



# BALKAN WATCH

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## A Review of Current Events

**BUSH TO DISCUSS KOSOVO IN BRUSSELS.** President Bush will discuss the issue of Kosovo when meeting with European Union officials in Brussels. Bush will meet with EU Foreign Policy chief Javier Solana, where he is expected to discuss plans outlined in his recent Inaugural Address. Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn noted to reporters that he plans to include Kosovo and other Balkans conflicts on the agenda for the meeting.

**INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP REPORT URGES KOSOVO FINAL STATUS.** In a report entitled, "Kosovo: Toward Final Status," experts at the International Crisis Group (ICG), a think-tank based in Brussels, urged international officials to work toward resolving the final status of Kosovo sometime this year or risk having Kosovo decline back into ethnic fighting. The report urged officials within the six-nation Contact Group to put together a definitive timeline to set out goals for the negotiation process. ICG also suggested that all parties agree before talks begin to three considerations: 1) Kosovo may not unite with neighboring Albania, 2) there will be no partition of Kosovo, and 3) an international presence will remain in Kosovo even after a deal is reached. ICG recommended that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appoint a special envoy to help the parties reach a deal at an international conference. The report warned that the situation on the ground in Kosovo is too fragile to allow for any delay in reaching a final status agreement.

**SERB CHOSEN TO HEAD KOSOVO MINISTRY.** On January 26, the Kosovo parliament elected Slavisa Petkovic, a Serb economist, to head the ministry of returns and communities. The ministry was established to promote the return of Serb and other minorities who left Kosovo after the 1999 war fearing revenge attacks by ethnic Albanians. Petkovic's decision to accept the post was criticized by Belgrade's envoy for Kosovo affairs, who has repeatedly urged Kosovo Serbs to stay away from Kosovo's governing institutions, and the Democratic Party of Kosovo, a leading ethnic Albanian party in parliament.

**SERBIAN POLL SHOWS MAJORITY FAVORS DIVISION OF KOSOVO.** A poll conducted in December by the Institute for Social Sciences revealed that 57 percent of Serbs would like to see Kosovo divided and only 19 percent oppose this. Around 48 percent of Serbs regard Kosovo as "lost" and would never return to Serbian jurisdiction. Division of Kosovo was regarded favorably as a means of extricating Serbia from the long-running dispute over control of Kosovo.

**MAROVIC QUESTIONS ELECTRICITY IN KOSOVO.** Serbia and Montenegro's President Svetozar Marovic recently complained to UN Secretary-General Kofi

Annan about the administration of electrical power in Kosovo. Recently, power companies have been clamping down on families that have failed to pay their electrical bills. Marovic views that Kosovo Serb families have been hit harder by this problem because of their ethnic minority status, facing tensions with a Kosovo Albanian majority. Kosovo Serbs have worried that having their power shut off may be another means of pressuring them into leaving Kosovo, prior to final status talks, which are tentatively scheduled to begin later this year. Compounding the problem is the unusually cold winter affecting Europe this year. UNMIK chief, Soren Jessen-Petersen, brushed aside calls of discrimination by the Kosovo Serb community, noting that "everyone has to pay their electricity bills."

**EU ENLARGEMENT CHIEF ISSUES WARNING.** The European Union's new Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, urged Serbs to improve their cooperation with the war crimes tribunal at The Hague as a condition for potential EU membership. Rehn's remarks followed a meeting, in which he sat down with Serbia and Montenegro's Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic. Rehn also met with moderate Serbian President Boris Tadic and nationalist Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, who has frequently stated his preference that suspects surrender voluntarily and resisted international entreaties to send indictees to the tribunal. Serbia and Montenegro has failed to arrest over a dozen indicted war crimes suspects for the tribunal. A team from Brussels will conduct a feasibility study in Belgrade to determine whether to consider a loose association accord, as a potential precursor to eventual EU membership. The feasibility study is expected to be completed by March.

Meanwhile, Miroljub Labus to B-92 radio that his party, G17 Plus, might pull out of the government soon if they did not cooperate with war crimes tribunal unless war crimes suspects were extradited to The Hague. "It wouldn't be good for Serbia if we did it," he said, "but it would be even worse to miss this moment and not extradite suspects."

**BOOKS BY WAR CRIMES SUSPECTS GAIN FOLLOWING.** As reported in an article by Nicholas Wood in *The New York Times*, books by various Serbian war crimes suspects have gained a following among Serbs. Radovan Karadzic, the chief organizer of crimes against humanity against Bosnians in the 1992-1995 Bosnian war, has written four books since going into hiding in 1996. Among these books are a children's book and "The Miraculous Chronicle of the Night," a novel in which the main character is an engineer, like Karadzic, who lived in Sarajevo when the death of Tito took place in 1980. Milorad Ulemek, a former paramilitary soldier, most recently published "Iron Trench," in which he writes about war. Ulemek's book has surpassed records for sales

of books in Serbia, having sold over 70,000 copies thus far. His publisher, Mihailo Vojnovic of M Books, notes that as Ulemek may be tried before the war crimes tribunal, his books may sell even more. Some experts are skeptical whether the book was actually written by Ulemek. These books appear to be having a major impact on Serbian culture, leading many to wonder about their validity and to address issues such as Serbia's role in the wars of the last decade, within Europe, and the treatment and capture of war crimes suspects. Natasha Kandic of the Humanitarian Law Center in Belgrade protested, having encouraged international publishers to boycott the book fair at which Karadzic's most recent book was released.

**JANSA AND SANADER AGREE TO RESOLVE DISPUTES.** Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa and his Croatian counterpart, Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, have agreed to discuss various pending disputes between the two Balkans countries. Relations between the two nations have suffered as a result of a border dispute in the Piran Bay area, seen by Croatia as a quick water route to Italy and by Slovenia as its only access to international waters. The two prime ministers agreed to discuss the issues bilaterally and only turn to international arbitration should an agreement not be made. Slovenia is already a member of the EU and NATO and is seen as a primary supporter of Croatian membership in both organizations. Sanader acknowledged that the lack of a settlement is hindering the economies of both states. The two nations also jointly operate the Krsko nuclear power plant, physically located in Slovenia.

## QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"It's up to Serbians and Montenegrins to decide whether they want to join the European mainstream. International obligations, especially those on cooperation with the Hague tribunal, are the gateway to a European future. There is no shortcut to Europe."—EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn, commenting on capturing war crimes suspects (*AP*, 1/25/05).

"It's like Joyce's 'Dubliners.' It is equal to the best pages in Serbian literature. We would have lost many precious pieces of literature if we ignored condemned authors."—Momo Kapor, commenting on one of indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic's books (*The New York Times*, 1/21/05).

"Either 2005 sees major progress on a future status solution that consolidates peace and development, or the danger is that Kosovo will return to conflict and generate regional instability."—International Crisis Group Report, "Kosovo: Toward Final Status" (1/21/05).

Prepared by John Sannar