

Foreign Press Office - Mostar

NEWS BULLETIN

Ulica Kneza Domagoja bb, 88000 Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina
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July 25-July 31

Amendment to stop Hague funding withdrawn

McCotter withdraws amendment

July 25, 2005 (Vecernji list)

Immediately before a scheduled vote United States Republican Congressman Thaddeus McCotter withdrew his amendment seeking to withhold financing the International Criminal Tribunal at The Hague (ICTY) in 2006 until charges against four Croatian journalists who "filed reports critical of the work of the ICTY" are dismissed.

Instead of a vote, the U.S. House of Representatives International Relations Committee will hold a hearing on the ICTY's threat to freedom of the media and indictments against the Editor-in-Chief of "Hrvatski list" Ivica Marijacic, former HIS [Croatian Information Service] director Markica Rebic, Stjepan Seselj and former Editor-in-Chief of "Hrvatsko Slovo" Domagoj Margetic. The hearing is to take place after summer recess.

We have learned that U.S. Ambassador for War Crimes Pierre Richard Prosper explicitly demanded a vote not occur. In turn, Congressman McCotter withdrew his amendment "at the very last moment."

"The actions of the ICTY are a direct threat to the evolution of liberty in the Former Yugoslavia, and we should be more determined in our efforts to defend a strong, free media as the ferment of every democratic process," says McCotter's previous press statement.

Lobbyists of the Croatian American Association (CAA) are responsible for initiating this amendment and in recent days they urged their elected representatives to support the amendment.

Congressman McCotter's decision to withdraw his amendment is also the result of pressure from the State Department, which does not want to condition the Tribunal's operation in any manner, as well as insistence by colleagues on the International Relations Committee because it would put members of Congress in an unacceptable position.

In case the amendment was passed, it would have placed the United States in a subversive position towards the ICTY.

At the same time, voting down the amendment would be interpreted as an American effort against freedom of the media.

McCotter thus accepted a compromise to hold a hearing before the committee chaired by Congressman Henry Hyde.

Up until now two hearings have been held before the International Relations Committee on Bosnia and Herzegovina which also warned of the difficult position of Croats in BiH.

Ivo Miro Jović: BiH PBS law has elements of racism

July 25, 2005 (FENA)

The Chair of the BiH Presidency, Ivo Miro Jović, visited the Municipality of Domaljevac-Šamac in the evening hours yesterday where he had talks with the leaders of the three Sava River Basin (Posavina) municipalities on the current problems.

Commenting on the Decision of the BiH Constitutional Court, which had concluded that the Law on the BiH Public Broadcasting System (PBS) was not destructive of the vital interest of the Croatian people in BiH, Jović said he was disappointed with the Decision. He maintains that there are domestic and foreign forces acting to the detriment of the Croatian people in BiH. Such forces are anxious to de-constitutionalise the Croats and leave them in the media darkness.

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The Croats in BiH, as a constituent people, deserve at least the level of rights guaranteed to the national minorities in Europe. "There is no such constitutional court, there is no such institution in this country and there is no such international factor that can forbid us to consume our fundamental human rights – the rights to language, culture, education and protection of our tradition and culture through media. The fight with legal means will not stop with this Decision of the BiH Constitutional Court which contains elements of racism," said Jović.

Speaking about the situation in Canton 2 (Posavina), Jović said he was surprised with the lack of care for this region on the part of the state institutions. Water supply for households, wastewater disposal, protection against floods – are only some of the problems begging solution. These problems cause many diseases and floods. The repair of the dyke near Domaljevac would solve the flood problem. But all this requires a lot of funds so that the support of the state is necessary, Jović concluded.

Croat and Serb books thrown out

July 26, 2005 (Vecernji list)

BUGOJNO – Bugojno City Library has removed books by Croat and Serb authors from its shelves. The City Library, which operates together with the cultural and sport center in Bugojno, recently received a valuable donation of books from the Federation Ministry of education, science, culture and sport.

One of the few libraries not destroyed in the war thus had the opportunity to enrich its book collection and offer new titles to book lovers.

Some books made their way to the shelves, while books by Serb and Croat authors were simply thrown out onto the street. Books on Croatian and Serbian history and culture were being sold on the streets of Bugojno for practically nothing.

This was accidentally discovered by Croat returnees to Bugojno when they asked what could be expected in the matter of the Croatian elementary school in Bugojno.

It is known for sure that the books being peddled in the street were from the Bugojno library because all the books contained the library's stamp.

Croat returnees view such behavior by the library's staff as a pre-meditated attempt by SDA [Party for Democratic Action], wartime leader Dzevad Mlace and his followers, who still rule Bugojno behind the scenes, to discourage the returnees and perhaps even shut down the only elementary school that utilizes a Croatian educational plan and program in Bugojno. (Excerpt)

Herzegovina – aluminum region

July 27, 2005 (Vecernji list)

Mostar's Aluminij has for the last 30 years been producing and exporting aluminum to European and world companies. That aluminum is then imported as building material, rims and window frames, at a much higher price.

