



# BALKAN WATCH

Monday, October 31, 2005

Volume 7.22

## A Review of Current Events

### UNMIK CHIEF AND SECURITY COUNCIL SUPPORTIVE OF TALKS.

UNMIK chief Soren Jessen-Petersen addressed the UN Security Council on October 24, noting his support for beginning Kosovo final status talks. Jessen-Petersen concluded that the political status quo in Kosovo was untenable. He warned that the negotiations, however, should not consume all of Kosovo's attention; continued work on improving the political climate in Kosovo was also necessary. UNMIK has outlined six priority areas for continued focus in cooperation with the government of Kosovo. The six areas addressed were continued implementation of international political standards, comprehensive reform of local government, pursuing the implementation of a comprehensive security agenda, building the capacity of political institutions, restructuring UNMIK over upcoming months to assure optimum performance during the status talks, and maintaining a safe and secure environment for everyone in Kosovo. Jessen-Petersen noted that the security environment in Kosovo is currently stable; however, he did not want UNMIK nor KFOR to become complacent during the talks.

Following Jessen-Petersen's statement, the Security Council endorsed Secretary-General Kofi Annan's suggestion that final status talks begin as soon as possible. Annan is expected to choose former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari to serve as his envoy at the talks, despite objections from the Serbs, who accuse Ahtisaari of favoring an independent Kosovo. In an op-ed in the *International Herald Tribune*, Jessen-Petersen noted that the "legal limbo" regarding Kosovo's political status is harming reconciliation efforts between Serbs and Albanians. He noted that the talks will enable Kosovo to move forward and work on improving its economic situation, allowing it to move closer to eventual EU accession.

### SLOVENIAN PRESIDENT ANGERS SERBS OVER KOSOVO SUPPORT.

A planned visit to Belgrade by Slovenian President Janez Drnovsek was cancelled by Serbia & Montenegro's President Svetozar Marovic. Marovic was angered by recent comments Drnovsek had made supporting an independent Kosovo as the most viable option for durable Balkans peace. Meanwhile, Slovenia's foreign minister, Dimitrij Rupel, is serving as the chairman-in-office of the OSCE, an organization that will play a significant role in the upcoming Kosovo final status talks. Drnovsek sent his adviser Ivo Vajgl to Belgrade to explain his position on Kosovo to Marovic and other Serbian leaders. Meeting with Serbia & Montenegro's foreign minister, Vuk Draskovic, Vajgl reiterated his support for protections for the Kosovo Serb minority, noting that minority protections will need to be covered in the negotiations. Drnovsek also recently announced that Slovenia would be

willing to host the upcoming talks.

### KOSUMI VISITS BERISHA, FISCHER

**REMARKS.** Kosovo's Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi recently traveled to Tirana to meet with Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha. Kosumi's visit was meant to focus on bilateral relations between Kosovo and Albania and to address some of the key items likely for discussion during the upcoming political status talks. Berisha suggested that Pristina maintain a continuous dialogue with Belgrade to ensure that Serbian interests are effectively understood. Various other international officials have also commented on the talks. Outgoing German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer remarked that both Serbia and Kosovo had a right to "clarity about the road ahead." Fischer stated he expected all parties in the negotiations to be willing to make compromises and to work constructively to reach an agreement.

### DJUKANOVIC REAFFIRMS APRIL REFERENDUM ON MONTENEGRO INDEPENDENCE.

Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic has reiterated his intention to hold a referendum on Montenegro's independence next April. He said that he would resist EU pressure to delay the referendum until later in the year, noting that, "that there is not even the smallest amount of room left for maneuver on the date of the referendum." Montenegrin President Filip Vujanovic declared that, "We accept that we have to hold the referendum in accordance with the highest international standards and we will contact the EU in this regard as we believe we should apply its standards to the fullest." A recent opinion poll shows 41 percent of Montenegrins in favor of independence, 34 percent opposed, and 25 percent undecided.

### BOSNIAN, EU TALKS TO BEGIN.

Members of the European Commission have recently agreed to initiate a cooperation agreement with Bosnia, putting the country on the path toward eventual EU membership. UN High Representative Lord Paddy Ashdown remarked that Bosnia would be like a new country in its pursuit of eventual membership, suggesting that Bosnians view themselves in a new way. The Commission, however, stated that it would be willing to delay the start of talks if Bosnia does not step up its efforts to capture war crimes indictees wanted by the UN tribunal at The Hague, especially former Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadzic. The Bosnian government must also undertake steps to ensure that the country's police force is more ethnically integrated and to also improve public broadcasting laws, making it easier for each ethnic group to participate in Bosnian civil society, according to the Commission. Bosnian officials have also been in discussions about amending the country's constitution, created at the Dayton Peace Accords ten years ago. A decision made by the Bosnian Serbs to integrate their police force with that already jointly

serving the Bosnian Muslim and Croat communities led to the Commission's decision to begin cooperation talks. Outgoing German Defense Minister Peter Struck also announced plans to withdraw a quarter of Germany's one thousand troops from Bosnia before he leaves office next month.

### MLADIC SUPPORTER CHOSEN AS DEFENSE MINISTER.

Former General Zoran Stankovic was recently selected to serve as the new defense minister of Serbia & Montenegro. Reportedly, Stankovic has ties to war crimes indictee Ratko Mladic. Stankovic has also remarked in the past that Mladic would probably never surrender to face the international tribunal. Stankovic was approved for his new position with 72 votes of support in the 126-member Serbia & Montenegro parliament. He had met with UN chief war crimes prosecutor Carla Del Ponte during her visit to Belgrade in September, asking her what she felt the army needed to do to comply with the tribunal. Del Ponte has previously stated that she expected the Serbian government to have arrested Mladic before the tenth anniversary of the Dayton accords on December 14.

### QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"My message to all of our friends in the international community is that they should be prepared for a new political reality in the Balkans in May next year and that will be the existence of a new state—independent Montenegro. I am absolutely convinced that Montenegro's path toward independence is the right thing to do and I am ready to navigate that state ship to the safe port of Montenegro's independence."—Montenegro Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic (*AFP, 10/21/05*).

"I am confident that the resolution of Kosovo's status can have only a positive effect on the wider region, including on Serbia, in terms of political stabilization, reconciliation, and economic growth. So while the way ahead will no doubt be difficult, it must nonetheless be clear to all of us that continuing with the status quo is not a viable option."—UNMIK Chief Soren Jessen-Petersen, addressing the UN Security Council (*UNMIK, 10/24/05*).

"Today's decision will put Bosnia & Herzegovina firmly to the path that leads towards Europe, and marks the most decisive shift yet away from the country's post war reality. From today the agenda has changed, and from tomorrow, Bosnia & Herzegovina is another country."—High Representative Lord Paddy Ashdown, discussing the importance of the start of cooperation talks between the EU and Bosnia (*AP, 10/21/05*).

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