

Foreign Press Office - Mostar

NEWS BULLETIN

Ulica Kneza Domagoja bb, 88000 Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Tel/Fax: +387 36 324 491 email: fpo@caausa.org



June 27-July 10

Ivo Miro Jovic takes position of BiH Presidency chair

June 28, 2005 (FENA)

Ivo Miro Jovic officially took over the position of BiH Presidency Chair from Borislav Paravac at a formal BiH Presidency session in Sarajevo on Tuesday. He will hold this position for the next 8 months.

Taking this post Jovic said that he views this act not only as a constitutional commitment, but also as a symbol of equality. Jovic intends to perform his duties in accordance with the law and “to the benefit of our country BiH and all its peoples and citizens”.

He announced that the BiH Presidency would strongly support the completion of the defense reform process.

However, Jovic stressed that there are serious difficulties in the restructuring of the police system. He is confident that this is no more than a brief weakness and that this process cannot be stopped.

Jovic said that much of his efforts in the next eight months would be directed at fighting for ensuring the equality of all peoples and citizens. In this respect he wishes to provide all citizens an education system in accordance with European standards and in the mother tongue, which also needs to be ensured in the media. (Excerpt)

BiH protests at Serbia and Montenegro foreign minister's secession remarks

June 28, 2005 (SRNA)

Bosnia and Herzegovina’s ambassador to Belgrade Tomislav Leko is concerned and displeased with Serbia-Montenegro Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic's statement in which he linked the possible independence of Kosovo with the possible secession of the [Bosnian] Serb Republic.

Leko said in a meeting with Serbia-Montenegro Deputy Foreign Minister Momir Udovicki that Serbia-Montenegro was one of the signatories of the Dayton agreement which guaranteed the integrity and international legitimacy and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Foreign Ministry said.

Udovicki said he believed that Minister Draskovic's statement did not infringe upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but that it was intended as a warning against a possible precedent set by the alteration of internationally recognized borders. (Excerpt)

CIA chief gave BiH list of 900 Al-Qa'ida members - analyst

June 28, 2005 (SRNA)

Darko Trifunovic, a representative of the Washington-based [NGO] International Strategic Studies Association, has said that well-informed sources maintain that CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] director Porter Goss recently brought a list of 900 names to Sarajevo in connection with the Islamic fundamentalist network.

Trifunovic told SRNA that Goss did not recently come “to Sarajevo for a surprise tourist visit”, but to hand over a list of some names to the Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities, because “clearly, nothing has been undertaken to prevent and halt the Islamic fundamentalist network which is widespread in Bosnia Herzegovina.” (Excerpt)

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Interview: Ivo Miro Jovic, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ivo Miro Jovic: Croats are persistently being portrayed as criminals
June 29, 2005 (Vecernji list)

Croat Member of the BiH Presidency Ivo Miro Jovic assumes the state chair at a time when black masks are again entering into successful Herzegovinian companies, when Serbia-Montenegro Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic is again threatening to divide BiH, when BiH is experiencing a governmental crisis, and just ahead of constitutional reform.

“My goal in this position is to make this state a community based on equal rights and improve further societal reforms in BiH by accepting European standards,” says Jovic in an interview with Vecernji list after assuming the office of Chair of the BiH Presidency yesterday.

VL: Is that possible in light of the crisis in government at the state level?

JOVIC: We have a crisis in the Council of Ministers because of the narrow interests of certain individuals. The meetings that we have had can assure that we will quickly resolve the problem.

VL: Do you have a solution for the existing crisis?

JOVIC: There can be no winners or losers. We do not know whether or not there will be changes in the Council of Ministers chair of Foreign Ministry. Regardless, we have opted for certain personnel changes within the Council of Ministers in order to be more effective.

VL: What is your comment on the special forces and EUFOR entry into Lijanovici?

JOVIC: If its purpose is to contribute to business security and the activity of government institutions, then I accept it. But I am afraid that is not the case, because similar operations thus far have exclusively been aimed at Croats. It is clear that Croats are persistently being portrayed as a criminal factor. I am afraid that is the background.

VL: How does one confront such intentions?

JOVIC: Conversations and conversations alone. We need to speak with mutual respect in order to solve fiery problems. We need to use our own strengths, and the international community as a consultant that will assist in solving a problem.

VL: Do we need the institution of High Representative?

