



# BALKAN WATCH

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## A Review of Current Events

### MONTENEGRO INDEPENDENCE.

Montenegrin President Filip Vujanovic told Serbian radio B92 May 13 that Montenegro could move faster on the reform path necessary for EU membership if it were independent from Serbia. He said he would prefer a "velvet divorce" similar to that of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but that in any case independence should come "as soon as possible" and that Montenegro would hold a referendum on the issue. He declined to speculate on a date for the vote, which could as early as 2005. He stated that independence would help stabilize the region and noted that the union of Serbia and Montenegro was not functioning well and costing too much money to sustain. He said it was proving difficult to harmonize their economies as the exports and imports of both differ and their economies do not match. He cited examples of small countries that had made fast progress toward development. He also suggested that Montenegro would be held back by the failure of Serbia to turn over indicted war criminals to the UN tribunal in The Hague.

### SERBIA CRITICIZED OVER WAR CRIMES NON-COOPERATION.

UN War Crimes Tribunal President Theodor Meron noted May 4 in a complaint to the Security Council that Serbia has been refusing to cooperate with the Hague tribunal. Meron's comments were based on information provided by Carla Del Ponte, the tribunal's chief prosecutor. Serbia has yet to track down and capture most-wanted fugitives Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic plus a number of other indictees. According to Del Ponte, cooperation from Serbia was virtually "non-existent," leading Meron to state that it was harming the tribunal's ability to complete its mandate by the target date of 2010. Meron wrote that, "I view the report of the prosecutor as indicating extremely serious failures on the part of Serbia and Montenegro, and the prosecutor has satisfied me that Serbia-Montenegro is failing to comply with its obligations." EU Commissioner for External Affairs Chris Patten also told reporters that Serbia would have to improve its cooperation with the tribunal in order to be considered for potential EU membership. According to Patten, the EU has given Serbia-Montenegro 1.5 billion Euro in aid. He later said during a visit to Belgrade that Belgrade would have to choose between cooperation on war crimes or EU membership.

**LUKOVIC SURRENDERS.** Milorad Lukovic, primary suspect in the assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, has surrendered to Serbia police. Lukovic led a paramilitary group in the various Serbian wars in the 1990s. Djindjic was murdered on March 12, 2003 in front of his office in Belgrade. Lukovic asked the panel of three judges leading proceedings in the case to allow him 45 days to prepare his defense; in reply, they gave him 30 days. Lukovic is believed to have been the master

planner of the Djindjic assassination.

### HOLKERI ADDRESSES UN SECURITY COUNCIL

UNMIK chief Harri Holkeri, was admitted to a hospital in Strasbourg on May 13 after apparently becoming ill while attending a diplomatic dinner, according to B92 Radio. While visiting UN headquarters in New York earlier in the week, Holkeri had formally invited Serbia-Montenegro Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic to visit Pristina to open up dialogue between the Kosovar and Serbian government authorities. Holkeri also asserted to the Security Council that UNMIK was focused on its goal of preparing Kosovo for self-governance. Responding to recent violence in Kosovo, he noted that UNMIK was reevaluating its role in Kosovo and working to determine potential responses to future crises. To date 270 arrests have been made for acts committed during the March violence in Kosovo, which began after some Kosovo Albanian youths were believed to have been drowned by Kosovo Serbs. Holkeri stated that approximately 50 cases stemming from the violence have been referred to international prosecutors.

Holkeri also announced that an investigation into the deaths of three American peacekeepers and injuries of 10 American and one Austrian in Kosovo has been launched. The 14 were believed to have been hurt by a Jordanian officer frustrated over U.S. policies in the Middle East. UNMIK also denied to Kosovo media sources that it had not reached an agreement with Serbia regarding decentralization of Kosovo, contrary to reports made by the Serbian government last month.

### UN AND KFOR FACILITATING KOSOVO SEX TRAFFICKING.

Amnesty International charged in a report May 6 that UNMIK and KFOR were fuelling sexual trafficking in women and that there had been an "unprecedented escalation" in such trafficking since the UN and KFOR had entered Kosovo following the 1999 war. The AI report stressed that, "It is outrageous that the very same people who are there to protect these women and girls are using their position and exploiting them instead—and they are getting away with it." The UN rejected the report.

### CROATIAN INITIATIVES TOWARD ETHNIC SERBS.

On May 11, Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader visited ethnic Serb villages damaged during Croatia's war for independence with Serbia ten years earlier. In the first visit by a Croatian leader to the ethnic Serb region of Croatia since the war ended, Sanader pledged that Croatia "is very committed to the return of refugees" and emphasized that Croatia wants "to go to Europe with all our citizens, regardless of their ethnicity." OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Belgian Foreign Minister Solomon Pasi praised Sanader for Croatia's willingness to allow displaced Serb refugees to return to their homes in Croatia. The Croatian

government has also earmarked additional funds to accelerate the return to Croatia of more Serb refugees. The Croatian government is seeking to begin formal talks with the EU on membership later this year or in early 2005, and needs to demonstrate progress in returning displaced Croatian Serbs to their homes and integrating into Croatian society. An EU summit in June will decide whether Croatia has met the conditions for beginning accession talks.

### FORENSIC EXPERTS UNEARTH BODIES IN BOSNIA.

Bosnian officials announced that a newly-discovered mass grave believed to hold the remains of 72 Muslims killed in the 1992-1995 war has begun to be unearthed. Most of the victims were supposedly killed in May 1992 and burned before being buried. Their remains will be taken to Tuzla for DNA analysis and possible identification. About 250,000 people are believed to have been killed during the war; more than 20,000 remain unaccounted for.

### QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"Good interethnic relations are the pillar of Macedonia's stability; good interethnic relations are prerequisite to economic growth and progress; finally, good interethnic relations are the shortcut to European and Euro-Atlantic integration."—President Branko Crvenkovski, in his address following his inauguration as President of Macedonia (*BBC*, 5/12/04).

"I think that it would be best if two countries, two governments, come to an agreement on separation, and then form an integrated relationship between two, independent, internationally acknowledged countries."—Montenegrin President Filip Vujanovic discussing possible Montenegrin independence from Serbia. (*B92*, 5/13/04).

"Either you will be supporting those who are accused of war crimes...or you will be on the path to joining the EU. You can't have both."—EU Commissioner for External Relations Chris Patten, speaking to Serbs during a visit to Belgrade (*B92*, 5/11/04).

Prepared by John Sannar