** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Friday, 4 April 2014**

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**LOCAL PRESS**

**Drecun: Normalization of relations with Pristina (*RTS*)**

The new government must immediately start resolving all problems that are present in our society, and one of the key problems is the process of normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, the chair of the parliamentary Committee for Kosovo and Metohija Milovan **Drecun** told the morning broadcast of ***Radio and Television of Serbia*** (RTS). Regarding President **Nikolic’s** statement that he will propose Aleksandar **Vucic** for the prime minister designate, Drecun says: “Vucic has stated that the government will be formed and we expect by the end of the month the constituting of the new convocation of the parliament.” According to him, this will be done quite quickly. “Perhaps this new government will really estimate whether a new resolution is necessary, and it would on the one side verify what had been reached, and on the other it would perhaps broaden some parts of the current resolution, perhaps define some new goals and take a position towards problems,” he said. Drecun opined that a bolder step could be made, especially in parts where a comprehensive, lasting and peaceful solution to the Kosovo problems is defined, stressing that normalization of relations should significantly contribute to the EU integration of Serbia and the region. Drecun stressed there would be no change in the stand that the unilaterally declared secession by Pristina will not be recognized and that all this should contribute to EU integration. Speaking about the dialogue on Kosovo, Drecun announced talks on the issues of property, position of the Serbian Orthodox Church and return of expelled people, stressing that now there is a new situation since the Constitutional Court disputed the agreement on the cadaster and this decree must be harmonized with the Constitution. He pointed out that the Union of Serb Municipalities should be formed, and that it should have a place in the domestic constitutional-legal framework with a special, so-called constitutional law and this should be an issue for a new resolution. He pointed out that the issue of the formation of so-called Kosovo armed forces has also opened up and the parliament needs to take stand on this. Pristina is trying to exert political marginalization of the Serb people in Kosovo, fearing that they will be an unavoidable obstacle to aspiration of those political forces among the Albanians who see Kosovo within a “Greater Albania”, said Drecun. He voiced assurance that Pristina would give up from adopting the decree, whereby documents issued by Pristina are necessary, which implies citizenship of the self-declared state of Kosovo. Underway is the defining of the statute of the new tribunal for organized and grave crimes committed in the province and specifying its work, and the latest option is that this court will have its unit in Pristina, the administration will be deployed in Brussels, while the trials should be conducted in The Hague, said Drecun. He says this court should receive a two-third majority support in the Kosovo Assembly, and Serbia should be included more actively in its formation. He pointed out that EULEX’s mandate expires on 14 June and that there should be a more active involvement in its defining within the next 15-20 days.

**NATO: Kosovo air space open for traffic; Hungary controlling flights (*Tanjug*)**

The air space of Kosovo has opened for civilian traffic, it has been confirmed at the NATO headquarters in Brussels. It was stated that in line with the Kumanovo Agreement, NATO and KFOR will keep on supervising the skies over Kosovo, but civilian traffic will be controlled by the Hungarian national flight control service. This should enable shorter itineraries and savings for 180 thousand flights every year, reads the statement.

**Davenport: Serbia to support EU stand on Ukraine (*Tanjug*)**

The Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia Michael **Davenport** said that Brussels wanted Serbia to support the EU joint view regarding the situation in Ukraine. “I believe the Serbian government shares the concerns of the European Council regarding the situation and wishes to see it de-escalate. There are efforts to that effect and the EU’s desire is that Serbia supports that joint view by the EU on Ukraine,” he told reporters at the Media Centre. When asked if that meant the pressure on Serbia to take a clear stand on the Ukrainian crisis would continue, he responded that it was not the issue. “This is about serious concern over the current situation and about finding a way to resolve it that would protect Ukraine’s territorial integrity,” he explained. Davenport stated he informed on Friday outgoing Serbian Foreign Minister Ivan **Mrkic** once again about the EU’s view concerning the Ukrainian crisis and the opinion that Moscow’s position towards Crimea was not acceptable. Commenting on the claims that the EU might not be so united in its view, since Germany has stated that economic sanctions are perhaps not the right solution and that it understands Serbia’s balanced position, Davenport said the EU was united in its stand, which had been announced by the European Council a week earlier.

