



# BALKAN WATCH

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## A Review of Current Events

**ASHDOWN FIRES BOSNIAN SERB LEADERS.** High Representative Paddy Ashdown announced he was firing 60 Bosnian Serb officials for failure to cooperate in the hunt for war crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic. Among those who have been fired are Bosnian Serb parliament and Serb Democratic Party head Dragan Kalinic and Zoran Djeric, Bosnian Serb Interior Minister and head of the police force. Kalinic threatened to sue Ashdown in the Human Rights Court at Strasbourg for firing him, noting he was barred from receiving his salary or holding any public office in the Bosnian Serb Republic. Under Djeric's administration, no war crimes suspects have been captured by Bosnian Serb authorities. Bosnia was rejected for potential membership in the Partnership for Peace at the recent NATO summit in Istanbul because of its failure to capture war crimes suspects and cooperate fully with the Hague tribunal.

**MIXED REACTIONS OVER NATO PLAN TO HAND OVER PEACEKEEPING TO EU.** Bosnian officials reacted with enthusiasm to a NATO announcement that its 7,500 member peacekeeping mission to Bosnia would be handed over to the European Union. Many Bosnians see the change as a benefit, helping Bosnia enhance its chances potentially to join the EU even sooner. EU spokesperson Frane Marojevic noted that most of the NATO troops in Bosnia are already from EU countries, thus meaning the transfer of authority should be relatively smooth. High Representative Paddy Ashdown also welcomed the transfer of authority, noting that it is almost time for NATO to leave because most of its objectives have been met. In a separate interview, Ashdown encouraged the Bosnian Serb Republic to continue with its reforms and stop treating war crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic as more valuable than the state itself. In the United States, Richard Holbrooke, a potential secretary of state in a John Kerry administration, criticized the move by NATO, saying that a withdrawal now would complicate efforts to capture suspected war criminals, including wartime Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladic. Holbrooke, who played the key role in negotiating the 1995 Dayton peace agreement, is fearful the transition could also harm America's international standing.

**GROSSMAN PRESSES BELGRADE ON WAR CRIMES SUSPECTS.** During a visit to Belgrade, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman urged Serbian leaders to improve efforts to capture and hand over indicted war criminals, including Ratko Mladic, to the international tribunal at The Hague. Mladic is wanted for genocide and war crimes

regarding the 1995 massacre of Muslims at Srebrenica. More than a dozen people are wanted by the tribunal, including four generals and four police officers. Grossman noted that following through with the tribunal should not be done just to improve relations with the European Union and the United States but as "an obligation you hold for yourselves." Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic agreed with Grossman's remarks, going further to note that it was in Serbia's national security interests to extradite the war crimes suspects. Defense Minister Prvoslav Davinic also told Grossman that two of the wanted generals were "seriously ill." Davinic failed to elaborate nor provide his source of information.

**MILOSEVIC'S HEALTH POSTPONES TRIAL.** The Hague trial for former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic has already been postponed three times because of his health. Milosevic was originally scheduled to begin his defense on June 8; however, various alleged health problems have led him to argue for postponement. According to a physician's report, Milosevic has suffered from high blood pressure, leading to an enlargement of his heart. Milosevic's legal advisor, Zdenko Tomanovic, claimed that the former Yugoslav leader has missed fifty-one days of preparation for his defense because of his health problems. Stephen Kay, an independent lawyer monitoring the trial for fairness, announced he felt that the court may need to consider whether Milosevic is fit to stand trial at all. Other lawyers and experts note they feel the trial is still progressing too slowly. Judith Armatta of the Coalition for International Justice suggested that the court appoint counsel to represent Milosevic, who has been representing himself throughout the trial. Further, Judge Richard May, one of the senior judges hearing the case, died recently. He was replaced by Lord Bonyon. Milosevic, if the trial continues under the same rules, will have 150 days to present his case.

**MACEDONIA OFFERS HELP TO SERBIA.** Macedonian President Branko Crvenkovski offered to help Serbia & Montenegro qualify for membership in the Partnership for Peace (PfP), considered a forerunner to eventual NATO membership. Crvenkovski made his announcement during a visit to Skopje by Svetozar Marovic, President of Serbia & Montenegro. Macedonia has been a member of PfP since 1995 and is considered a strong candidate for NATO membership in 2007, when the next enlargement will take place. Macedonia contributed 41 troops to international efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq within the past couple years. Officials in Belgrade and Skopje also signed an agreement promising to protect Serb and Macedonian

minorities along their border.

**REXHEPI CALLS FOR AGREEMENT WITHIN KOSOVO.** Kosovo Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi has called for talks within Kosovo, between ethnic Albanians and Serbs. Rexhepi feels the talks would help expedite the process of autonomy, potentially necessary to end further violence, such as occurred last March. Rexhepi wants to increase the amount of autonomy allowed at the local level, helping which might become an important element in the process of determining Kosovo's final status, regarding which Kosovo's Albanians expect significant progress next year. Reacting to the election of Boris Tadic as new president of Serbia, Rexhepi suggested that the Serbian president's strategy toward dealing with the Kosovo question would likely be similar to that of Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica.

### QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"Decentralization is also not a process of a month or two, but probably more than two or three years. In this moment the solution would be to sign an agreement between the majority Albanian community and the Serb community. An agreement within Kosovo, not between Pristina and Belgrade. The agreement would regulate the degree of autonomy on the local level, but also the obligations towards the central government."—Bajram Rexhepi, Kosovo Prime Minister, outlining a plan leading to independence (*Blic*, 7/2/04).

"The idea now is to go from the Dayton Agreements to the European approximation of Bosnia into it... into us. Therefore we are moving the center of gravity fortunately to a potential crisis to a potential moving of the Bosnia-Herzegovina to the European Union which is our dream and is our objective."—Javier Solana, at NATO conference in Istanbul, Turkey, referring to transfer of authority in Bosnia from NATO to the EU (*FNS*, 6/29/04).

"Our obligations toward The Hague court are something that must not be bargained with, they must be followed through. We don't want to be an isolated island in the sea of European democracies."—Vuk Draskovic, Foreign Minister of Serbia & Montenegro (*AP*, 7/7/04).

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