



# BALKAN WATCH

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## A Review of Current Events

**U.S. SUSPENDS AID TO SERBIA.** The State Department announced on March 31 that Secretary of State Colin Powell was suspending American aid to Serbia because of Belgrade's non-cooperation with the war crimes tribunal in The Hague. Powell "cannot certify to Congress that Serbia and Montenegro is cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and as a result, as of March 31, new assistance for Serbia will stop," said deputy spokesman Adam Erel. Serbia stands to lose about \$26 million of its \$100 million aid package from the United States, offered on condition that Serbia offers cooperation with the tribunal. About \$43 million had already been disbursed and funding for humanitarian assistance and democratic assistance to municipalities is exempt.

Vojislav Kostunica had announced that cooperation with the tribunal was not a major priority of his administration after his selection as Serbian prime minister. On the eve of the certification deadline, the Serbian parliament adopted a resolution calling for payments to war crimes indictees, including Slobodan Milosevic, while detained by the tribunal. Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont), who along with Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky) sponsored the legislation mandating annual certification three years ago, noted that "Serbia's political and economic development will continue to suffer" so long as Belgrade fails to bring war criminals to justice.

**SENIOR U.S. OFFICIAL VISITS KOSOVO.** Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman met with Kosovo government officials and political leaders and international administrators and security officials in Pristina March 29. Grossman told a press conference that "the recent violence is a setback" for the final status process and the vision of beginning status talks in March 2005. He urged Kosovo Albanians to commit themselves to implementing international standards promulgated as part of the UN "standards before status" policy and praised Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi for committing to provide funds to repair damage caused by demonstrators. Grossman traveled to Belgrade for talks with Serbian leaders before returning to Washington.

**KOSOVO PRIME MINISTER OFFERS TO REBUILD SERB HOMES.** Kosovo Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi offered to help Serb families harmed during ethnic violence two weeks ago.

Speaking to a crowd in Serbian, he denounced the attacks against Serbs by ethnic Albanians, calling the event vandalism. Rexhepi offered to have almost 300 Serb damaged or destroyed Serb homes repaired or rebuilt. The project is expected to cost at least \$6 million. Reconstruction began March 27; Rexhepi promised to have the homes repaired within ten days. UN officials viewed the gesture as a helpful move to calm tensions. NATO peacekeepers also began an investigation into the violence.

**SERBIAN RESOLUTION ON KOSOVO.** The Serbian parliament approved a resolution declaring Kosovo inseparable and a part of Serbia. The resolution declared that no borders should be changed and that the UN should reconsider its policies in Kosovo after recent ethnic violence. The declaration was overwhelming passed with the support of 220 of the 250 members of the Serbian parliament. Meanwhile, Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica proposed "cantonization" of Kosovo but backed off the suggestion following opposition from the EU, calling for "decentralization" instead and claiming that he did not support Kosovo's partition.

**SERBIAN KILLING.** Branko Bulatovic, general-secretary and head of the Serbia-Montenegro Soccer Association, was killed by an unknown assailant with a shot in the back of the head on March 26 while standing in the lobby of the Association's headquarters in Belgrade.

**SERBIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION SET.** June 13 has been set for the vote. Tomislav Nilolic of the ultra-nationalist Radical Party is widely expected to win. The vote will mark the fourth attempt in the past year and a half to select a president.

**MACEDONIAN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN.** Candidates running for the presidency of Macedonia recently have begun their campaign to succeed Boris Trajkovski, killed in a plane crash in February. The April 14 election will determine Macedonia's route toward accession into the EU. For the election to be valid, at least fifty percent of the public must vote.

**NATO.** Slovenia, along with six other eastern European nations, was inducted into NATO last week. Meanwhile, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution calling for NATO to dis-

cuss membership with Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia by 2007.

**BOSNIA ORDERS SERB TOWNS BE RENAMED.** The Bosnian constitutional court ordered that several towns in the Bosnian Serb Republic be renamed to prevent discrimination against Muslims and Croats. These towns were originally renamed during the war in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995, to include the term "Srpska" (Serb) within the town name. Decisions by the constitutional court are final.

**BOSNIAN SERBS SENTENCED BY TRIBUNAL.** Miroslav Deronjic, a former Bosnian Serb politician, was sentenced to 10 years in prison in The Hague for his participation in war crimes in Bosnia in 1992. Deronjic pled guilty to one charge of persecution, in which he was believed to have participated in the destruction of Glogova, a Muslim town, in which 65 people were killed. Deronjic personally gave the order for the town to be destroyed. At the Milosevic trial, Deronjic recalled a situation in which Bosnian Serbs and Serbs cooperated in transporting weapons. This recollection helped provide evidence of cooperation between the Bosnian Serbs and Serbs from Serbia proper. Milosevic has denied responsibility for the 1992-1995 war; at his trial in The Hague, he claimed Deronjic was lying. Former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic personally told Deronjic of his plans to kill the Muslims of Srebrenica, before the massacre of 1995 took place. Karadzic and accomplice Ratko Mladic are currently on the run from international authorities.

Darko Mrdja, a Bosnian Serb policeman during the Bosnian war, was sentenced to 17 years in prison for his role in the massacre of at least 228 Muslim and Croat prisoners. Mrdja reportedly ordered that the men be separated from the women and children and the men taken to a mountain, where police shot and killed them. Twelve men survived the massacre. Mrdja pled guilty to murder and attempted murder but claimed that he had no choice but to participate in the massacre. Judge Alphonse Orié announced that the court did not accept Mrdja's argument.

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### Quotable Quotes

"The United States abandoned the [Kosovo] issue as soon as the Bush administration took over, subordinating it to a low level in the bureaucracy. The European Union made a series of mistakes and [UNMIK chief] Harri Holkeri... did not take action to accelerate the status talks because he did not seem to realize that time was not on his side."—Richard Holbrooke (*Reuters*, 3/23/04).

"So the question is what next? Are we stuck in this dead end? Or is there will on behalf of the people here to move forward to meet the vision of the UNMIK standards? And that, I said to everyone, that is very much in people's hands in Kosovo."—Under Secretary of State Marc Grossman, in Kosovo (3/29/04).

"We call on the authorities in Belgrade to cooperate fully with the tribunal by arresting and transferring their fugitive indictees, particularly Ratko Mladic, to face justice before the tribunal."—State Department deputy spokesman Adam Erel (*AP*, 3/31/04).