

Foreign Press Office - Mostar

MEDIA REPORTS

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Cavic: Karadzic should turn himself over or he will be apprehended

FENA

August 1, 2005

BANJA LUKA – Republika Srpska President Dragan Cavic on Monday warned that the future status of this BiH Entity largely depends on cooperation with The Hague Tribunal, and that there is no alternative to apprehending the persons indicted for war crimes.

He stressed that ICTY indictee Radovan Karadzic must turn himself over, or otherwise he would have to be arrested.

RS President stressed that the Entity Ministry of Interior has been working “for months” on persons on the ICTY public indictment with the aim of bringing them to The Hague.

He reiterated the manner in which the RS Ministry of Interior had worked on this matter during the first half of the year, when the indictees were discovered, than negotiations were conducted to see whether they wish to turn themselves over voluntarily or to be apprehended.

“There is no third solution. It is indeed painful, many thought that this was not fair, many feel that this is politically colored, but it is absolutely clear that without this we will have a political problem with great capacity for escalation”, declared the Entity President, adding that this could mean new pressures of international representatives in BiH on the RS and its institutional values.

Stalled Police Reform Continues to Hold Back Bosnia and Herzegovina

SETimes

By Anes Alic in Sarajevo

August 1, 2005

Plans to reform and unify Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) ethnically separated police forces have hit a deadlock over Bosnian Serb objections. While the international community has backed a reorganisation of the police force into 11 interethnic regions, authorities in Republika Srpska (RS) continue to insist on retaining five mono-ethnic police districts.

The reorganisation is part of a broader package of envisaged reforms, including state-level legislative and budgetary authority over the police, the establishment of police districts based solely on policing considerations rather than on ethnicity, and an end to political interference in police operations. The police reforms are one of the key conditions set by the EU for BiH to begin Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) talks -- the first step towards membership in the European club.

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Because of its failure to reach a consensus on police reforms, BiH appears set to miss its third EU deadline in November for initiating SAA talks.

The two entities have run their own police forces under separate interior ministries since the end of the war. Such a system, according to critics, both at home and abroad, is a boon for criminals, who can easily flee across inter-entity boundaries that the ethnically separated police are not allowed to cross.

In Sarajevo, for instance, auto theft gangs from RS collaborate with their "colleagues" from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) to steal an average of four cars daily, taking advantage of the jurisdictional restrictions on the police. According to the Sarajevo Canton police, only 7 per cent of the stolen cars are returned to their owners. The rest end up in other parts of Southeast Europe.

Damir Hadzic, a member of the opposition Social Democratic Party presidency and the chief of the Novi Grad (New City) municipality that borders RS, said police in his district are co-operating with Bosnian Serb police, setting up patrols next to each other on entity borders.

But he also says they only co-operate "because they have to", adding that the patrols are blocked from conducting more serious operations. "The administrative procedures and rules make it impossible for them to, for example, chase criminals [across borders]," Hadzic told the SE Times.

Hadzic himself was the victim of car theft in 2001. Two years later, FBiH police tracked the car down and discovered it was being used by the Macedonian government under new, falsified registration documents. The vehicle was never returned.

In late April, RS officials agreed in principle that a national police force should replace the present entity forces. Since then, however, the ruling nationalist Serb Democratic Party (SDS) has obstructed the effort to make this principle a reality. On 30 May, the entity parliament formally rejected the proposed creation of a BiH-wide police force controlled by the central government in Sarajevo.

Sixty-two out of the RS parliament's 83 deputies voted against the reform, stating that "any model of police organization in Bosnia according to which police districts would cross the entity boundary line is unacceptable." Even the moderate Party of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), Republika Srpska's largest opposition party, voted against the proposal.

Only Bosniak and Croat representatives voted their approval.

In June, the Bosnian Serb public made its voice heard as well, with thousands of Serbs protesting in the RS capital of Banja Luka against what they called "experimenting with and dismantling of RS institutions".

The main objection given by Bosnian Serb officials is that a unified police force would effectively mean the end to RS's *de facto* autonomy, which it received as a result of the Dayton Peace Accord that ended the 1992-1995 conflict in BiH.

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They also downplay the need for reforms, arguing that the entity's police are fully up to the task of catching criminals, particularly war crimes indictees.

"The main objection against the RS police was that we had not arrested a single war criminal since end of the war. Things have changed, though, and in the last several months we have conducted many arrest operations and we have assisted NATO and EUFOR in their actions," RS Prime Minister Pero Bukejlovic said in a statement posted on the local government's Web site.

Leading Bosnian Serb politicians have nevertheless called for a fresh round of negotiations on police reform. RS President Dragan Cavic, the leader of the SDS, said all politicians should do their best to find a compromise solution. "We can't wait until something falls from sky. I expect that everybody will show flexibility," he said.

SNSD leader and Bosnian state parliament President Nikola Spiric says he doubts the country's three ruling nationalist parties have the political will to agree on police reforms by the November deadline set by the EU.

"I don't think those parties can find a solution. Their views ... are too different. If anything is going to be achieved, it's going to be done by the international community and High Representative [Paddy] Ashdown, specifically," Spiric said.

Ashdown has sharply criticised the SDS for derailing the reform process. "The party founded and led by indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic has shown itself incapable of looking to the future and once again has placed blight on the future of the whole country," Ashdown said.