

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 Thursday 30 May 2002:

Agency	Spokesperson	Topic
a. OHR	Patrik Volf	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High Representative fully supports reform of the judiciary• High Representative welcomes the adoption of the State budget<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High Representative TV address tonight• High Representative's Press Conference tomorrow• PLIP Agencies announce latest implementation statistics
b. OSCE	Urdur Gunnarsdottir	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relocation of Fed Army from properties in Donja Dubica
c. UNMIBH	Stefo Lehmann	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hand over ceremony by IPTF Commissioner
d. UNHCR	Aida Feraget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Giorgio Armani is new UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador
e. SFOR	Major Scott Lundy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2002 Op Harvest results are encouraging

2. Thirty members of the media and four 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*

Patrik Volf – OHR

I have a few things for you this morning. First of all, you are all aware of the statements made by the Republika Srpska leadership regarding the High Representative's decisions on judicial reform. We want to put on the record and firmly so: The High Representative Paddy Ashdown fully supports last week's decisions on judicial reform. These will provide for a professional, fair and de-politicised judiciary, which is at the core to establish the rule of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These decisions are now law and the High Representative's view is that they need to be implemented in full.

The High Representative also welcomes the adoption by the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Representatives of the 2002 State budget. The High Representative notes that the passage of the budget will secure substantial international funding and will make it possible to expand and improve the measures which are being taken to improve the lives of the citizens of this country. He urges the House of Peoples to adopt the budget without delay.

This evening at eight o'clock the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will make a TV statement on RTRS and Federation television. The High Representative wants to speak directly to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and believes this is the best way of reaching as many people as possible at one time. He sees himself as much a servant of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the International Community and he believes the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina have a right to

know what to expect from him. Bosnia and Herzegovina will have to undertake difficult reforms over the next few years, and the High Representative wants to explain to the people of this country why they should support these reforms. The High Representative knows that without the support of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina these reforms will not succeed. If they don't succeed, Bosnia and Herzegovina will remain isolated and not the successful state, integrated into Europe, that the High Representative believes is its future.

Copies of the text of the address are available outside. I want to emphasise, it is not written on the actual text of the address but it is embargoed until the broadcast, which is at 2000 hours tonight.

Also, I want to remind you that the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, will hold his initial press conference tomorrow here at CPIC at 1200 hours. A media advisory, has already been sent or will be sent today.

Lastly, the Agencies of the Property Law Implementation Plan (PLIP) (OHR, OSCE, UNHCR, UNMIBH and CRPC) announced today that the overall implementation of the property laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina has risen, as of 30 April, to 49%, or in other words out of 255,000 claims currently on file in municipal housing offices, 141,139 have been solved.

The PLIP Agencies however wish to draw attention to the fact that the 5% increase in last months implementation rate in the Republika Srpska, is to a large extent due to the decrease in the number of claims in Republika Srpska, resulting from the continuing exclusion of claims filed for devastated property. Meanwhile, despite a continuing rise in claim figures, the Federation's implementation rate has risen by 3% and that of the Brcko District by 4%.

OHR, OSCE, UNHCR, UNMIBH and CRPC wish to emphasize that the housing offices responsible for the processing property claims

are performing a service that benefits the country as a whole, and are gravely concerned by continuing reports of threats against housing officials. The latest reports include repeated verbal harassment and threats, both in Zenica and in Glamoc. The local authorities, the local police forces and society at large must do more to ensure that officials are protected and the work of the housing offices is supported and recognized.

Urdur Gunnarsdottir – OSCE

As an addition to the PLIP statistics I want to mention a positive step, which is a reminder that even though the process can be painstakingly slow, the situation can and is improving.

Following intense efforts on the part of field staff of OSCE, UNHCR, OHR and SFOR over a two-and-a-half year period, a battalion of the Fourth Guard of the Federation army has begun to move out of properties it occupies in the Serb return village of Donja Dubica in Posavina Canton.

Since the war, the village has been used as a military base and division headquarters and has thus constituted one of the major obstacles to property law implementation and minority returns in this area.

With SFOR providing logistical support, the battalion's move to new premises should be completed in the coming days, thereby bringing this matter to a successful conclusion.

The municipal authorities and the military have committed themselves to ensuring that vacated property in Donja Dubica is returned to the rightful owners and have agreed to set up a joint commission to make this happen.

Stefo Lehmann – UNMIBH

We have one very brief point. We issued a media advisory

yesterday and this is just a reminder that tomorrow at the UN Headquarters we will have an official change of command ceremony from Commissioner Coeurderoy to the new Commissioner Frederiksen. This is primarily a photo opportunity. The media is invited to attend and you should arrive at the UN Headquarters by 0945. The ceremony takes place at 1000 hours.

Aida Feraget – UNHCR

UNHCR is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Giorgio Armani, the Italian fashion designer, as the new UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador.

Mr. Armani was appointed on 28 May 2002 in Modena Italy, during the annual "Pavarotti and Friends" concert.

The High Commissioner, Ruud Lubbers, gave the Goodwill Ambassadorship to Mr. Giorgio Armani in recognition of his significant contribution during the Afghan refugee emergency and to strengthen an ongoing partnership to the benefit of some 20 million-world refugees.

Giorgio Armani will visit refugee camps later this year to learn more about UNHCR's education and vocational training projects. Among his other activities, he plans to provide for UNHCR income-generating projects for refugees.