JOVIC: I must answer that it is good for Croats that OHR exists. In a different environment, we would not even be able to come to the table, because the other two peoples do not even have the need to conduct such talks.

VL: A few days ago you stated, if RS continues to exist, then Croats also have a right to their own republic. Do you still stand behind this statement?

JOVIC: The fact that BiH is divided into two entities among Bosniaks and Serbs is no one's fault and is considered potentially functional. The Croat position on this must be clear. If two entities remain, then a third one must be formed. However, if we seek a future without entities, then Croats do not need an entity either.

VL: What sort of territorial arrangement should Croats support?

JOVIC: We cannot accept that we live in peace in such an unequal community. We need to sit down with everyone else and solve these problems not with guns, but with arguments. We need to have the same as the other two peoples. There is not a society or country in the world made up of more than one ethnic community that is not federal. I think I have been clear. (Excerpt)

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Herzegovina under siege

June 28, 2005 (Vecernji list)

Federation police together with European peacekeeping troops in BiH (EUFOR) searched the headquarters of Lijanovici meat industry in Siroki Brijeg yesterday, removing several cardboard boxes full of documents.. The company financed, among others, the reelection campaign for Stipe Mesic. In Mostar the forces arrested the head of the legal department Zdenka Simunovic and her husband Ljubo.

Lijanovici called the action revengeful, while Croats in general view it as a new demonstration of force and attempt to ruin their business. Legal experts further argue that conducting an investigation after the indictment has already been confirmed illustrates the poor position in which international prosecutor Jonathan Rattel has found himself.

Armed and masked police officers wearing bullet-proof vests and EUFOR soldiers were last seen in such a massive action in the spring of 2001 when the international administration forcefully shut down Hercegovacka Banka, allegedly because the bank was the financial generator of the political project "Croat self-rule."

EUFOR troops yesterday blocked all roads towards Siroki Brijeg and set up more than ten checkpoints for searching vehicles and passengers.

The area in front of the company was sealed off with police tape and masked special units blocked all access. No one could enter or leave the building, which contained about 50 production workers and drivers at the time. Their keys were confiscated and semis carrying meat products and livestock were moved to the side.

The workers had no idea what was happening. They were disturbed. The area Croats felt the same. All this, they stated, reminded them of the war. They thought perhaps they were searching for Gotovina again. Foreign troops later made excuses saying that they did not know of the Federation police operation until early morning.

Several sealed boxes were removed from the company. The operation ended late in the afternoon. Federation forces had orders to remove all computers as well, but gave up after attorney Davor Martinovic intervened.

At early dawn special forces also knocked on the door of Zdenka Simunovic's Mostar apartment. Simunovic is head of the Lijanovici legal department. After an almost four-hour search, Simunovic and her husband Ljubo were taken to Sarajevo.

"There were about ten of them. They conducted the search in a dignified manner. They took some documentation with them," stated Zdenka Simunovic in a telephone conversation, not able to speak about her status.

The trial involving the four brothers Lijanovic – Slavo, Mladen, Jozo, and Jerko – HDZ BiH president Dragan Covic, BiH Constitutional Court president Mato Tadic, and law professor Zdravko Lucic, begins tomorrow.

Sarajevo: Abdulahim Maktouf sentenced to five years of prison

July 1, 2005 (FENA)

The Court of BiH on Friday found Abdulahim Maktouf, Iraqi citizen who lives in Travnik, guilty for assisting in the criminal act of war crime against the population and sentenced him to five years of prison. The lowest prison sentence for this criminal act is 10 years of prison, but the Court of BiH has decided, given all the circumstances, to soften the punishment deeming that the five-year prison sentence fits the crime committed.

Maktouf was convicted for helping Abu Dzafer and other members of unit El-Mujaheed in capturing three Croat civilians from Travnik on October 19 1993 and taking them to the unit's camp in Orasac.

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Constitutional Court to rule on Croat TV channel

July 1, 2005 (Vecernji list)

The issue of the PBS law will most likely be resolved by the BiH Constitutional Court as the political differences surrounding the submitted proposal for creating a state PBS system are apparent. Bosniak and Serb delegates in the House of Peoples are pushing to adopt the proposal they received from the Council of Ministers, while the Croat delegates invoked protection of their vital national interest.

These developments have reduced to a minimum the possibility of achieving a compromise. If the proposed law is not adopted, it will be sent to the Constitutional Court for consideration.

