



BALKAN WATCH

Monday, September 19, 2005

Volume 7.19

A Review of Current Events

ILL RUGOVA NAMES NEGOTIATION

TEAM. Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova announced his team for upcoming final status talks: his close adviser and Speaker of Parliament Nexhat Daci, Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi, former KLA leader and the leader of the main opposition party Hashim Thaci, and leader of another opposition party Veton Surroi. Rugova pledged to lead the delegatin. American diplomat Philip Goldberg praised Rugova for reaching out to all of the main political parties within his government and encouraging unity. Earlier this month, Rugova was diagnosed with localized lung cancer. If his health continues to deteriorate, the Kosovo delegation may suffer a legitimacy crisis because of the lack of a clear successor for Rugova. The president told reporters that his doctors had placed him on a rigorous recovery plan. Rugova had been treated at the American military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany; treatment will continue at the US Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo.

SERB AND KOSOVO OFFICIALS MEET.

Serbian and Kosovo officials met together in a six-hour session in Vienna designed to address some of the less contentious issues between the two groups heading to expected final status talks on Kosovo. The meeting was the first between Serbian and Kosovo officials since October 2003 and was described by participants as being "business-like and civil." The participating officials discussed matters such as local government reform and return of Serbs who left Kosovo during and following the 1998-1999 war. Lutfi Haziri, the top Kosovo negotiator at the meeting described the talks as being "very constructive." The Vienna talks were organized by UN envoy Kai Eide, who is working on producing a report evaluating whether Kosovo has successfully completed various requirements to hold final status talks. Eide's report is expected to be released later this month.

ICG REPORT ADDRESSES MITROVICA.

The International Crisis Group recently produced a report titled "Bridging Kosovo's Mitrovica Divide," which recommended that the international community ensure that Kosovo Serbs living in northern Kosovo are guaranteed autonomy. The report noted that Belgrade has been pursuing its own policy of partition, which, if continued, would have the potential to create further instability in the Balkans, including in Macedonia. ICG experts also recommended that NATO's KFOR and UNMIK take a firmer stance on enforcing UN resolutions in northern Kosovo and shut down some illegally-run police stations set up by Belgrade. ICG also recommended that Mitrovica be used as a "hub" to ensure services for the Kosovo Serb minority, while reducing the divisions and ending a partition policy.

KOSOVO DONATES MONEY TO

KATRINA RELIEF. The government of Kosovo announced that it would be donating around \$500,000 to the American Red Cross to aid in the relief effort following Hurricane Katrina. Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi noted that the amount of money was small but a token gesture to help the United States out at a critical moment, after the United States provided large levels of assistance to Kosovo during and after war in the late 1990s.

DJUKANOVIC SAYS MONTENEGRO TO BE INDEPENDENT BY SPRING.

Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic pledged that Montenegro would be independent "by next spring," having moved out of its state union treaty with Serbia. Djukanovic stated that independence would come through an agreement with Serbia or a successful independence referendum in Montenegro. Serbian President Boris Tadic had remarked that tensions between Serbia and Montenegro have been increasing and threaten to pull the two entities apart. Djukanovic denied that his government's efforts to work toward independence are responsible for the increasing tensions. Tadic also cancelled a planned trip to the UN in New York after Montenegrin officials stated they would be sending their own, separate delegation and because Serbia & Montenegro's state union President Svetozar Marovic would not be represented at the event. Adding to the tensions were also allegations of corruption led by the Serbian Finance Minister Mladan Dinkic, against Montenegrin Defense Minister Prvoslav Divinic, who is responsible for the state union's overall defense policy.

WORLD BANK NOTES IMPROVEMENT IN SERBIA.

World Bank officials noted that business conditions had improved greatly in Serbia but that much work remains to be done. Serbia & Montenegro were named on a World Bank list of the twelve most-reformed countries to do business in as part of a report titled "Doing Business in 2006: Creating Jobs." Carolyn Yung, World Bank envoy to Serbia & Montenegro, praised the current Serbian government under Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica for having pushed business reform in the country. Yung refused to speculate on how much of an impact recent defense spending scandals in Serbia would have on continuing business and economic reforms. Simeon Djankov, one of the authors of the World Bank study, remarked that Serbia needs to keep up its current pace of reforms to drive the country even further. Djankov also noted that Serbia needs to change labor legislation to make the labor market in the country more flexible, allowing new business growth. The World Bank study is based on data compiled from over 3,500 academics, lawyers, local experts, business consultants, and accountants from around the world. Other countries praised for their business reforms were Latvia, Germany, Georgia, and Romania.

U.S. WANTS WAR CRIMINALS ARRESTED BY NOVEMBER.

The American ambassador to Bosnia, Douglas McElhaney, told Bosnian reporters he was displeased with the inability of Bosnian Serb authorities to capture suspected war criminals, including Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. McElhaney also suggested the United States would like the two men captured by the time of the tenth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords later this year in November.

BOSNIAN EU TALKS POSTPONED.

Potential talks between Bosnia and the European Union over eventual Bosnian accession have been postponed after the Bosnian Serb parliament refused to pass legislation approving the implementation of EU-required police reforms that would have merged various ethnically-determined police forces within the country into one overall force. Bosnia was hoping to enter into a Stabilization and Association Agreement, considered one of the first steps toward EU accession, by the end of the year. EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn expressed disappointment that the Bosnian Serbs failed to agree with the EU policy and that talks over potential accession would have to be postponed. A spokesman for OHR chief Paddy Ashdown said that Bosnia may not have another chance at Association Agreement negotiations until 2007.

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"If facts on the ground in Mitrovica and even new violence are not to destroy the prospect of a stable final status settlement for Kosovo, the international community needs to work harder and creatively to change Serb strategic thinking and get Albanians to recognize the need to participate in a constructive offer. The no-partition dictum is, unfortunately, not self-executing."—International Crisis Group report "Bridging Kosovo's Mitrovica Divide" (9/13/05).

"With our serious engagement and unity in preparation for possible talks on the final status, we will show the world that Kosovo is ready to take its place within the community of independent and free countries."—Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova, commenting after making his team of final status negotiators public. (AFP, 9/13/05).

"We believe that Montenegro has to be independent. We believe that the independence should be achieved through a democratic procedure, through an agreement with Serbia, or through a democratic referendum in Montenegro. I am sure that Montenegro will be independent in spring next year."—Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic (AP, 9/12/05).

Prepared by John Sannar

Balkan Watch is a publication of the Public International Law & Policy Group. Balkan Watch is available on the Web:

<http://www.pilpg.org/areas/poldev/balkanwatch/>. Questions or comments? E-mail balkanwatch@pilpg.org