



BALKAN WATCH

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A Review of Current Events

KOSOVO TALKS BEFORE SEPTEMBER? UNMIK chief Soren Jessen-Petersen declared on March 28 in Belgrade that talks on Kosovo's final status might begin prior to September. In addition, he called upon Kosovo Serbs to participate in the provisional government there and criticized some Belgrade authorities for discouraging this step forward. He warned that leading officials in the US and Europe had ruled out a "return to the situation before 1999" (i.e., Serbian rule). He also denied that he would be leaving his current assignment to become head of the UNHCR.

FISCHER RULES OUT KOSOVO PARTITION. German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer publicly denounced a plan to partition Kosovo between ethnic Albanians and Serbs. Fischer encouraged Albanian authorities to work harder to protect members of Kosovo's Serb minority, one precondition for final status talks to begin this fall. Fischer met with Kosovo government authorities, including President Ibrahim Rugova and new Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi, in addition to meeting with officials from NATO and the UN. While calling for a "forward move," Fischer noted that final status in Kosovo would require international consensus. Germany has more troops in the NATO-led peacekeeping force than any other country. Fischer also met with Macedonian Foreign Minister Ilinka Mitreva in Albania, pledging support for a Macedonian bid for EU membership. Meanwhile, Swedish Defense Minister Leni Bjoerklund was also visiting Kosovo, meeting with 300 Swedish troops participating in the peacekeeping force.

PKD CRITICIZES UNMIK. Hashim Thaci's Democratic Party of Kosovo (PKD) has launched a blistering critique against UNMIK, charging the UN body with extensive corruption. The charges reportedly came in a 30-page document submitted to UNMIK. The document also accused some members of the Kosovo government of corruption.

KOSUMI VISITS ALBANIA. The newly selected prime minister of Kosovo, Bajram Kosumi, made his first visit abroad since his election by visiting neighboring Albania. He met with Albanian leader Fatos Nano, who offered his support during final status talks planned to begin later this year. Kosumi also urged close cooperation between his government and the Albanian government in the period leading up to talks. Kosumi stated he believed final status talks would be completed by mid-2006.

SERBIAN GOVERNMENT WEB SITE CRITICIZES HUMAN RIGHTS IN KOSOVO. A Web site recently introduced by the Serbian government was designed to bring attention to the human rights situation of Kosovo Serbs, noting that Serbs have been unable to return to their homes and have had to live under close supervision by NATO

peacekeepers. Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica told reporters that life for Serbs in Kosovo has become more difficult in the past few years. The government claimed that the Web site was designed with the purpose of "constantly remind[ing] the domestic and foreign audience of the intolerable violations of human rights of Serbs and non-Albanians in the southern Serbian province." The site does not refer to Serbian activities in Kosovo leading up to the 1998-99 war.

MLADIC PROTECTED BY SECURITY FORCES. Serbia & Montenegro Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic stated in an interview with the *Financial Times* that Serbian state security forces are most likely aiding in the hiding of indicted Bosnian Serb war criminal Ratko Mladic, wanted for his participation in various war crimes related to the 1992-95 war in Bosnia. Draskovic's remarks differ with the official Serbian position that no government officials have assisted in Mladic's efforts to evade the Hague tribunal. It is an open secret in Belgrade that the authorities have been assisting Mladic and that nationalist Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica has been reluctant to intercede to force his arrest. EU officials have recently stepped up pressure on the Serbian government to cooperate with the tribunal as a precondition for eventual EU membership.

LUKIC ARRIVES AT THE HAGUE. Former Kosovo Serb police chief General Sreten Lukic has arrived at The Hague after having been charged for war crimes committed during the 1998-99 Kosovo war. Andreja Mladenovic, a spokesperson for Serbia's governing Democratic Party, noted that Lukic voluntarily surrendered to authorities for extradition.

SERBIA/MONTENEGRO BACKSTAGE TALKS. Serbian President Boris Tadic announced that Serbian and Montenegrin officials were holding "backstage negotiations" regarding the state union status between the two entities. Various Montenegrin officials have criticized the current arrangement, claiming that Serbian inaction in following through with war crimes extraditions to The Hague have hindered their eventual goal of joining the European Union. The current arrangement, created in 2003, replaced a more centralized Yugoslav government. This plan called for elections to be held in February 2005 to create a joint state assembly. Tadic originally stated that an agreement may be close at hand, able to be signed during a visit by EU foreign affairs chief Javier Solana, who played a large role in the negotiations that led to the 2003 state union agreement. Upon arrival in Serbia, an agreement was not ready for Solana to initial; however, he did acknowledge that progress has been made and the parties are closer to an agreement. Solana is also expected to put more pressure on Serbian authorities to cooperate with the UN war crimes tribunal. A study is also due out later this month, evaluating whether Serbia may

ever be able to join the EU.

BOSNIAN SERB AUTHORITIES INVESTIGATE SREBRENICA. A list assembled under the order of High Representative Lord Ashdown includes the names of nearly 900 Bosnian Serb officials to be investigated by Bosnian Serb prosecutors for their involvement in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, in which nearly 7,000 Bosnian Muslims were killed. Human rights groups claim that the long list shows that many suspected war criminals are still in power, necessitating reform within the Bosnian government. Although Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic have both been charged by The Hague tribunal for their involvement in the massacre, neither of them has been captured, nor have Bosnian Serb courts charged any Bosnian Serbs for their roles in the massacre.

FORMER MAYOR CALLS FOR SEPARATE SARAJEVO. Juraj Martinovic, formerly mayor of Sarajevo and currently a professor at Sarajevo University, has called for the city to be made separate from the three Bosnian sub-state entities, allowing it to be viewed more as an actual capital of the country.

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"It is only logical that the security services know where Mladic is. They know this if he is in Serbia, and they know if he is not. They are paid to know. Without that kind of protection, without that kind of network, it would be impossible for Mladic to be invisible."—Serbia & Montenegro Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic, revealing Serbian government complicity in shielding indicted war criminal Ratko Mladic from the Hague tribunal (*Financial Times*, 4/5/05).

"The final Kosovo status requires international consensus. It is necessary to fulfill the standards in order to move Kosovo toward Europe. Standards have a crucial role for the determination of Kosovo's future status."—German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, commenting on fulfillment of standards for final status talks in Kosovo (*AFP*, 4/6/05).

"Belgrade politicians are not ready to face the Kosovo problems. There is only one issue that cannot be negotiated with Belgrade—Kosovo's status, the will of the Kosovo people, which has been violated for 100 years. That has to be taken off the agenda."—Kosovo Prime Minister Bajram Kosumi (*AP*, 4/1/05).

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