Other UNHCR Goodwill Ambassadors include the American actress, Angelina Jolie; the Swedish-American classical singer, Barbara Hendricks; and the Egyptian actor Adel Imam. Giorgio Armani will be the only current Goodwill Ambassador from Italy, although his compatriots Riccardo Muti and Sophia Loren are former holders of this title.

Major Scott Lundy – SFOR

I have one point for you concerning Operation HARVEST.

The Commander of SFOR, Lieutenant General John B. Sylvester, and his multinational division commanders are very pleased

with the way things are working out this year and in particular with the numbers of illegally held weapons, munitions, mines, explosives and other war-making devices that have been collected and destroyed thus far in the 2002 Operation HARVEST campaign.

The results are impressive. According to SFOR's calculations, Operation HARVEST has brought in nearly twice as many items during the first five months of 2002 as it did during the same period last year. As soon as the final May 2002 collection figures become available, I will pass them on to you.

These results have been achieved thanks to the determined efforts of local authorities and the strong co-operation this programme has received from the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Of course, there is still more work to be done. SFOR once again calls on the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to turn in their illegally held weapons, ammunition, mines and other war-making devices during Operation HARVEST so that this country can become a safer place for everyone.

To this end, SFOR is launching a new television ad campaign designed to reach young people and raise their awareness of the issue of illegally held weapons. I would like to show that first ad for you now. (The ad was then shown.)

This ad and a shorter, 15-second version of it will appear on a number of TV stations throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina next week.

Questions and Answers

Q Sabina Arslanagic / PFP – Do you have any comment about what the Republika Srpska Army is saying about this tapping incident? They say they have some equipment but they use it for training young soldiers, any comment?

A SFOR – Well, SFOR's investigation in the entire incident is ongoing. As you will remember on the 21 May we did an inspection of two sites, one of which was found to be non-compliant and the equipment that you are mentioning and the documents from that site were taken and then analysed. Secondly, we did an inspection of the Headquarters, the Air Force Headquarters, two days ago now and some more equipment – some computers and some more documents – were removed. The investigation is ongoing and to have that comment given to us is useful but we do not know where the investigation is going exactly at this point; it is continuing. I believe, we have said that in a few weeks time we hope to get back to you with more results but if they have any, as we have asked from the outset, if there is any more information regarding electronic warfare or electronic monitoring activities that the Bosnian Serb Air Force or the Bosnian Serb Army is doing we would encourage them to let us know about it now. Then we can deal with that. So, in a sense, although I am aware that this statement has been made, I would ask that the Bosnian Serb Air Force and the Bosnian Serb Army come forward with any other details they might have related to this case.

Q Antonio Prlenda / Oslobodjenje – Did they provide you with any details that you requested?

A SFOR – My understanding is that two days ago now the Republika Srpska Army and Air Force personnel at the Headquarters were co-operative with the investigation, the people who went in to inspect the site and who ultimately removed the equipment and the documents. But I do not know of any other interviews or information that they may have provided since then. I could get back to you on that though.

Q Antonio Prlenda / Oslobodjenje – As I understood your first press release on this subject, you expect that they will provide you with everything they were doing in this electronic intelligence operation, I mean did you ask them to submit reports on what exactly?

A SFOR – Based on interim results, the investigation is still going on, but based on the interim results the Commander of SFOR did three things:

- He suspended General Torbica until such time as the investigation is over;
- He also suspended all training activities of the Bosnian Serb Air Force and air defence; and
- The third thing was he insisted that any other activities, either electronic warfare or electronic monitoring activities, be brought to our attention so that they could be dealt with.

Q Antonio Prlenda / Oslobodjenje – Was any deadline given to them for to submit this?

A SFOR – I am not aware of one, but given the seriousness and the very active approach that General Sylvester has taken to this issue, SFOR would expect that it would be an immediate or very quick response.

Q Antonio Prlenda / Oslobodjenje – Do you have any idea how long this activity was going on?

A SFOR – Well, we understand that it was a passive monitoring effort that was underway and the logs and all of the documents that were seized from our two inspections are being analysed now to determine how far back in time this goes. But because it is passive – there is no sort of electronic emission in particular that we picked up on – it was more a case of this was going on and in the course of an inspection we found some suspicious things. So we are not entirely certain how far back it is going.

Q Antonio Prlenda / Oslobodjenje – Can you tell us when SFOR became aware of this activity?

A SFOR – Again we were doing an inspection of two sites. One of them was completely compliant, in the second

some suspicious documents were seen and then were removed and a short time later equipment from that second site at Lisina, near Prijedor, was then removed as well.

Q Merdijana Sadovic / ABC – I think you said to the press earlier that it is quite unlikely that the Republika Srpska Army used this equipment to help Karadzic escape from SFOR. My question is can you rule out that possibility all together?

A SFOR – I cannot rule that out yet; we do not have the final results but the point is that we have looked at it. Our experts have looked at it and it is almost certain that it could not have been used in any way.

Q Merdijana Sadovic / ABC – Why? Can you explain that to us because I do not understand how that equipment really works?

A SFOR – Well you should probably speak with someone who has a background in communications but in layman's terms the kind of monitoring that was going on. You have to have certain capabilities I suppose is the best way to put it. The capabilities required to monitor things such as the raids in Celebici are not thought to have existed at these sites.