



# BALKAN WATCH

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## A Review of Current Events

**SWISS FOREIGN MINISTER FOR INDEPENDENT KOSOVO.** Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calme-Rey stated that she believes that the return of Kosovo to Serbian control would be unrealistic. Calme-Rey, on a four-day trip to Kosovo, noted she felt that the current status quo in Kosovo has been unacceptable. She proposed that Kosovo be guided into independence with help from the international community, noting that full independence may take some time, being not just a goal but also a process. She also encouraged parties to meet soon to reach a solution on Kosovo's final status. Calme-Rey's remarks come as a surprise, given Switzerland's well-known reputation as a neutral country. She also met with a contingent of Swiss peacekeepers at the town of Suva Reka, in Kosovo, to celebrate the Swiss national holiday.

**FREE TRADE DEAL BETWEEN KOSOVO AND MACEDONIA.** A free trade agreement has been reached between Kosovo and Macedonia. Tariffs on various products will decrease until 2008 for goods entering Kosovo from Macedonia and goods from Kosovo going into Macedonia will be able to do so duty-free. A UN spokesperson noted that the UN Mission in Kosovo had begun implementing the deal, allowing the economy of Kosovo to benefit from it. UN officials were influential in helping to broker the deal.

**MACEDONIAN PLANES GROUNDED IN SERBIA OVER CHURCH DISPUTE.** Planes rented by Macedonia from Serbia were grounded after a Serbian Orthodox priest was jailed. Bishop Jovan was jailed in Macedonia for holding services for Serbian Orthodox worshippers. Last month, he was officially convicted of trying to incite religious hatred. Serbian Investments Minister Velimir Ilic ordered the two planes that Macedonia has rented from Serbia to be grounded until Bishop Jovan was released. Ilic also stated that Serbia would not cooperate with Macedonia until Bishop Jovan was released. Macedonia does not have its own airplane fleet. It has rented planes from neighboring countries, including Serbia, and has flown them under their own airline name, MAT. The dispute stems from a religious disagreement that began in 1967, when the Macedonian Orthodox Church split off from its Serbian counterpart. In 2002, the Serbian church offered to welcome the Macedonian church back into its fold with some level of autonomy; however, Macedonian religious leaders and politicians refused to take up the offer, with the exception of Bishop Jovan, who wanted to rejoin the Serbian church. Serbian President

Boris Tadic took an approach toward the recent airplane dispute that differed from that of the investment minister. Tadic called Macedonian President Boris Crvenkovski to congratulate Macedonia on its August 2 national holiday and

stated that the conflict between the Serbian and Macedonian churches is best settled by the churches themselves. He described the jailing of Bishop Jovan as an internal matter for Macedonia itself to come to terms with and to resolve. Tadic also suggested that if the matter were to continue, using European organizations as mediators might help reach a solution.

**CHARGES AGAINST MARKO MILOSEVIC DROPPED.** Charges against former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's son, Marko, were dropped by a prosecutor in eastern Serbia, in Milosevic's hometown of Dimitar Krstev. The younger Milosevic was charged with harassing his father's political opponents. Originally, Marko Milosevic had fled to Russia to evade a previous conviction, in which he was found guilty also of threatening pro-democracy activists after his father's ouster from power. A higher court within Serbia overturned those charges, leading Marko to return to Serbia, while still awaiting a retrial to be held this September. Additionally, a warrant for Marko's mother, Mirjana Markovic, was revoked, allowing Milosevic's wife to travel freely, after having been wanted for allegedly abusing her power as first lady of Serbia and possibly having been involved in a murder case. Critics of the government of Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica have charged that the cases against the younger Milosevic and his mother were only dropped in order to win further political support from radical, pro-Milosevic nationalist elements within Serbia.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA AMONG FORMER YUGOSLAVS.** Recent studies have shown that over twenty percent of people from the former Yugoslavia suffer some form of trauma or depression, mostly relating back to the wars of the 1990s. A study approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College in London found that nearly eighty percent of victims from the wars believe that justice has yet to be dispensed to their aggressors, which undermines the victims' efforts to recover. Complicating these traumas are high rates of unemployment that have led many Balkan men to domestic abuse.

**TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION STORM.** On August 4, Croatia celebrated the tenth anniversary of Operation Storm, a military campaign led by the Croatian government in 1995 to prevent the Serb-controlled Krajina region of Croatia from splitting off and joining Serbia. Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader described the campaign as magnificent. Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic, however, expressed disappointment that Croatia was celebrating the event, noting that it led many Serbs to leave Croatia for either Serbia or the Bosnian Serb Republic. Croatia, hoping to join the European Union, has been held back from accession negotiations because of its inability to

capture war crimes indictee General Ante Gotovina, believed to have committed war crimes during Operation Storm. The campaign has proven controversial. On one hand, Serbs who had forced Croats out of their homes in Krajina were forced out themselves. On the other hand, many Serbs who refused to leave the region were killed. Croatian President Stipe Mesic asked for forgiveness from those people who had been harmed during the operation. Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica compared Operation Storm with the Holocaust, saying it was the largest example of ethnic cleansing since World War II. Croatian leaders, on the other hand, have interjected that it was nowhere nearly brutal as the Srebrenica massacre, carried out by Serbs against Bosnian Muslims, in which 8,000 men and boys were killed in one day.

**CAVIC CALLS FOR KARADZIC TO FACE JUSTICE.** Bosnian Serb President Dragan Cavic has publicly stated that indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic must surrender to authorities, or else their country's relations with the international community will not improve. Cavic's remarks come a week after Karadzic's wife, Ljiljana, appealed to her husband to surrender, a move supported by NATO and the UN. In July, their son, Aleksandar, was detained by NATO authorities for ten days, believing that he might have more information about his father's whereabouts.

## QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"That is painful; many believe it's not fair; many say it is politically influenced but it is completely clear that without this we have a serious political problem that will escalate and prompt a new, much sharper political course of big powers toward Republika Srpska and its institutions."—Bosnian Serb President Dragan Cavic, commenting on the necessity to arrest indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic (*AP*, 8/1/05).

"Today we mark the 10th anniversary of Storm, the mother of all battles, the final and the last battle of the Homeland War, the last battle and, let us hope, the last armed battle in Croatia in both the past and the future."—Croatian Parliament Speaker Vladimir Seks, commenting at an Operation Storm commemoration ceremony (*BBC*, 8/5/05).

"Current status quo in Kosovo is unacceptable because it obstructs economic development. We think that the return of Kosovo under Serbia sovereignty is an undesirable and unrealistic approach as well."—Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calme-Rey (*AFP*, 8/1/05).

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