



BALKAN WATCH

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A Review of Current Events

BALKAN COMMISSION REPORT. A commission headed by former Italian Prime Minister Giuliano Amato released its report, "The Balkans in Europe's Future" on April 12. The report was written by the sixteen-member International Commission on the Balkans, arguing that the current status quo in handling the crisis in the Balkans is unacceptable and could lead to a "black hole" being formed in Europe. The commission advocates that a clear road map be produced outlining how the international community will go about the process of attaining final political status in Kosovo and in other countries, including Bosnia. The report suggests replacing Bosnia's Office of the High Representative, currently headed by Lord Paddy Ashdown, with an EU negotiator associated with the EU Enlargement Commissioner in Brussels. The commission also outlined a four-step process by which Kosovo would attain independence. The first step would require the UN Security Council to drop Kosovo's status as a UN protectorate with a formal tie to "Yugoslavia," as outlined in Security Council Resolution 1244. Second, Kosovo would undergo a stage called "independence without sovereignty," in which the international community would still play a large role in the oversight of human rights and other political matters in Kosovo. Third, Kosovo would undertake "guided sovereignty," while it negotiates with the EU on accession. Fourth, Kosovo would become a full member of the EU once it has met accession standards.

The commission also criticized UNMIK for having a policy of "reverse discrimination" in place on employment decisions, such as the number of Serbs hired at the Kosovo Electric Company. The commission challenged the UN and EU to take steps to finalize standards, such as offering all of the Balkans countries concrete EU membership timetables.

The Commission's report can be found online at www.balkan-commission.org.

CONTACT GROUP MEETS IN PRISTINA. Representatives of the Contact Group at the political director level met in Pristina on April 13 with key Kosovar and international figures, including President Ibrahim Rugova, Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi, Assembly President Nexhat Daci, PDK leader Hashim Thaci, ORA President Veton Surroi, Kosovo Serb officials Oliver Ivanovic, Goran Bogdanovic and Randel Nojkic, and UNMIK head Soren Jessen-Petersen. Speaking on behalf of the Contact Group, senior German diplomat Michael Schaefer said that Kosovo would not be partitioned forced to return to Serbia or to accept border changes. He also stressed the importance of implementing standards as a condition for making progress in final status.

KOSOVO PARTY OFFICE BOMBED. A bomb exploded outside the office of the opposition political party ORA, headed by

Veton Surroi, on April 17. The building sustained extensive damage and slightly injured three children living above the offices. Surroi termed the bombing an "attempted political murder."

HARADINAJ BROTHER KILLED. Enver Haradinaj, brother of former Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, was ambushed by unknown attackers while driving from Pec to his home in Glogjane. The former prime minister, having been indicted for war crimes and under UN custody at The Hague, was granted permission to travel home to attend his brother's funeral. Tens of thousands of mourners joined him for the funeral. While attending the funeral, Haradinaj was kept under UN police control and was restricted from speaking with the media. However, he told mourners that Kosovo must proceed on its path toward independence and statehood. He returned to The Hague after the funeral. Later, Haradinaj's defense team filed a motion at the tribunal requesting that he be given permission to return to Kosovo until his trial is held. The prosecution will have two weeks to respond to the motion before judges issue a ruling.

HOLBROOKE COMMENTS ON BALKANS. Former Assistant Secretary of State and special envoy under President Clinton Richard Holbrooke commented on the Bush administration's policies in the Balkans in an April 20 op-ed in *The Washington Post*. Holbrooke noted that the U.S. has made a minor change in its policy regarding final political status in Kosovo, by actually becoming more engaged in the process of negotiations, compared with the past four years, which Holbrooke criticized as being "four years of neglect." He stated that independence is the only viable option for Kosovo, "perhaps on a staged basis over the next several years," provided that strong guarantees for the Serb minority are included. He suggested that American pressure was necessary to drive talks forward, lamenting that the EU has become "sluggish, process-driven." Holbrooke urged that Serbia give up seeking to regain Kosovo and instead work toward EU membership. He concluded that instability in Kosovo could spread elsewhere in the Balkans and lead to a major crisis.

PAVKOVIC SURRENDERS. Former Yugoslav army chief, General Nebojsa Pavkovic, reportedly surrendered to the war crimes tribunal at The Hague, where he was indicted for crimes committed during the war in Kosovo.

SREBRENICA FAMILIES TRAVEL TO KOSOVO. People from the town of Srebrenica traveled to Kosovo to show solidarity with individuals who lost members of their families during the 1998-99 war in Kosovo. In 1995, approximately 8,000 Muslim men and boys were massacred by Serbian forces in Srebrenica.

The International Commission on Missing Persons hoped that their bringing Srebrenica victims together with victims in Kosovo would help raise international awareness of unresolved issues of missing persons.

CROATIA-DEL PONTE SHOWDOWN? Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader insisted that a recent meeting held in Luxembourg was not a showdown between him and Carla Del Ponte, chief prosecutor at the war crimes tribunal at The Hague. Sanader and other Croatian leaders have been criticized for failing to capture indicted war criminal Ante Gotovina. Sanader and others have suggested that Gotovina may be hiding in France, where he is believed to hold dual citizenship. Del Ponte insists that his capture be a prerequisite for talks to join the EU, which Croatia wants to begin soon and which the EU has delayed pending capture of Gotovina. An international commission is evaluating whether Croatia is doing all it can to try to capture him.

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"The Balkans need a new strategy if it is to translate Brussels' stated political aim to integrate the region into reality. The commission acknowledges there are no quick and easy solutions for the Balkans and that ultimately it is up to the people of the region to win their own future. But we are convinced that the international community and the European Union in particular have a historical responsibility to face and a decisive role to play in winning the future of the region."

—Report issued by the International Commission on the Balkans (*The International Herald Tribune*, 4/28/05).

"Washington and the European Union fashioned a delaying policy they called "standards before status," a phrase that disguised bureaucratic inaction inside diplomatic mumbo-jumbo. As a result, there have been no serious discussions on the future of Kosovo for the past four years, even as windows of opportunity closed and Albanian-Serb tensions rose."

—Former Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke (*The Washington Post*, 4/20/05).

"I am very pleased to see that the Contact Group has ruled out partition of Kosovo, has ruled out the union of Kosovo with any country or part of any country, and has ruled out the return to the situation before March 1999."

—UNMIK chief Soren Jessen-Petersen, following meetings of Contact Group representatives in Pristina (*UNMIK Press Release*, 4/13/05).

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<http://www.publicinternationallaw.org/programs/balkans/archives/>. Questions or comments? E-mail balkanwatch@pilpg.org