

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

CPIC/Media Conferences

1. The following attended the regular Press Conference held at the CPIC at 1130 hours on Tuesday 23 July 2002:

| Agency | Spokesperson | Topic |
|-----------|--|---|
| a. OHR | Mario Brkic | • Veterans Law. |
| b. OSCE | Urdur Gunnarsdottir | • Ambassador Beecroft meets with the Minister of Defence for the Irish Republic. |
| c. UNMIBH | Kirsten Haupt | • Kostajnica border crossing. • De-authorisation of State Border Service officers. |
| d. UN | Celhia de Lavarene Head of STOP Project | • NBC article |
| e. SFOR | Lieutenant Commander John Coppard | • No statement. |

2. Twenty-two members of the media and two-television crew attended the conference.

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

C. Barraud
Lt. Col. (FR A),
Chief Operations and Plans

Mario Brkic – OHR

As you know, the federation law on the rights of soldiers, war invalids and the families of deceased soldiers has been the subject of very intensive discussion over the last few days. If the law is passed, Bosnia and Herzegovina will lose 100 million US dollars in loans over the next six months and up to 400 million US dollars in loans as well in the next year and a half. The credibility of the country, with international donors and more important in the long term with international investors, will be severely damaged. In addition, the authorities will be unable to meet their financial obligations, including their obligations to pay veterans pensions.

The SBiH, the NHI, the SDP and the SDA have all assured the Office of the High Representative that they are against passage of this bill, and the Federation Government issued a clear statement on Friday, if you remember, indicating that it does not support the bill.

However, we have just heard half an hour ago, that the Federation Parliament has withdrawn the law from the procedure from the House of People. This was the only way as we see it a sensible option, especially for SBiH, which should have taken the right decision from the very beginning and not put the financing of pensions, schools and health care at serious risk.

Tens of thousands of former soldiers face unemployment – because some parties have played petty political games and wasted time promoting unworkable legislation. Instead, they should have been organising passage of crucially important economic laws that will kick start the economy, attract investment and create jobs. This is the only way to ensure benefits for all members of society in Bosnia and Herzegovina,

and definitely including the war veterans. Thank you very much.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

Good morning, I have just one brief statement.

The OSCE Head of Mission Ambassador Beecroft, met today with the Minister of Defence of the Irish Republic Mr. Michael Smith, the Secretary General of the Irish Defence Department Mr. David Callaghan, and the Chief of Defence Staff of the Armed Forces of Ireland Lieutenant General C. E. Mangan.

The talks centred on a review of OSCE activities in the area of defence, security and arms control in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They also discussed OSCE's role, co-operation with other International organisations and their Bosnian counterparts. Thank you.

Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH

Good morning, first of all let me introduce my colleague Celia de Lavarene, who is joining us today to speak later, about the article we have seen in the media coming from NBC. First, some points from my statement.

First, on the Kostajnica border crossing. UNMIBH welcomes the willingness of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers to maintain the current situation at the border between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia at Kostajnica and the councils readiness to continue working on a solution that is acceptable to both countries.

In the meantime, the Bosnia and Herzegovina State Border Service, remains at its current location. Both sides had earlier agreed to establish a joint border point in this area, which is north of the Uncica and south of Una. The technical modalities of the establishment of this border checkpoint have yet to be finalised in the consultations between the two

countries. The joint border checkpoint at Kostajnica will serve to increase the efficiency of the control of the international borders in this area.

It is essential to note and to agree that international borders have to be respected by all sides. Hence, it needs to be reiterated that the situation at the Kostajnica border crossing is a matter to be addressed by Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia.

UNMIBH urges both parties to make every effort to come to a solution on the technical modalities of the establishment of a joint border crossing at Kostajnica. UNMIBH stands ready to assist in this process which will contribute to the further strengthening of good neighbourly relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

I have an announcement on further withdrawals of provisional authorisations. The IPTF Commissioner Sven Frederiksen has withdrawn the provisional authorisation to exercise police powers from three State Border Service officers as an investigation into their conduct found them unfit to serve in the police forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In December 2000, in connection with a case of human trafficking, three Moldavian women had been held in the police station in Zvornik. When the three police officers Savo Bojanic, Dusan Zekanovic and Jelenko Vasic had been told that the women could be released, they handed them over to an individual who was known to be involved in human trafficking.