**Zeman: A dangerous process of redrawing borders started with Kosovo (*Politika*)**

The visit of Czech President Milos **Zeman** has coincided with the marking of 15 years since the NATO bombardment of the FR Yugoslavia. The tragic jubilee had prompted him to emphasize how the Czech Republic was the last country that agreed with this kind of intervention. In an interview to ***Politika*** he explains how he experiences today such a decision. “The system of Slobodan **Milosevic** was autocratic, but this still isn’t the same as totalitarian. Furthermore, the bombardment of FRY was against the UN resolution and all possibilities for a peaceful solution have not yet been exhausted. I publicly stated that the Czech Republic was the last country that accepted the bombing, and at the same time it was the only one that set one condition – that there must not be the bombardment of civil targets. We were promised that this condition would be fulfilled, but, as you know, the promise was not fulfilled. Later on the president has recommended that Wesley Clark, who conducted the operation of the bombardment of Yugoslavia, be awarded with the highest decoration of the Czech Republic – the Decoration of the White Lion, but I was the prime minister at the time and I refused to sign such a decision. I thought that the bombardment was not a reasonable move. Imagine a situation where NATO is preparing an extensive intervention, and the Czech Republic is at that moment a member of the alliance for only three weeks. All other members are “for” and only in the Czech Republic we are debating all night on what we should do. That was one of the most difficult political decisions in my carrier,” says Zeman.

**How much was the bombardment of the FRY, without the approval of the UN SC, a precedent for opening doors to similar interventions throughout the world?**

“Such measures are counterproductive. I often remember the meeting with Cuban immigrants in Miami 15 years ago. I told them: You advocate sanctions and blockade of Cuba, but Fidel **Castro** has been the president of that country for 40 years now.” When I speak about sanctions against Russia, a system will be probably formed where Russia will be a fortress surrounded by enemies. But such an image is not correct, of course, because friends are both inside and outside the fortress. In such a besieged fortress one is provoking the creation of a system similar to the totalitarian with political processes and prisoners … The best method is communist ideological diversion, which implies the same that the EU is advocating, i.e. free flow of information, people, goods and capital. That is the only way for democratization of some autocratic or non-democratic authority.”

**You have recently stated that the Crimea case would not be nearly as complicated if it wasn’t for the “Kosovo precedent”…**

“Independence of Kosovo is contrary to the UN SC resolution that mentions territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. If you accepted independence of Kosovo, then why aren’t you accepting independence of Crimea? That is why Kosovo represents the beginning of a dangerous process of redrawing of borders, redrawing of territorial integrity and from this point of view the example of Kosovo is a good argument for those who support joining of Crimea to Russia.”

**You have also stated that Kosovo is ruled by a mafia regime that is financed by drug trafficking…**

“This was also stated by the former chief prosecutor of the ICTY Carla del **Ponte**, who in her book speaks not only about the drug mafia in Kosovo but also about human organ trafficking. Take Afghanistan as an example, because the situation is very similar. Opium production in Afghanistan has increased ten times over the past several years on the territory controlled by the Talibans. This is occurring because the terrorists need money, while some Kosovo Albanian leaders had also been the chiefs of mafia organizations that are linked with drug trafficking.”

**If this is so, then why did the Czech Republic recognize independence of Kosovo?**

“The parliament adopted the resolution whereby the government is requested no to accept Kosovo’s independence. Still, the Czech government decided to recognize independence. My predecessor at the post of the president Vaclav **Klaus** and I have decided not to send an ambassador to Pristina, but only a charge d’affaires. That is our way of voicing the stand towards independence of Kosovo.”

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**Radmanovic: RS for strict implementation of Dayton (*Nezavisne novine*)**

When asked about the possible chances for a referendum on the independence of the Republika Srpska (RS) and information he has on official Belgrade’s stance on the issue, Serb member of the B&H Presidency and high-ranking official of the SNSD Nebojsa **Radmanovic** said that Serbia is a signatory to the Dayton Accord and a guarantor of its implementation. “We raise the issue of self-determination only in a situation where pressure is exerted upon us, when our autonomy that we now have in B&H is threatened, and we believe that such is also the position of Serbia” According to him, the referendum is discussed for several reasons, first of which is that all peoples in the world have the right to referendum, which cannot be denied to the Serb people in B&H, that is, in the RS. Radmanovic said that the RS supports strict implementation of the Dayton Accord and that this is a situation that does not require a referendum.
Commenting on the fact that Croatia is offering a solution for B&H, Radmanovic said that Croatia is now a strong advocate of the view that the rights of the Croat people in B&H must be respected, and that inevitably leads to some new organizations. Naturally all Croats in B&H have Croatian passports and Croatian citizenship, and that has not happened with the Serbs and Serbia, Radmanovic pointed.

Reminding of attitudes of some European officials that special attention should be paid to B&H and a special approach so that the state could catch up with other Balkan countries on the course toward the EU, Radmanovic said he does not know how it will end, and that during the month, they expect the debate at the ministerial level. Let’s see whether the idea of a special approach to B&H will be accepted by all European countries, but we are not sure that it is going to be the case, Radmanovic said, adding that he believes that the internal organization is the matter of agreement within the state. Unfortunately, some people in Sarajevo who are involved in politics think that intervention should be invoked and that this will then result in a solution, Radmanovic said.

