



# BALKAN WATCH

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## A Review of Current Events

**CARLUCCI PRESSES FOR U.S. ACTION ON KOSOVO.** Former Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci, warning that renewed violence could break out in Kosovo this spring, urged that the U.S. move quickly toward settling Kosovo's final status. He noted that the best solution would be for UN-administered Kosovo to become fully independent. He called for the U.S. to work with its five partner nations in the Contact Group to press for a Kosovo Accord, a process to initiate the final status talks. Carlucci suggested taking the ideas of partition or unification with Albania or any other neighboring state off the table.

**PATTEN ENCOURAGES KOSOVO TIMETABLE.** Warning that time was running out on resolving the Kosovo issue without violence, former European Union Commissioner for External Relations Chris Patten encouraged the six-nation Contact Group to immediately put together a timetable for Kosovo to achieve independence. Patten warned that the international community has failed to address the Kosovo question properly because of other concerns, including Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. He reiterated that rights would need to be guaranteed to the Kosovo Serb and other minorities and the option of Kosovo joining one of its neighbor states taken off the table. He also criticized Serbia for focusing too much on the Kosovo conflict, instead urging that Belgrade work on capturing war crimes indictees and being more cooperative with the international community, as Croatia has done.

**KOSOVO CONSTITUTION.** A draft constitution was presented to Kosovo's president and prime minister by a delegation from the Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG). According to PILPG Executive Director Paul Williams, "There are three major steps towards independence. Firstly, the standards, then solving the issue of the final status, and equally important is the constitution." President Rugova noted that there would be a group of Kosovo experts established to work on the draft constitution. Kosovo media have reported that debate has already begun among the public on the PILPG draft.

**EU SAYS KOSOVO NOT TO RETURN TO PRE-1999 STATUS.** EU foreign ministers meeting to discuss Kosovo on February 21 issued a statement promising that there would be "no return to the situation before 1999" in Kosovo, i.e., no return to Serbian rule. They also agreed to discuss in "early summer" the issue of whether Kosovo had achieved satisfactory progress in meeting standards that the international community had established as a preliminary hurdle before tackling final status issues. UNMIK chief Soren Jessen-Petersen told the foreign ministers that the Kosovo security situation was "still fragile," and warned that the most serious threat to stability was the economy. Referring to the unemployment rate of 70 percent, he said Kosovars would only see

a "significant change with certainty on status." Foreign ministers also called for dialogue to resume between Pristina and Belgrade.

**KOSOVO-SERBIA TALKS TO RESUME.** Talks between Kosovo and Serbia on the fate of those missing during the fighting of 1998-99 will resume on March 10 in Belgrade, according to Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj. These talks will be the first between the two parties since a wave of rioting in March of last year. Talks between the Kosovars and Serbs would help to create a positive atmosphere for the launch of final status negotiations this summer.

Italian Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini, however, warned that the time might not be right to address the final status of Kosovo, saying that neither a return to the former situation or a plan for an independent Kosovo would be appropriate at the present time. Fini encouraged parties to hold off on reaching a decision to address Kosovo's final status because of fears this could damage short-term and long-term stability in the region. Fini's counterpart in Belgrade, Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic, remarked that a final status solution would have to respect "democratic principles and those of international law." On the subject of the state union between Serbia and Montenegro, Fini noted that the current arrangement has yielded some positive results. He reminded the parties to respect each other's opinions and to acknowledge the principle of self-determination.

**DJUKANOVIC VOWS INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM.** Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic has called for a referendum to declare independence next February, unless Serbia and Montenegro are able to agree on some other type of state arrangement. One prominent alternative to outright independence would entail both entities declaring independence from each other with the expectation that the two entities would join together in a loose union, along the lines of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Djukanovic offered this alternative for Serbia to decide upon for the remainder of 2005; if it is not chosen, he warned that Montenegro would hold a referendum to vote on complete independence.

Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica has thus far rejected the alternative presented by Djukanovic, preferring to maintain the status quo in retaining the current state union arrangement. Djukanovic and other Montenegrin officials have repeatedly complained about a lack of effort on Belgrade's part to cooperate with international authorities in the extradition of war crimes indictees to The Hague, contrasting this with Montenegro's cooperation. Montenegro's view is that Serbian recalcitrance on tribunal cooperation jeopardizes the Montenegrin goal of joining the

EU so long as Serbia and Montenegro are treated by the international community as a single entity. Djukanovic has criticized Belgrade for not focusing enough on trying to eventually join the EU. His alternative plan of a union of independent states would require ratification by both the Serbian and Montenegrin parliaments. Djukanovic plans to travel to Brussels this week to discuss his plans with EU officials.

**MESIC WANTS TO SOLVE GOTOVINA PROBLEM.** Croatian President Stipe Mesic announced that he will ensure that war crimes indictee General Ante Gotovina is either captured or it is proven beyond doubt that he is not in Croatia, and thus unable to be captured by the Croatian Government. The EU has scheduled membership talks with Croatia to begin on March 17; however, member states have threatened to postpone the talks if Gotovina is not captured by that time. UN War Crimes Tribunal chief prosecutor Carla Del Ponte argued that Croatia failed to attempt to "break the net" allowing Gotovina to hide in Croatia. Her remarks make it more difficult for Croatia to move ahead on EU accession talks unless it turns over Gotovina. Many Croatian politicians fear that if Gotovina is captured and turned over to The Hague, the country may move in the direction of Serbia: toward a more nationalistic state in further jeopardy of international isolation.

## QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"The only solution that makes long-term sense is full independence for Kosovo, and the only question that remains is how to get there."—Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci, in an op-ed warning of the danger of renewed violence in Kosovo (*The New York Times*, 2/22/05).

"The six-nation Contact Group (the US, the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Russia) should immediately issue a timetable for independence through development of a 'Kosovo Accord'. A successful UN review of the Kosovo government's commitment to democracy, good governance and human rights—already set for mid-2005—should be the trigger for drafting the accord, which would need to pass muster through an international conference and would include a constitution to be ratified by referendum in Kosovo."—Former EU External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten (*Financial Times*, 2/23/05).

"This offer is open for the duration of 2005. If Serbia passes on it, we will carry out our referendum in February 2006."—Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic, proposing a union of two independent states for Montenegro and Serbia (*AP*, 2/19/05).

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