



BALKAN WATCH

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A Review of Current Events

HARADINAJ PICKED FOR KOSOVO

PRIME MINISTER. The newly elected Kosovo parliament voted December 3 to accept Ramush Haradinaj as the new prime minister. The vote followed a deal struck by Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) leader Haradinaj with Ibrahim Rugova, leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), who was selected by parliament for a second term. The vote for Haradinaj was 72-3 in the 120-member body, with many parliamentarians abstaining, especially those from Hashim Thaci's Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK). Rugova's decision to ally himself with Haradinaj was a surprise to many observers up until almost the time Rugova had made his announcement weeks before the formal parliamentary vote; the LDK leader had already reached a tentative agreement with Thaci, whose party had received the second largest amount of votes in the parliamentary elections. Haradinaj, a KLA leader during the 1998-99 fighting who was in charge of field operations in western Kosovo, is considered likely to be indicted by the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague before the end of this year, according to sources close to the tribunal and Western governments. Prior to his selection as prime minister, Haradinaj had met with representatives from the tribunal to answer questions about his actions during the war but had abruptly walked out of the informal proceedings when questioning veered too close to matters he considered sensitive. Many fear that Haradinaj's indictment could trigger renewed violence by Kosovars who would regard it as an attempt to de-legitimize the KLA and Kosovo's national struggle. Some predict that such violence would be directed primarily against internationals in Kosovo rather than Serbs. There was general unease that his selection would set back the Kosovars' campaign for clarification of final status next year.

SERBIA REQUESTS ANNULMENT OF HARADINAJ SELECTION.

Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica called on UNMIK chief Soren Jessen-Petersen to annul the selection of Ramush Haradinaj as Kosovo's prime minister due to the latter's alleged involvement in war crimes and likely looming indictment by the Hague tribunal. Kostunica charged that the selection of Haradinaj could undermine stability in the region.

NATO TO MAINTAIN KOSOVO TROOP STRENGTH.

Despite the transition of forces in Bosnia to EU control, NATO allies agreed to maintain their number of forces in Kosovo because of fears of renewed unrest. Talks on Kosovo's future next year have the potential to re-ignite violence between the ethnic Albanian majority and the Serbian minority there. Last March, riots between the two groups caught the NATO-led KFOR peacekeeping force by surprise when 19 people were killed. Guenther Altenburg, NATO assistant secretary general for political affairs, noted that the alliance probably would not need to add additional troops to

KFOR.

EU ASSUMES BOSNIA PEACEKEEPING

ROLE. In a ceremony marking the transition, the EU assumed command of a contingent of 7,000 NATO peacekeepers working in Bosnia. The move is seen as historic, in that the EU has never before played such a significant military role aside from operations directed by individual member states. NATO leaves the country, having helped to build a multiethnic military, consisting of Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats, in a better position to apply for NATO membership. Javier Solana noted that the transition will help pave the way for Bosnia to eventually join the EU. The transition is also important for defining the role of cooperation between NATO and the EU given recent events. US Ambassador to NATO Nicholas Burns noted that the NATO mission in Bosnia was the security organization's most successful operation in its history. Renamed EUFOR, the operation will keep 7,000 peacekeepers in the country, headed by British Major General David Leakey. Leakey stated that EUFOR's mandate was as strong as its predecessor's. The United States will keep 150 of its own troops in the country.

TADIC SURVIVES ROAD RAGE BY AMERICAN EMBASSY EMPLOYEE.

Serbian President Boris Tadic survived a car crash in which a car driven by a Serbian security guard from the American embassy in Belgrade crashed into his motorcade. Serbian officials had initially believed that the incident marked an attempt to assassinate the pro-Western president. The embassy guard was identified as Miroslav Cimpl, who was reportedly angry that the motorcade was blocking a busy street in the Serbian capital. Because of Tadic's pro-Western policies, many had feared that Serb nationalists had been behind the car crash, trying to repeat their successful murder of reformist Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic in March 2003. The American embassy expressed its regret that one of its employees was involved in the accident and has cooperated fully with security authorities.

MAROVIC WARNS OF SPLIT.

Current President of Serbia & Montenegro, Svetozar Marovic, criticized the Serbian government of not cooperating with the UN war crimes tribunal, saying that non-cooperation has the potential to lead the union to split apart. Tensions between the two states have persisted since creation of the union. Montenegro may hold a referendum on independence as early as next year. Marovic, a Montenegrin, was critical of statements made by Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, who has been avoiding giving direct answers about cooperating with the tribunal.

OJDANIC SEEKS NATO EVIDENCE.

Serbian war crimes indictee General Dragoljub Ojdanic has begun to seek the release of NATO intelligence information that may have an

impact in his case before the war crimes tribunal. Ojdanic was indicted for allegedly playing a role in a 1999 crackdown by Serbian military forces against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. Ojdanic's defense lawyer, Peter Robinson, wants NATO to release conversations recorded by member states' intelligence agencies between January and July 1999. Robinson acknowledged that his client's request for intelligence from 15 countries was unprecedented. Lawyers from the Netherlands and Canada argued against Ojdanic's request, saying that it had the potential to set a dangerous precedent if granted. Ojdanic, 63, faces five counts of crimes against humanity and violations of the laws and customs of war for allegedly taking part in a plan to deport or murder Kosovo Albanians.

FORMER RUSSIAN PRIME MINISTER TESTIFIES IN MILOSEVIC DEFENSE.

Yevgeny Primakov testified before the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague that he did not believe Milosevic had any intention of creating a Greater Serbia. Primakov recalled a meeting he had with the former Yugoslav president in January 1993, when he asked Milosevic if he had plans for Serbian expansion. Primakov said that Milosevic had stated he did not have such plans. Primakov also claimed that the West had persistently tried to "weaken Serbia" over the course of the 1990s. Primakov accused Germany of supporting the Kosovo Albanians in the war in order to allow ethnic Albanian guest workers in Germany a better chance to return home. Primakov was the second major Russian politician to testify before the tribunal in Milosevic's defense. Former Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov testified in November, accusing NATO of provoking the exodus of Kosovo Albanians through the alliance's bombing campaign.

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"I consider that there is no case against me."—Newly selected Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, on reports that the Hague tribunal plans to indict him for war crimes (*AP*, 12/3/04).

"The election of Haradinaj is seriously threatening to jeopardize the dialogue concerning the final status of Kosovo."—Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica (12/4/04).

"The next 12 months will be crucial in determining the future of Kosovo."—UNMIK chief Soren Jessen-Petersen (*AP*, 12/3/04).

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