



# BALKAN WATCH

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## A Review of Current Events

**TADIC WINS SERBIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.** Serbian voters yesterday elected Democratic Party leader Boris Tadic over Radical Party candidate Tomislav Nikolic by a margin of about 54 percent to 45 percent. Two weeks earlier, no candidate won a majority of the votes, forcing Sunday's runoff between the first and second place finishers. Tadic, a pro-Western reform candidate, was reluctantly endorsed after the first round by Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia. Tadic also received support from Bogoljub Karic, who placed third in the first round. Foreign Minister and Serbian Renewal Party leader Vuk Draskovic had also endorsed Tadic. Many Serbs worried that the election of Nikolic, an ultra-nationalist who affirmed his dream of a Greater Serbia during the campaign, would lead to further Serbian isolation. Tadic built his campaign around a commitment to bring Serbia closer to the West and cooperate with the Hague tribunal. When the results became clear Sunday night, he declared that, "This is not my victory but the victory of a shared idea of Serbia's European future." The position of president is a mainly ceremonial role, with limited powers assigned to the office.

**SERBIAN HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROBLEM.** A study jointly authored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Victimology Society of Serbia noted that Serbia has become a major transit point for human trafficking over the last decade because of poverty and porous borders. The study noted that Serbia's central location in the Balkans region has contributed to the problem. Many low-wage, black-market workers originating mainly from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa have crossed into Western Europe through Serbia. Black-market workers have become an increasing problem in EU countries, including Germany, where Finance Minister Hans Eichel and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder have stepped up efforts to reduce it through a public campaign. Hanelore Valier, head of the OSCE's Democratization Department in Serbia and Montenegro, vowed to do everything possible to combat this major problem, which she termed "modern slavery."

**DJINDJIC ALLY ARRESTED, RELEASED.** Miodrag Kostic, a close ally of former Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, was arrested over charges that he had been involved in financial wrongdoing, selling sugar on the European market illegally. Kostic was traveling from Croatia back into Montenegro when border officials arrested him. He appeared later that day in court, where the judge released him. He will appear before the judge at a later date in relation to the charges. Kostic is alleged to have violated trade laws with the European Union, causing Serbia to lose the ability to sell its sugar on the European market. Various European officials have stated that Serbian businessmen were purchasing cheaper sugar from unknown

third party companies in other countries and then selling it illegally at favorable prices on the European market. Kostic claimed that he had been arrested for political reasons, noting that Djindjic and current Prime Minister Kostunica were bitter rivals.

**MONTENEGRIN LEADER CALLS FOR INDEPENDENCE VOTE.** Ranko Krivokapic, head of the Montenegrin Social Democratic Party, stated that the joint state union of Serbia and Montenegro was failing and called for a referendum to be held in Montenegro to end the problem. Krivokapic's party has supported Montenegrin independence since the joint state union was established in early 2003. Critics in Montenegro have called Serbia and Montenegro "Solania," noting they feel it was imposed upon them by the European Union's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana.

**JESSEN-PETERSEN APPOINTED UNMIK HEAD.** UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced that Soren Jessen-Petersen, of Denmark, would be replacing Harri Holkeri as UN chief administrator in Kosovo. Jessen-Petersen, educated as a journalist and lawyer, has served in various international roles, most recently as the EU special representative in Macedonia. Jessen-Petersen also worked for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for many years, culminating in his tenure as assistant high commissioner from 1998 to 2001. In his new position, Jessen-Petersen hopes to arouse more interest in the Kosovo problem within the international community, noting that while situations in Afghanistan and Iraq may be more urgent, ignoring the Balkans will prove costly in the long term. A spokesman for Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova urged Jessen-Petersen to transfer powers from UNMIK to his government, to "assert the power that emanates from the vote of the people." Joint working groups, consisting of UN and Kosovo government officials are to meet soon to discuss the future of Kosovo. The groups will monitor responses to various components of the "standards before status" policy designed to improve respect for the rule of law, the economy, and other aspects of life in Kosovo. Immediately prior to Annan's announcement of Jessen-Petersen's appointment, PDK leader Hashim Thaci dismissed UNMIK as a failure and said it could "continue until elections in October 2004, but after that we need a complete change in the relationship between the Pristina government and UNMIK, in favor of the institutions elected by the people of Kosovo."

**CAVIC REGRETS SREBRENICA.** Bosnian Serb Republic President Dragan Cavic expressed regret for the 1995 massacre of up to 8,000 Muslim men and boys by Bosnian Serb forces. Cavic stopped short, however, of issuing an apology. His announcement was the first direct public statement by a Bosnian Serb official regarding a report issued two weeks

earlier by a commission within the Bosnian Serb government. Within the report, Bosnian Serbs are found to have been involved in the massacre. Cavic described the massacre as a "dark page in Serb history." Muslim and UN officials have found the remains of nearly 5,000 people already, who were killed in the massacre.

**ASHDOWN URGED TO WITHDRAW LAWSUIT.** In a letter written by Bosnian Serb officials, High Representative Paddy Ashdown, international administrator in Bosnia, has been urged to mediate the end of a lawsuit against Serbia and Montenegro by Bosnian Muslims to be decided by the International Court of Justice. Bosnian Serb officials stated they felt it would be a hindrance toward Bosnian participation in trans-Atlantic relations, such as eventual NATO membership. The lawsuit was filed in 1993 against Yugoslavia by Bosnia. Bosnian Serb officials question the legitimacy and legality of the lawsuit.

**CROATIA-EU MEMBERSHIP TALKS.** EU leaders agreed at their summit meeting to begin membership talks with Croatia early in 2005. Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader said he thought negotiations would last around two years. EU President Romano Prodi, asked at a press conference if other Balkan states could receive a membership invitation, replied that, "The door is open but the message is clear: each country on its own merit."

**BALKANS-NATO.** Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on June 18 encouraged Balkan nations to continue working toward qualifying for NATO membership. He noted that, "earlier this year, seven new members joined the NATO Alliance. The door remains open for others."

### QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"The international community cannot afford to be disengaged in its support for Kosovo, in its support for moving the process in Kosovo forward."—Soren Jessen-Petersen, newly appointed UNMIK head, at a press conference in Skopje, Macedonia (*AP*, 6/17/04).

"UNMIK has been a complete failure, particularly in the last two years."—Hashim Thaci, former Kosovo Liberation Army leader and current head of Kosovo's PDK political party (*RFERL*, 6/14/04).

"I'll dream about that border as long as I live."—Tomislav Nikolic, Radical Party candidate for Serbian president, commenting on his support for Greater Serbia while campaigning (*Reuters*, 6/26/04).

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