want a better life for themselves and their families.

The final thing he will be discussing with Jack Straw is the letter that Chris Patten the European Commissioner, sent to the members of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency at the end of last week. He will say that Mr Patten has now made clear the conditions that Bosnia and Herzegovina will need to fulfil if it is to move closer to the European Union. These include a single Value Added Tax for a single country, customs reform to boost revenue and cut fraud, and reform of the Council of Ministers. Thank you very much.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

Good morning.

A little more on what is going to happen tomorrow, you are all invited to the second education forum, which takes place at the Holiday Inn tomorrow at 12:00.

Around 300 people have been invited to the forum, where a strategy paper on education reform will be discussed. This is a paper that local and international education experts have been working on for over three months and will be presented by Bosnia and Herzegovina education authorities at the next Peace Implementation Council Steering Board meeting in Brussels on 21 November. The education forum starts tomorrow, as I have said, at 12:00, with a photo opportunity and will be followed by a press conference in the Neretva salon at 15:00, there is a media advisory on this outside. Thank you very much.

Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH

Good morning. I have three items for you today.

First of all I would like to respond to some media reports today, on the certification process, you may have seen there was considerable room given to this issue in the papers today. However, when reading those articles it appears that this process has not have been fully understood. So, I am just going to run you through the key aspects of the certification process.

One of the key goals of the UNMIBH mission was to ensure that law enforcement personnel meet international standards of professional competence and personal integrity. A thorough review process was devised during which police officers had to prove that they meet those standards. This process ran through a number of phases including registration of police officers and their provisional authorisation. It is now coming to completion with the certification of those police officers who met all requirements of certification. These requirements were known throughout the process. They include

the following key aspects, I am sure you all know them, but I would rather run you through them again. Valid educational credentials, compliance with Bosnia and Herzegovina property legislation, demonstrated ability to abide by the law and to uphold human rights, completion of UNMIBH mandatory training courses, Bosnia and Herzegovina citizenship and court clearance as proof of clean criminal record. The process was conducted thoroughly and fairly. It was a long ongoing process and requirements for certification were known to police officers for a long time as well.

The result of this process will be that law enforcement personnel in Bosnia and Herzegovina meet requirements of professional competence and personal integrity. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina need and deserve a police force in accordance with international democratic standards. It is to their benefit that all police officers meet the requirements mentioned above to ensure professional competence and personal integrity.

Comments in the press regarding the alleged role of individual UNMIBH personnel in the review and certification process are entirely unfounded and pure fabrication. The certification of police officers has been an immense joint effort and a team effort of UNMIBH in close co-operation with law enforcement agencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On a second issue also coming out of the press today, there has also been increasing interest in the conditions under which, UNMIBH is using and occupying the building in Nedzarici. Let me give you some clarification on this. In the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed on 27 August 1999, by UNMIBH and the University of Sarajevo, UNMIBH has the right to use and occupy the mentioned premises for eight years or until the UN presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina ceases to exist.

Let me also mention since 1999, UNMIBH has carried out

extensive repairs and renovations of the structure and installations of the premises these repairs amount to a value of about of 3.4 million US dollars. These repairs and renovations will then be of benefit to the University of Sarajevo once the premises will be handed back to them.

Lastly on a matter that we have discussed earlier on the issue of political influence in police matters. Following the joint letter of the High Representative Paddy Ashdown, and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General Souren Seraydarian, condemning political interference in police matters, UNMIBH has learned again that there are continued attempts to exert political pressure on police officers.

Again, UNMIBH would like to reiterate that any form of political obstruction of the work of law enforcement agencies will not be tolerated. Political interference in police matters is in clear contradiction of the principles of democratic policing. UNMIBH will continue to monitor the situation very closely. UNMIBH also encourages the law enforcement agencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina to examine thoroughly such cases of political interference and obstruction with the aim to take those responsible to account.

Let me quote again from the letter, “the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina deserve a non-political police force that serves them, not the politicians or their parties.”

UNMIBH wishes to reiterate its full support to the process of democratic police reform as an essential pre-requisite for Bosnia and Herzegovina to move towards European integration. That is all I have for you today. Thank you.

Bakir Jalovcic – UNHCR

Good morning. I have the latest return statistics for you.

In the first nine months of the year 2002, UNHCR recorded a total of 80,711 minority returns in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The number of 11,162 minority returns recorded in, September shows that the return process is in full swing, even in this late stage of the year.

“September is the month with the second highest number of recorded returns this year”, said Udo Janz Acting Chief of Mission, and reiterated the continuous requirement for reconstruction assistance for all so-called minority returns throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. He appealed to both domestic institutions and the international donor community to maintain their financial assistance in the light of the seemingly unstoppable return trend towards the full implementation of Annex 7 of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Out of the total number of 907,968 refugees and displaced persons who have returned to their pre-war municipalities since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, 568,073 are Bosniak 63%, 212,612 Serb 23%, 120,192 are Croat 13%, and 7,091 belong to other nationalities, which is 1% of the total. That is all thank you.

Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

Good morning.

Sabahudin Fijuljanin who had been detained and interviewed by SFOR at Eagle Base in Tuzla will be delivered today to Federation Ministry of Interior officials.

Accompanied by local police, Sabahudin Fijuljanin was detained for questioning by SFOR soldiers in Multi-national Division North on the 26th of October after he was seen surveying SFOR personnel and installations. SFOR personnel followed a van driven by Fijuljanin to a residence in the town of Gornja Maoca. SFOR soldiers assisted by local Srebrenik police questioned Fijuljanin who admitted that he was in possession of a legally held handgun and an illegally held light anti-tank weapon in his residence. SFOR personnel and Srebrenik

police searched his residence and removed the light anti-tank weapon, which was later destroyed by SFOR.