This would not be the first time that the Constitutional Court is called upon to judge the constitutionality of a proposed law and its destructive influence on the vital national interest of a constituent people.

In a previous case, the Constitutional Court confirmed that Croat delegates in the House of Peoples were correct in arguing the proposed state law on higher education was destructive for their vital national interests. (Excerpt)

BiH Federation recognizes Croatian war decorations as own

July 5, 2005 (HINA)

The upper house of the Croat-Muslim entity of Bosnia-Herzegovina [Federation of BiH] on Tuesday [5 July] adopted a law on allowances for holders of war decorations, including holders of decorations awarded by the Republic of Croatia, who were members of the BiH Croat Defense Council (HVO) which existed in 1990s.

The adoption of the law in the House of Peoples of the Federation of BiH was the result of a consensus reached today after the bill was brought into question last week when Bosniak [Bosnian Muslim] deputies supported an amendment, moved by Deputy Vahid Heco, on the exclusion of holders of decorations awarded by the Republic of Croatia.

According to today's decision, former HVO members, holders of the decorations awarded by Croatia, are equated with holders of decorations which were given to members of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

As of 1 January 2006, they are entitled to the financial compensation accounting to 50% of the average monthly salary.

Catholics in RS uprooted

July 6, 2005 (Slobodna Dalmacija and KTA)

Banja Luka Bishop Franjo Komarica met with Senior Deputy High Representative Ambassador Martin Ney and his delegation on Tuesday. This was their first meeting since Ambassador Martin Ney took over his new post.

Bishop Komarica informed his guest of the unfortunate fact that the Catholic Church has been uprooted from Republika Srpska, not without the "help" of international community representatives in BiH.

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“To go from around 220,000 Catholics prior to the war to, ten years later, less than 13,000 is shameful and a large defeat for European and world politicians who were responsible for securing equality amongst the peoples of this country and respect for basic human and civil rights and freedoms for individuals and ethnic or religious groups,” emphasized Bishop Komarica.

Komarica further mentioned he regrets the disunity, indecisiveness, and wavering among the international community and domestic politicians, which results in the “inability of Bosnia and Herzegovina to finally stand on its own feet as a legal state and homeland of all those born here and who wish to live a dignified life here.”

Ambassador Ney agreed with many of the Bishop’s arguments, adding that “nonetheless some positive steps have been taken that are necessary for preparing the country for European integration.” (Excerpt)

UK-based, Bosnian Firms Place Bids for Bosnian Cigarette Factory

July 6, 2005 (SeeNews)

A UK-based firm and a Bosnian company have offered to buy the Bosnian cigarette factory Fabrika Duhana Mostar (FDM), the privatisation agency of the country's Muslim-Croat Federation said on Wednesday.

London-based S&A Capital Limited, headed by Naveen Aggarwal, and KOCKA promet Mostar, headed by Bosnian businessman Jozo Musa, have placed bids in the tender for the sale of 67% of FDM by the June 30 deadline, the agency said in a statement.

The factory is based in Mostar, southern Bosnia. Its capital is 17.6 million marka (\$11.7 million/9.0 million euro), the Federation government said on its website.

A previous attempt to sell the factory failed in 2001 after the government rejected the only offer received from Italian-based Adriatica.

FDM sells its output mainly in the Federation. The company posted a revenue of 3.9 million marka in 2004, down from 4.3 million in 2003, the privatisation agency said. (Excerpt)

Strasbourg: European parliamentarians support amending of Dayton accords

July 7, 2005 (FENA)

The European Parliamentarians on Wednesday, marking ten years since the massacre in Srebrenica, supported amending of the Dayton Accords from 1995, which ended the war in BiH.

German representative and leader of the influential Green Party in the European Parliament Daniel Cohn-Bendit said that the Dayton Accords was necessary at that particular time, but that it contains an ethnic designation of the region.

“If we do not have the courage to bring Dayton Accords into question, we will never be able to deal with the past”, he said.

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OHR: High Representative removes Central Bosnia Canton education minister

July 8, 2005 (FENA)

Today High Representative Paddy Ashdown signed the Decision on removing the Central Bosnia Canton Education Minister Nikola Lovrinovic. The Decision bars Mr. Lovrinovic from holding any official, elective or appointive public office and from running in elections unless or until such time as the High Representative may expressly authorize him to do so, OHR said.