Yesterday's manifestation, where FEAL from Siroki Brijeg and Aluminij entered a new joint venture, marks a new era which opens the door for Herzegovina to become a European aluminum region.

This is the most significant project on the territory of Herzegovina since Aluminij began operations in 1997. The new aluminum refinement plant is symbolically situated next to the old closed Alumina Plant. It will employ 100 people and the total investment is worth \$32 million. Construction is expected to be completed by the middle of next year.

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Aluminij director Mijo Brajkovic and FEAL director Mate Cuic agreed that the new plant offers enormous potential for small businesses.

Brajkovic pointed out that Aluminij has finally rounded out its aluminum production and aluminum and alloy refinement processes, which will benefit the entire region. He emphasized that simultaneous with the FEAL joint venture, Aluminij will continue to increase aluminum production by 12,000 tons, which he claims will be the “basis for a new electrolysis.”

Brajkovic judged that the agreement with the Federation Government on Aluminij’s ownership structure is a compromise in the best interest of the company’s further development.

“Mostar – World Cultural Heritage” round-table held

July 27, 2005 (Mladi.info)

The inclusion of the Old Bridge in Mostar and the Old City on UNESCO’s list of world cultural heritage is a huge achievement for Bosnia and Herzegovina and introduces a brighter future for B&H cultural heritage, concluded the round-table discussion “Mostar – Global Cultural Heritage: Perspectives for the Coming 10 Years”.

Zeljana Zovko, the B&H Ambassador to UNESCO said that Bosnia and Herzegovina has no other object on the UNESCO list, but that nominations of other B&H areas, such as Vjetrenica Cave and the Menhirs near Mostar, are expected in near future.

Zovko and Ljubo Beslic, the Mayor of Mostar, agreed that Mostar’s entry onto the world cultural heritage list was, primarily, the project of the City of Mostar, which should bring prosperity to the city and the state. Beslic also mentioned the need to create a good economic environment and educate the citizens about the culture of living, in order to keep Mostar on the UNESCO list in the coming decade.

Ambassador Zovko thanked the media for their positive reporting on B&H, presenting the country in better light as capable of creating a better future for all. The media reporting was an important step towards the entry of Mostar on the cultural heritage list.

Mayor Beslic thanked all people and institutions that lobbied for Mostar and this project, the Presidency of B&H, Government ministries, the National Commission of Conservation of cultural monuments, political parties and citizens of Mostar. (Excerpt)

No justice even 12 years after massacre

July 28, 2005 (Vecernji list)

Twelve years ago today members of Armija BiH committed horrendous crimes against imprisoned members of the Croat Defense Council [HVO] and Croat civilians in the village Doljani in Jablanica municipality, where they killed 24 HVO members and 14 civilians, of which five are still missing.

The largest massacre occurred on Stipica livada where 22 bodies were located.

The same day 16 Croats, mostly civilians, were killed in Krkaca, Stupari, Orlovac and Sarancevic.

Those who survived Doljani, around 210 of them, were arrested and deported to the infamous concentration camp “Museum” in Jablanica.

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The captured included 21 children less than five years old, the youngest of which was 37 days old, 42 children age five to 15, 10 pregnant women, 39 women and 31 people older than 60.

After the Doljani massacre, the local Jablanica television showed Enes Kovacevic, commander of the 44th Armija BiH mountain brigade, publicly commending the actors of the attack on Doljani. Congratulations also came from the Jablanica war presidency, headed by Dr. Safet Cibo.

It is disturbing that, despite the extent of the crime and despite the fact that Hague investigators visited the locality several times, no one has been held responsible at The Hague for the massacre in Doljani.

The Mostar cantonal court conducted investigations several times. However, due to a "lack of evidence" the commanders and those who carried out the crimes have evaded prosecution.

The survivors call upon The Hague Tribunal and newly established war crimes court in Sarajevo to finally initiate processing the crimes committed in Doljani.

BiH Croat party to appeal to European court over violation of rights

July 29, 2005 (SRNA)

The HDZ BiH [Croatian Democratic Union in Bosnia-Herzegovina] will appeal to the [European] Court of Human Rights in order to establish equality within the framework of the Bosnia-Herzegovina public radio-television [RTV] system, the party said today.

The statement points out that the HDZ BiH was forced into making such a move due to the impossibility of protecting the fundamental rights of Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"The Croat people have a constitutional right to their own radio-TV channel in the Croatian language, which would protect the vital interests of Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina, ensuring the equal treatment of programmes in the Croatian language in the Bosnia-Herzegovina media," the statement says.

HDZ BiH believes that through the reform of the public RTV system "consideration should be given to those who today are a national minority in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as the right to information is one of the foundations of democracy".

The Bosnia-Herzegovina Constitutional Court decided that the draft law on the public RTV system was not harmful to the vital interests of Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina when it came to the matter of the Croatian language. ■