The disposition of the suspect is now the responsibility of Federation Ministry of Interior. In the past, there have been many co-operative efforts amongst the agencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina and SFOR. We have been very impressed by the actions of the Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions and entities such as the Federation Ministry of Interior to deal with individuals who pose a potential threat to the safe and secure environment. We are confident that the Federation Ministry of Interior will conduct a thorough investigation of the potential threat to the safe and secure environment posed by Fijuljanin.

In accordance with SFOR's mandate under Annex 1A to the Dayton Peace Accords the Commander of SFOR will do all that he judges necessary and proper to ensure the safety of SFOR personnel and installations. SFOR will continue to work closely with Bosnia and Herzegovina security agencies and the International Police Task Force to determine potential threats to the safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina

We are not going to comment on any intelligence, specific threats or operational details associated with our on-going efforts to monitor potential threats to SFOR personnel and installations. Discussing these types of issues could endanger the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and SFOR personnel. That is all.

Questions and Answers

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC

Yves, did you find any evidence against this man apart from the weapons you found in his house?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

Yes we did find some evidence and the evidence will be turned over to the Ministry of Interior this afternoon, along with Fijuljanin. But, we are not going to discuss the type of evidence that we found.

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC

Do you still consider that man a potential threat to security?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

Yes that is why we are turning him over to the Federation Ministry of Interior for them to conduct a thorough investigation and to get to the bottom of it. We full confidence in the ability to investigate and will let them do it.

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC

One question for Office of the High Representative, can you comment on allegations that Munir Alibabic, was actually providing members of the International Community with false intelligence reports regarding Karadzic's, whereabouts which allegedly later lead SFOR to several unsuccessful attempts to arrest Karadzic, is that true?

A: Julian Braithwaite – OHR

As we have said all we are going to say on this. Most indeed all of the allegations that he has made, actually do not deserve any further comment from us and we have said all we want to say on this.

Q: Merdijana Sadovic – ABC

Do you co-operate with him at all or at anytime?

A: Julian Braithwaite – OHR

We have said all want or need to say about Mr. Alibabic.

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic – Reuters

Yves, can SFOR confirm allegations by the Bosnian-Serb Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic, that SFOR knew and approved the departure of the top Bosnian-Serb military officials to Burma for talks on arms sales?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

SFOR has a mandate to monitor the movements of weapons and weapons components within Bosnia and Herzegovina. We do not have responsibility to monitor the travel of Republika Srpska or Federation defence officials around the world. That is not our mandate.

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic – Reuters

So, you did not know about it and you did not need to approve that travel?

A: Lieutenant Commander Yves Vanier – SFOR

No.

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic – Reuters

Julian, can you comment on the attempt of the Bosnian-Serb leadership to sell arms to Burma, at a time when a scandal broke about illegal arms trade?

A: Julian Braithwaite – OHR

It is pretty extraordinary that these two senior officials should be in Burma, at that time and I think it just goes to show that there is a need to introduce proper civilian control and oversight of the military industrial complex and the military in this country.

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic – Reuters

So, you would just say with this statement that it is pretty extraordinary, but nothing else because obviously the government knew about it?

A: Julian Braithwaite – OHR

At this stage until we know further details about exactly what the results of their business there was, I think that is all we can say.

Q: Sabina Arslanagic – AFP

One thing remains unclear here with Ivanic, saying that the International Community, whatever that means, knew about this trip and then it was later determined that they are under sanctions, so they just decided to quit. This obviously had the full knowledge of the government behind it. Do you know if the International Community initially approved the talks and then backed up?

A: Julian Braithwaite – OHR

What I can say is the Office of the High Representative certainly did not and it is an extraordinary thing for him to have said.

Q: Daria Sito-Sucic – Reuters

Do you believe that they really did not know that the country was under European Union arms embargo until they went there?

A: Julian Braithwaite – OHR

If they really did not know then it just goes to show how weak the systems are for controlling the exports of arms from this country.

Q: Alem Karamesic – TV Hayat

A question for the UN, yesterday, the work of 72 police officers from Sarajevo was de-authorised, 22 of them were from a special unit and the violation of human rights was mentioned as the reason, so I would like to ask for your explanation for this de-authorisation?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH

First of all, I have to correct you on the figures. Let me give you the figures again for Canton 9 Sarajevo, 1,305 police officers were certified by the Police Commissioner, 46 cases are still pending and 59 officers have been denied certification. I have gone through the criteria again, let me just explain to you again what those two categories mean, the pending and the denied certification. The category pending refers to requirements that the officers are still able to meet and we give them some additional time to so, this concerns the provision of some documents that they have to deliver, such as certificate of citizenship as well as court clearances to prove clean criminal record. Also in the same category are police officers who have ongoing criminal procedures or are involved in criminal procedures there of course we cannot pre-judge the outcome of the criminal procedure, we have to wait for the outcome and then there will be a decision made on certification or non-certification. In the cases that have been denied for that certification, there we have clear violations this does not make these officers suitable to serve in the police forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This includes police officers who have violated property legislation meaning these officers have and still remain in premises, apartments or houses as illegal or double occupants thus violating Bosnia and Herzegovina's property legislation. These officers have also proved not to be able to uphold the law or respect human rights when looking into their backgrounds when working as a police officer. The third point is, these officers who have been denied certification may also have been among those who could not provide valid

educational credentials. I can only repeat again, this process has been going on for along time. It has been carried out very thoroughly. Lots of people have worked on this. It has been an immense task to go through this and you can believe me it has been done with the utmost thoroughness to actually prove who deserves to be a police officer in this country or not.

Julian Braithwaite – OHR

If there are no more questions then thank you very much.