**Nimetz prepares new proposal for settlement of name dispute (*Vecer*)**

Greek Foreign Minister Evangelos **Venizelos** met with UN Secretary-General **Ban** Ki-moon, ***Vecer*** writes. “With the Secretary-General we talked in brief about two main issues: the Cyprus problem and the initiative of the UN Special Representative for the name dispute Matthew **Nimetz** concerning the dispute over the name. The positions of Greece on this matter are clear and strong and the Secretary-General appreciates this,” Venizelos said after the meeting.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**EU to fund court for Kosovo organ harvesting probe (*Associated Press*, 4 April 2014)**

PRISTINA, Kosovo — A senior European Union official says the 28-member bloc plans to set up an international tribunal in the Netherlands that would focus exclusively on crimes allegedly committed by Kosovo's ethnic Albanian rebels during their war with Serbia in 1998-1999.

The official told The Associated Press that hearings will take place in the Netherlands to protect documents and witness' identities. He spoke on condition of anonymity because the deal is yet to be approved by Kosovo's assembly.

The creation of the court highlights the failure by both Kosovo authorities and its international backers to establish a sound justice system in Kosovo.

The court will deal with allegations of organ-harvesting by rebels and the disappearance of some 400 people, claims which allegedly implicate Kosovo's prime minister, Hashim Thaci.

**Serbian Govt Takes Over Another Media Outlet (*BIRN*, by Bojana Barlovac, 4 April 2014)**

Despite pledges to withdraw from media ownership, Serbia's government is due to become majority owner of a new company, merging the daily newspaper *Vecernje Novosti* and the printing house Stamparija Borba and Borba Ltd.

The Serbian daily *Vecernje Novosti* and the printing house Stamparija Borba and Borba Ltd are to form a joint company in which the majority owner will be the Serbian state.

The merger is due to happen once a new government is formed. Serbia held a general election on March 16.

The decision follows a meeting of the representatives of all three companies and their unions last week. The information was revealed on Wednesday.

Momir Stojanovic, chair of the supervisory board of Stamparija Borba, said the initiative to create a unified company came from Aleksandar Vucic, the outgoing Deputy Prime Minister and the man most likely to be the next Prime Minister. Vucic also heads the Progressive Party, which triumphed in the recent elections.

Stojanovic said the only way *Vecernje Novosti* could pay off its debt to Stamparija Borba was to convert the debt into state shares in *Vecernje Novosti*.

"This is how we are going to have a healthy company that might be offered on the market and privatized," Stojanovic told the Serbian journalists' association, UNS, on Wednesday.

Borba Ltd is owned by the state, as is 80 per cent of Stamparija Borba, and 38 per cent of *Vecernje Novosti*.

Ratko Dmitrovic, managing director and chief editor of *Vecernje Novosti*, said the move was good for the newspaper, which for the first time will get its own printing house.

However, the merger contradicts the government's own "media strategy", adopted in September 2011, which the current government has pledged to respect and which envisions the state withdrawing entirely from the media ownership.

This is not the first media outlet that the Serbian government has taken over in recent years.

In July 2012, Germany’s WAZ Media Group sold its 50-per-cent share in the daily paper *Politika* to a Moscow-based company, East Media Group.

After UNS linked the East Media Group to Miroslav Bogicevic, a donor to the Democratic Party, the Progressive Party condemned the change in ownership.

In October, the state then took a majority share in the publishing house via state-owned banks and companies.

**Serbia sentences two for car bombing of Croat journalist (*Agence France-Presse*, 4 April 2014)**

A Belgrade court on Wednesday jailed two men for the mafia-style murder of high-profile Croatian journalist Ivo Pukanic.

Pukanic, the editor-in-chief of Croatian political weekly Nacional, and his marketing director Niko Franjic were killed by a car bomb in Zagreb in 2008.

Zeljko Milovanovic was given a 40-year prison term for his role in the murder in the neighbouring Croatia, Serbian media reported Wednesday.

Milovanovic was convicted in absentia for the same crime by a Croatian court in 2010, along with five other men.

Another defendant, Milenko Kuzmanovic was jailed on Wednesday for five years for helping those involved in the murder, the court ruled.

Known for his in-depth reporting on organised crime, Pukanic was a controversial figure who had close ties to high-ranking Croatian politicians and leading criminal figures.

But the Belgrade court was unable to determine who commissioned the assassination.

Wealthy Serbian businessman Sreten Jocic, who had been blamed for planning the attack, was acquitted due to lack of evidence, the B92 television channel reported.