Minister Lovrinovic has failed to take action to implement Laws on Primary and Secondary Education and as a result has undermined the rule of law. The failure to implement these Laws, one year after they have been introduced, clearly shows Mr. Lovrinovic's disregard for the benefit of students and teachers. Assets obtained through cutting costs by eliminating double administration could be used for improving working conditions for both students and teachers. Continuing defiance of the laws and his transparent attempts to obstruct its application for another school year could not be tolerated.

By continuously obstructing to implement the Laws Mr. Lovrinovic has failed the duties of his office. He openly subordinated the interests of the cantonal government to his own political objectives. He has acted as if it was up to him to decide whether to follow the law or not. As a result, Mr. Lovrinovic has inflicted considerable damage on the dignity and independence of his office.

The High Representative's Decision is effective immediately. According to the Decision any entitlement to receive remuneration or any form of post-removal compensation, excepting vested pension, or to any privileges or status arising out of his post as a minister ceases forthwith, OHR said.

War crimes court sends two Serbs to Bosnia for trial

July 8, 2005 (Agence France Presse)

The UN war crimes court Friday authorised the transfer to Bosnia for trial of two Serbs accused of serious offences against civilians in Bosnia during the 1992-1995 war.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) said Savo Todovic and Mitar Rasevic should stand trial in the special court established by Bosnia-Herzegovina in March to hear war crimes cases.

The two men, who were in charge of a detention camp, opposed the decision. They are accused of persecuting Bosnian Muslim civilians in Foca in eastern Bosnia.

"Being satisfied on the information presently available that the accused should receive a fair trial and that the death penalty will not be imposed or carried out, the referral bench (...) orders the case of Savo Todovic and Mitar Rasevic to be transferred to the authorities of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina," the court said..

But the court decided not to send back a third man, Dragomir Milosevic, accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes for having led a campaign of terror against civilians during the siege of Sarajevo.

"The referral bench ... concludes that the gravity of the crimes charged and the level of responsibility of the accused requires that the present case be tried at the tribunal," it said.

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BiH Croat Catholic dignitaries honour Srebrenica dead

July 8, 2005 (HINA)

The Iustitia et Pax commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina has issued a declaration on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the massacre in Srebrenica, condemning the crime and pointing out the necessity for the amendments to the Dayton peace accords which stopped the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1996.

The declaration reads that these days all should remember with grief the massacre which the Bosnian Serb army and various paramilitary units committed in the eastern Bosnian Muslim enclave of Srebrenica in the summer of 1995.

"We particularly emphasize the fact that many of those who committed that crime have to date succeeded in evading to face their guilt. We also recall a shameful fact that many international leaders had hesitated for too long to stop the conflict," the Catholic bishops of Bosnia and Herzegovina said in their declaration, calling on governments in leading countries in the world to take necessary steps to bring war crimes suspects to justice.

The Iustitia et Pax commission also warns that the current state of affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that the recent years in the country have proved that "the boundaries defined by the Dayton agreement formed very dangerous territories".

The unjust boundary lines have legalized unacceptable and immoral ethnic cleansing and thwarted efforts aimed at achieving a lasting peace, the declaration reads.

The state and society of Bosnia and Herzegovina needs political arrangements that will guarantee justice, and the time is now ripe to consider and rectify the injustices imposed by the Dayton peace accords, the Catholic commission said, calling for organizing an international conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Possible new failures of Europe and the international community to consistently carry out their duty and commitments in Bosnia and Herzegovina would threaten the stability of the entire region, including prospects of neighbouring countries to become full members of Europe and the European Union. Finally, such a failure would present disappointments in the values of the European Union and the collapse of the common foreign and security policy," the declaration said.

The Catholic Primate in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cardinal Vinko Puljic, sent a letter to the leader of the Islamic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mustafa Ceric, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, expressing his solidarity as a human being and a believer with all the innocent victims and the families whose loved ones were killed.

Jelavic trial postponed

July 8, 2005 (FENA)

The trial of former BiH Presidency member and FBiH Defense Minister Ante Jelavic in the "Croat Self-rule" case was postponed before the BiH Court on Friday.

The trial has been postponed for September 30 because of Jelavic's commitments in the Hercegovacka Banka case also before the BiH Court.

The trial will resume on September 30 when the Prosecution will open its case.
