



# BALKAN WATCH

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## A Review of Current Events

**JESSEN-PETERSEN REMINDS OSCE OF KOSOVO RISKS.** Kosovo's UN administrator Soren Jessen-Petersen reminded OSCE representatives at a Permanent Council meeting in Vienna that the Kosovo final status question could impact the larger European political context. "Kosovo remains one of the last pieces of the Balkan jigsaw that still confronts us with serious threats to stability," he stressed. Although he claimed that the authorities in Kosovo could handle violence, he did note that the potential for violent attacks by both Kosovo Serbs and Albanians sides might increase as the expected start date for final status talks approaches. He also ruled out the possibility of a partition of Kosovo and said Kosovo needed to reduce its unemployment rate of 60 percent. Jessen-Petersen also touched upon the potential indictment of Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, a former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army, by the Hague war crimes tribunal. Haradinaj is suspected of having committed war crimes against Kosovo Serbs during the Kosovo War in the late 1990s. Jessen-Petersen dismissed claims by Belgrade officials that a decision had been made to indict Haradinaj, noting that only the tribunal itself would decide on that. Were Haradinaj to be indicted, the UNMIK chief said he expected the prime minister "to know exactly what he should do as a responsible, mature person who has been extremely important for moving Kosovo forward."

**CAR OF KOSOVO SERB LEADER BOMBED.** The vehicle belonging to Oliver Ivanovic was destroyed by a car bomb on February 8 in north Mitrovica. No one was injured in the blast. Ivanovic was one of the few moderate Kosovo Serb leaders to participate in the October Kosovo-wide elections.

**KOSOVO, SERBIA TALKS TO RESUME.** Talks between the Kosovo and Serbian governments will resume in Belgrade under the auspices of the International Red Cross in the second half of this month, according to UNMIK chief Soren Jessen-Petersen. The talks will explore the fate of 3,192 persons listed as missing during the 1998-99 fighting in Kosovo: 2,460 Albanians, 529 Serbs, and 203 of mixed ethnic background. The Serbian official in charge of Kosovo affairs, Nebojsa Covic, proposed a resumption of talks, and Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj approved the initiative. The last such discussions took place in October 2003.

**TADIC STRATEGIZES WITH GREEK FOREIGN MINISTER.** Serbian President Boris Tadic met last week with Greek Foreign Minister Petros Molyviatos. They discussed Kosovo and its final status. Molyviatos reiterated his support for Serbian participation in final status talks believed likely to start later this year. He said that talks must include multiple parties, including the EU, with the ultimate goal of the parties to join the European

Union. The Greco-Serb strategy session followed a visit to Athens by UNMIK chief Soren Jessen-Petersen to discuss Kosovo final status. Molyviatos said an evaluation of Kosovo standards and conditions would take place in July, so that a talks on the shape of Kosovo's future government could begin the following month.

**DJINDJIC AIDE ACCUSES ARMY OF HIDING MLADIC.** Vladimir Popovic, a former aide to assassinated Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, told Serbian B92 interviewers that it was clear the Serbian army was playing a role in sheltering war crimes indictee Ratko Mladic. Various officials have suggested that Mladic may be hiding at the Topcider military barracks in Belgrade. A former aide and bodyguard to Mladic, Colonel Branislav Puhac, is serving on the security team at the barracks, according to Popovic. Critical of the current Serbian government led by nationalist Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, Popovic has accused Kostunica of providing support for radical elements linked to indicted former President Slobodan Milosevic. Kostunica has resisted arresting war crimes indictees, seeking to persuade them to surrender voluntarily.

**MILOSEVIC TRIAL DELAYED BY FLU.** The war crimes tribunal postponed proceedings against indicted former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic for a second week because Milosevic was reportedly suffering from the flu. The Milosevic trial at The Hague is beginning its fourth year, leading many to question the court's effectiveness in allowing such a long drawn-out legal procedure. Milosevic's lawyers have repeatedly invoked health concerns of their client to seek one delay after another.

**SERBIA, MONTENEGRO DISAGREE ON FUTURE OF STATE UNION.** The union of Serbia and Montenegro marked its second anniversary February 4 with conflicting statements by Serb and Montenegrin leaders. Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica defended the union as the "best solution" to prevent the disintegration of the last remnant of the former Yugoslavia. Montenegrin President Filip Vujanovic sharply criticized the union as "ineffective and costly," and reiterated Montenegro's desire to secure its independence from Serbia.

**BARROSO URGES BOSNIAN COOPERATION.** European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso urged Bosnian Prime Minister Adnan Terzic to work to improve his country's cooperation with war crimes proceedings at The Hague. Bosnia has lost out on opportunities for foreign aid and investment because of the lack of cooperation, particularly on the part of Bosnian Serbs, in capturing war crimes indictees, including Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, both believed to either be in the Bosnian Serb Republic or

Serbia. Terzic noted that his country wanted to work closer with the European Union, including seeking EU membership.

**CROATIA NEARING MARCH DEADLINE.** Croatian membership hopes in the European Union are approaching a March 17 deadline created by the EU to put pressure on the country to capture war crimes indictee General Ante Gotovina. Recently, EU Commissioner for Expansion Olli Rehn noted that Gotovina had "indirect contact" with the Croatian government, suggesting it was not doing enough on its part to oversee his capture. Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader called Rehn's comments an "unpleasant surprise." Gotovina is accused of leading the murder of 150 Serbs and the forced expulsion of some 150,000 Serbs during a 1995 offensive to recapture land taken by the Serbs four years earlier. The tribunal's chief prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte, urged EU officials to link Gotovina's capture with EU membership for Croatia. Recently, Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany urged Rehn and other international officials to provide concrete evidence supporting their claims that Gotovina was in Croatia. Gotovina also holds a French passport, leading some to suspect that he may be in the European Union itself.

**BOSNIAN MAN KIDNAPS DAUGHTER FROM GERMANY.** Edin Kantarevic surrendered to Bosnian authorities after kidnapping his young daughter from his estranged wife in the western German town of Viersen, near Dusseldorf, having led authorities in a long-distance car chase through four countries. Kantarevic's daughter was unharmed. He was originally in Germany on a legal working permit.

## QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"The process leading into status talks might be launched in the second half of the year...I count on Greece to move up the Kosovo issue on the agenda of the European Union and as a non-permanent member of the Security Council."—UNMIK head Soren Jessen-Petersen, speaking in Athens following talks with the Greek foreign minister (*AP*, 2/7/05).

"The solution of the Kosovo problem must be based on European principles and values - a solution that will help build stability and peace in the area."—Greek Foreign Minister Petros Molyviatos, after meeting in Athens with Serbian President Boris Tadic (*AP*, 2/8/05).

"For the Serb side, an independent Kosovo is unacceptable. It will be something unprecedented in the region and it will destabilize Macedonia."—Serbian President Boris Tadic, speaking in Athens following talks with the Greek foreign minister (*AP*, 2/8/05).

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