



BALKAN WATCH

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A Review of Current Events

GERMAN ROADMAP FOR KOSOVO FINAL STATUS. German Defense Minister Peter Struck recently visited peacekeeping troops stationed at a base near Prizren in Kosovo. Struck noted that his country's 2,500 troops in Kosovo will remain there until Kosovo's final status question has been resolved under NATO mandate. Following a meeting with President Ibrahim Rugova, Struck encouraged leaders on both sides to work harder so that a final status solution could be achieved sooner rather than later. Meanwhile, Michael Schaefer, political director at the German Foreign Ministry, outlined a possible "roadmap" for the future of Kosovo. This plan ruled out a division of Kosovo, "immediate unconditional independence," returning to the situation in place before 1999—i.e., the return of Kosovo to Serbian authority—and allowing a potential union with another state, such as Albania. Schaefer encouraged laying "the foundation stone for peaceful coexistence in a society based on a democratic constitution." He also recommended that Serbian politicians change their attitude toward the talks and internal politics in Kosovo, instead of maintaining their current "blockade attitude."

KOSUMI SELECTED AS NEW PRIME MINISTER. Bajram Kosumi, proposed as new prime minister by recently-indicted Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, has been chosen as the new prime minister by President Rugova. Kosumi began his political career in the 1980s by participating in student demonstrations in Pristina. He was arrested and forced to spend ten years in prison. Kosumi most recently worked as Haradinaj's minister of environment and urban planning while serving as vice president of Haradinaj's political party, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK). Opposition leaders in the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), led by Hashim Thaci, claimed that Kosumi was a poor choice for prime minister, saying that he lacks charisma and forcefulness. Kosumi became a reporter immediately following his release from prison in 1991. In 1994, he was appointed president of the Parliamentary Party of Kosovo, holding the position until 1998, except for a two year period when Adem Demaci held the post. Kosumi opposed a Kosovo Contact Group plan formulated in 1998 that would have created a government in Yugoslavia based on the Bosnia model. He favored a plan created by Demaci calling for a looser alliance among Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo, naming it Balkanija. He has vowed not to change the cabinet left in place by his predecessor.

RUGOVA ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT. An explosive device was detonated as the motorcade of Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova passed by en route to a meeting with EU Representative for Foreign Policy Javier Solana. Solana reportedly intended to urge that Rugova appoint PDK leader Hashim Thaci as the new prime minister, and the incident was interpreted

by many as a warning by Haradinaj supporters that Rugova should retain Haradinaj's AAK party in the prime ministry. The attempt came one week after Prime Minister Haradinaj was indicted by the Hague war crimes tribunal and resigned. Rugova's car was damaged and one person was injured by flying glass.

SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, KOSOVO GOVERNMENT SIGN AGREEMENT. The government of Kosovo signed an agreement with the Serbian Orthodox Church on March 25 to reconstruct churches destroyed during the March 2004 rioting in Kosovo. Patriarch Pavle signed for the church, with Kosovo's Minister of Culture Astrit Haraqija signing for Pristina. The agreement stipulates that a five-person commission headed by an international heritage expert will oversee the process. UNMIK head Soren Jessen-Petersen praised the agreement as a step forward "for all who believe in a stable, multiethnic and tolerant Kosovo, and respect for all religious sites." Around \$5.4 million was allocated by the Kosovo government for the project.

KOSOVO, SERBIA MEET ON PRISONERS. Officials from Serbia and Kosovo have met under Red Cross auspices to discuss the whereabouts of people missing since the war of 1998-99. Approximately 3,000 persons remain unaccounted for since the fighting ended, and most or all are presumed dead, with some assumed to be buried in mass graves. The importance of the meeting is that it fulfills a condition of the international community that a dialogue resume prior to the holding of final status peace negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina.

OSCE SUGGESTS SECRET PRISTINA-BELGRADE TALKS. OSCE Chairman-in-Office Dimitrij Rupel, Slovenia's foreign minister, urged on Friday that officials in Belgrade and Pristina hold secret talks to explore a final status solution for Kosovo. Kosovo's parliamentary speaker, who revealed the proposal after meetings in Pristina between Rupel and Kosovar and international officials, rejected the suggestion.

CIA INVOLVED IN MLADIC SEARCH. Former Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Zivkovic told reporters that the CIA had been involved in a joint cooperative program with members of the Serbian security service to seek indicted war criminal Ratko Mladic. Zivkovic stated that over a dozen operations were carried out during the six months the program lasted. Three CIA agents accompanied Serbian agents as observers during the hunt for Mladic. He also noted that after he lost election in 2003, his successor, Vojislav Kostunica, would not allow the joint intelligence program to continue. Had the program continued for 20 more days, Serbia would have been eligible for millions of dollars in financial aid from the U.S.

BOSKOVSKI INDICTED. Former Macedonian Interior Minister Ljube Boskovski has been indicted by the war crimes tribunal at The Hague, along with police officer Johan Tarculovski for having a role in a 2001 clash between security forces and Albanian rebels in the town of Ljuboten, near Skopje. Boskovski is already in custody in Croatia and is also awaiting charges in Macedonia for murdering seven Asian migrants in 2002.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE CALLS FOR BOSNIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM. In a hearing held by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Venice Commission experts recommended that Bosnia's constitutional framework be reformed because of problems associated with the country's government costs. The commission found the current government system to be inefficient and unsustainable. The experts recommended that the powers of the central government be strengthened; that the powers of the cantons within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina be curtailed or the cantons abolished; that political and administrative structures be simplified; and that decision-making processes at all levels be streamlined and ethnic vetoes reduced. The Venice Commission is the Council of Europe's body of experts on constitutional affairs.

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"Independence for Kosovo is not the only challenge we face. Independence is a step which we should achieve in order to work on economic development and integration with the EU and NATO. Independence won't solve all our problems but it will give us a chance to start solving problems and become a part of the prosperous world."—New Kosovo Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi's inaugural address. (AP, 3/23/05).

"Neither Serbia nor Russia—nor the reluctance of a busy administration to take on another problem—should be allowed to stand in the way of resolving Kosovo's future and developing a broader plan for the Balkans this year. Delay will only invite a resumption of the terrible conflict that plagued the West a decade ago."—Editorial (*Washington Post*, 3/24/04).

"There is going to be a broad consultation on where we go with Kosovo."—Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice discussing the Bush administration's policy on Kosovo. (AP, 3/24/05).

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