

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 4 June 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Julian Braithwaite	• Repeat of statement made by HR
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	• Press conference to launch a report on the Roma situation
c. UNMIBH	Stefo Lehmann	• Clarification on attempted dismissal of Dragan Lukac
d. SFOR	Major Scott Lundy	• Urge people to register for the elections

2. Twenty-nine members of the media and three television crews attended the conference.

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

*C Minck
Col (FR A),
Chief Media Operations and Plans*

Julian Braithwaite – OHR

To those of you who do not know me, my name is Julian Braithwaite and I am the new Chief Spokesman at the Office of the High Representative. I would like to begin with a readout of an interview that Paddy Ashdown has just given to Radio BiH1, part of which will be going out at 1800 hours this evening and the rest of it will be going out on Saturday. His main message was as follows and I can basically quote you what he said.

He said that last week was the easy part. He said it was easy to go around saying what Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to do to deliver better jobs for the people of this country and a better future for their children.

He said that the hard part will be making this happen. He said that for him that means very clear prioritisation.

He said that what the people in this country need is an effective and impartial judicial system, free from political control. He said that Bosnia and Herzegovina currently had a judicial system that delivers justice for the politicians but not for the people.

He said he was determined to accelerate the process of judicial reform. Yesterday, he said he had given an interview to RTRS and to Nezavisne Novine to underline his complete support for the judicial reform legislation imposed by his predecessor.

On Thursday, he will be attending the inaugural session of the State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina and be giving it his full support as the Court that will hear the most high-profile cases of criminality and corruption.

In the interview he stressed one thing in particular. He said that we must have – all of us – zero tolerance for corruption. He said that there are allegations of corruption

at all levels of government in this country, which in any other European country would already have led to resignations and full investigations.

He said nobody should be allowed to get away with robbing the people of this country of millions and millions of KM (Convertible Marks) of public funds. Money, he said, that should be going to education, healthcare, and pensions, is going into the private bank accounts of the powerful and politically well connected.

He then issued a challenge to the authorities of this country. He said if you want to be accepted into Europe, if you want to do the right thing for your people, you must pursue these cases without compromise and ensure that justice is done. He said that whether the cause is incompetence or corruption pure and simple, those responsible should pay the price.

Also in the interview, the new High Representative appealed to all the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina who need to register for the elections in October to do so by the deadline of 18 June. He said that this was particularly important because unless people voted and voted for change there would be no change.

On the Human Rights Chamber decision about the Palic case – you may have read that there was an article in Oslobodjenje at the weekend reporting that Mrs. Palic had written to Paddy Ashdown. The High Representative responding today to that letter and he believes that it is a disgrace that despite the 11 January 2001 decision of the Human Rights Chamber, a proper investigation has yet been carried out and those who abducted Colonel Palic have not yet been brought to justice. In his letter, he says that justice and the rule of law are the starting point, the essential requirement for a decent life for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and for progress in everything we do. He said that he would be taking this matter

up with the authorities of the Republika Srpska and asking them why it is that a full investigation has not been completed and why it is that Mrs. Palic has not been told about what really happened to her husband. He says that he sees this as an important test case for the authorities of the Republika Srpska in terms of their implementation of the Human Rights Chamber decisions.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

I have a short media advisory. It is about a press conference we are holding here in CPIC tomorrow at 1200 hours.

The OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Council of Europe, European Commission and UNICEF, we are holding a press conference to launch a report on the Roma situation in Tuzla Canton. The present situation of Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina is among the worst in Europe and the report identifies a number of problems as well as suggesting future steps. Tuzla was chosen since most Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina live in the Canton and the report is a strong indicator of the situation in the country as a whole.

Ambassador Beecroft, Head of OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sonja Moser-Starrach, Special Representative of the Secretary General of Council of Europe in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Renzo Daviddi, *Chargé d'affaires* of the European Commission and Helena Eversole, Head of the UNICEF Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, will make opening remarks at the press conference.

You are all invited to attend. We will have a press conference in Tuzla at the same time at 1200 hours at the OSCE Regional Centre in Tuzla where we will focus more specifically on the situation there.

Julian Braithwaite – OHR

I would just like to come in there and say that Paddy Ashdown

thinks it is extremely important. He saw members of the Roma community in Bijeljina when he was there on Wednesday and he was shocked by the conditions in which they are living. Many of them are unable to get their homes back and are finding that they are just the bottom of the pile and the back of the queue on property returns.

Stefo Lehmann – UNMIBH

The UN Mission would like to clarify any misleading information regarding last week's decision by Federation Interior Minister Maslesa to remove the Federation Police Director, Dragan Lukac. As you may be aware, various stories were printed in today's newspapers. There was no misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the Federation Law on Internal Affairs, as some have claimed.