Also, Mr. Zekanovic and Mr. Vasic gave false statements during the ensuing investigation. The withdrawal of provisional authorisation to exercise police powers prevents all three individuals from working in any law enforcement agency in Bosnia and Herzegovina now or in the future. Now I will give the word to my colleague Ms. de Lavarene.

Celhia de Lavarene – UN – Head of STOP Project

Good morning.

I believe you have all probably read the NBC article, accusing the UN again of wrongdoing. We are used to it, however a lot of numbers they gave in the article are not correct. So, I am going to rectify this.

First of all, we do not have 2100 international police officers, we are only 1500 to 1600. So, I guess when a journalist says something, he should check with us.

The second thing is, we have the figures for you available outside. Sarajevo does not have 40 night-clubs, but 24 among which 16 have been closed. We did not conduct 100 raids, but 589, which is a big difference.

Further into the article, David Binder said *"the guys paid 50 dollars for an hour"*. Which is not true, the prices are less expensive; it is 60 KM for half an hour, 100 KM for an hour and between 300 KM and 400 KM for a night.

I am telling you that, because I am a former journalist and I do believe that as a journalist everybody should check three times before writing something like that.

Further more, it is said that SFOR established something like STOP. They never, ever have. We are the only organisation, who has established a unit for anti-trafficking

What else, that is about all, except it is said that the girls are bought and sold for 3000 dollars. Which is not true it is between 1500 KM and 6000 KM.

We fight trafficking; we are the only one's to do so. Later on we had some organisation coming and asking us, to be with us, which is very convenient. But we do the job. That is all I have to say.

Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH

Let me add a few words on this. Again I can only reiterate what Celhia has said, that we take this issue very seriously.

I would also like to point out that UNMIBH continues to follow a strict zero tolerance policy on any case of misconduct of an IPTF officer or any other UN staff member. In line with this policy each claim of misconduct is being thoroughly investigated and appropriate disciplinary measures are being taken, when allegations are being substantiated. We have an internal investigation section that takes care of such cases. The section is tasked to initiate investigations upon receipt of any information or allegation suggesting the involvement of an IPTF monitor or any other UN staff member, in any criminal activity or breach of the code of conduct.

If allegations have been substantiated and the case warrants repatriation, then the case is being referred to the respective home country to ensure that appropriate disciplinary or legal action is being taken in the case. The UN as you know, does not have the authority to prosecute. So, it is up to the country concerned to initiate disciplinary action and or legal action against the individual concerned.

It is essential to reiterate again, that UNMIBH takes all cases of misconduct of its staff very seriously. However, it also has to be said that, unsubstantiated allegations are not helpful when addressing such cases. We are indeed interested if anyone has information on misconduct of UN staff that they come forward and make this information available to the UN. So that we can follow up these cases, investigate these cases and take appropriate action. Thank you very much.

Just one more remark on the Kostajnica border crossing, I had promised some journalists that I would show some pictures of the actual location, my assistant is bringing them. So, hopefully after the briefing if you are interested, you can have a look a look at them. Thank you.

Lieutenant Commander John Coppard – SF0R

There is no statement from SF0R today.

Mario Brkic – OHR

Any questions?

Questions and Answers

Q: Julie Harbin-Poucher – IWRP:

I have not seen the article; did you say NBC is in the American television network?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH:

Yes, NBC?

Q: Julie Harbin-Poucher – IWRP:

Because NBC is television, so was it MS...?

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH:

They have a web site. This particular article we tracked it down was published on their website and it can be seen.

Q: Julie Harbin-Poucher – IWRP:

MS NBC...

A: Kirsten Haupt – UNMIBH:

MS NBC.

Q: Julie Harbin-Poucher – IWRP:

MS NBC, just to clarify it, thanks.

Mario Brkic – OHR

Thank you very much.