UNMIBH and the Office of the High Representative have repeatedly called on the Federation Government to adopt the necessary amendments and finally pass the Law on Internal Affairs. Among other things, the adoption of the law would create an Independent Selection and Review Board (ISRB) which would act as an independent and transparent mechanism to select Police Commissioner candidates and/or to recommend their removal.

Unfortunately, this law has not yet been adopted. As a result, this Board has not yet been established. Therefore, pending the adoption of the law, any decision on the appointment or removal of the Federation (or Republika Srpska) Police Commissioner will have to be taken in consultation with the UN and the Office of the High Representative. This is not a case of misunderstanding. I want to emphasise this is clearly a case of Minister Maslesa attempting to exert political pressure on the police forces. This will not be tolerated, not by the UN, not by the Office of the High Representative and, in fact, as you understand the entire concept behind the Police Commissioner project is to separate

the police from politics and political influence.

After conducting a comprehensive review of the acts and omissions of various police officers serving with the police forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former IPTF Commissioner, Vincent Coeurderoy, decided to withdraw...(indecipherable). We announce these about ten days after the decision has actually been taken to prevent the officers being de-authorised from hearing about it through the media and not directly through the letter. So the decision was made 20 May to remove the provisional authorisation to exercise police powers from four additional officers.

I have the names here. I will not go into the details, however, if you need the details please call me and I will provide them to you. The provisional authorisation was removed – three from Tuzla and one from Foca/Srbinje – after determining that the officers engaged in various types of misconduct, including excessive use of force, neglect of duty, and giving false statements during investigations.

Removal of provisional authorisation in no way precludes the obligation of the respective Ministries of Interior from taking their own appropriate internal disciplinary action, in addition to necessary criminal investigations as required by the law.

The Commissioner's decision is effective immediately and prevents these officers, as you know, from participating in any aspect of police work anywhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina, either now or in the future and by the way this brings the total number of de-authorised officers to 161 since 1999. 37 of these have been de-authorised for their wartime background.

I would finally like to emphasise that these de-authorisations are part of an ongoing process to get rid of bad police officers and, more importantly, to increase the confidence that the citizens have in their police forces.

Julian Braithwaite – OHR

Could I just say that the Office of the High Representative obviously fully supports UNMIBH position regarding the statements made yesterday by the Federation Ministry of Interior?

Major Scott Lundy – SFOR

Lieutenant General John B. Sylvester, the Commander of SFOR, fully endorses the recent remarks of High Representative Paddy Ashdown regarding the need for all eligible voters of Bosnia and Herzegovina to register their vote.

As Mr. Ashdown pointed out, two weeks from today – 18 June – is the deadline for voter registration.

SFOR is taking up no role in this election and the current election campaign, and of course, it is not about to take sides or urge a vote for any particular party or candidate. But SFOR does think it is essential that eligible citizens exercise their right to vote.

And the first step is to register.

Questions and answers

Q – Zlejkovic / RTV FBiH – Have you finished your investigation with regard to the Republika Srpska Army?

A – SFOR – Okay, you are asking about the case from several weeks ago concerning the electronic monitoring by the VRS? The investigation is continuing; at last Thursday's news conference we suggested that it would be approximately two weeks before we had a final report on what we had found. So, the investigation continues. There have been some good developments and we are following those but we will have to wait another week or so before we can announce anything.

Q – Zlejkovic / RTV FBiH – Are you familiar with the

investigation in Travnik?

A – UNMIBH – Yes, that was an investigation as you know conducted and co-ordinated by the Federation Minister of Interior based on information that they obtained. I would have to refer you to them. They know the information that they want to give out and if there is any additional information then you should contact them directly.

A – OHR – I think that the Office of the High Representative would just like to say that we obviously welcome this action and we very much looking forward to a swift and thorough investigation.

Q – Viola Gienger / Cox Newspapers – I am curious, what happens to de-authorized police officers? There are 161 of them wandering around out there, what are they doing? Does anybody know?

A – UNMIBH – There are going to be many more in the coming weeks.

Q – Viola Gienger / Cox Newspapers – Is the community safe?

A – UNMIBH – Well, these are police officers, they are not necessarily criminals. Yes, the community is safe. But one of the concerns we have had in the past is that these de-authorized police officers are then re-hired or the Ministry attempts to re-hire them in a civilian capacity which would take them outside the purview of the Police Commissioner. This has been the case in various instances around the country. We have uncovered various of these incidents and we have corrected them, however, we believe that it tends to be a trend for many of these de-authorized police officers to be offered employment in a civilian capacity within that Ministry or within any other Ministry. Working in any other Ministry would be in compliance within the law, however, employment with the Ministry of Interior would not be. So, we have to ensure that they are not, in fact, offered positions in the

civilian capacity with the Ministry of Interior.