Prosecutors claimed Jocic was paid at least 1.5 million euros (two million dollars) for organising Pukanic's killing by a "so far unidentified person" who had ordered it.

The prosecutor said he would lodge an appeal.

**MEDIA: Arkan Bodyguard Shot Dead in Belgrade (*BIRN*, 4 April 2014)**

Unknown assailants shot dead a former bodyguard of the late paramilitary chief Zeljko Raznatovic 'Arkan' in Belgrade on Wednesday.

Rade Rakonjac, a former bodyguard to Zeljko Raznatovic "Arkan", was shot dead in a cafe in the Belgrade neighborhood of Dedinje on Wednesday at noon.

Two others were injured in the incident and taken to the emergency centre.

A burned car was found in the Medak neighborhood on Wednesday, and, according to reports, "two young men left the car before it was set on fire". It is suspected that the vehicle was used in the attack on Rakonjac that took place earlier in the day.

Rakonjac was a former member of Raznatovic's paramilitary formation, the Serbian Volunteer Guard, known also as "Arkan’s Tigers".

He was detained during Operation Saber, launched in Serbia in the wake of the assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic in 2003.

While Rakonjac, a native of Bijelo Polje, in northern Montenegro, was mentioned in Montenegrin and Serbian reports on organized crime groups, he was never convicted.

Arkan was charged with the murder and rape of non-Serbs in the area around the Bosnian town of Sanski Most in 1995. He was shot dead in Belgrade in 2000.

**Sarajevo auxiliary bishop calls Bosnia an 'artificial state' (*ANSAmed*, 3 April 2014)**

**'Peace imposed had nothing to do with the people's interests'**

GORIZIA - Bosnia Herzegovina is currently an ''artificial state from the political point of view and, as a result, from other ones as well'', said Sarajevo's auxiliary bishop Pero Sudar on Thursday. Sudar was speaking in Gorizia at a national conference of Catholic weeklies. ''Bosnia went through a terrible war, caused by communist-inspired imperialism and historic feelings of resentment rekindled among the population,'' he said. ''The peace that was imposed to satisfy certain interests has nothing to do with the people's interests. For many in Bosnia it is a dying society, and a country to flee from if possible.''

**Macedonia’s State Election Commission approves order of appearance of parties in ballot paper (*Focus Information Agency*, 4 April 2014**)

***Skopje.*** After lots were cast at the Macedonian State Election Commission the order in which the parties will appear in ballot papers at the snap parliamentary elections was approved, **Alsat-M** reported.
In line with the lots cast the major Macedonian parties will appear under the following numbers in ballots: the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) will be number 1; the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) – number 2; the Coalition ”Dignity for Macedonia” – number 3; the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) – number 4; the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) – number 5; the National Democratic Renewal – number 6; the People's Movement for Macedonia – number 7; GROM – number 8; the Alliance for Positive Macedonia – number 9; the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – People's Party – number 10; the Social Democratic Party of Macedonia – number 11; the Party for Economic Changes – number 12; the Party for Democratic Prosperity – number 13; the Party for European Future – number 14.

**Macedonia Campaigns Started Too Soon, OSCE Says (*BIRN*, by Sinisa Jakov Marusic, 4 April 2014)**

Macedonia's presidential candidates started their campaigns prematurely, the first OSCE/ODIHR interim report on the country's April presidential and general elections says.

The interim report released on Thursday, covering the period March 10-26, says the presidential candidates started promoting their campaigns before the campaign's official start date - March 24.
Incumbent President Gjorge Ivanov, who is running for second term for the ruling VMRO DPMNE party, visited some 70 villages before the race began and published a report on his achievements as President on March 14, it said.
The candidate of the main opposition Social Democrats, SDSM, Stevo Pendarovski, also started too soon, attending a meeting in the town of Prilep. The ethnic Albanian party, the Democratic Party of Albanians, DPA, also launched its campaign prematurely on behalf of Iljaz Halimi with a meeting in the western town of Gostivar.
The report said publication of a report on the government's work by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski marked an early start to the general election campaign as well.
"The State Electoral Commission heard two complaints filed by the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, SDSM, alleging early campaigning. The Commission upheld the first complaint and dismissed the second," the report recalled.
On a more positive note, the report said changes to the Electoral Code made in January marked an effort "to address the majority of prior OSCE/ODIHR recommendations".
The OSCE noted progress in the electoral code over such matters as ensuring a clearer divide between party and state activities, and clearer regulations about party and political campaign finances.

However, "issues of concern remain unaddressed, including the inequality of the in-country and out-of-country votes in parliamentary elections and the 40-per-cent turnout requirement in the second round of presidential elections,” the report added.
The OSCE also said penalties concerning abuses of party spending in elections campaigns were not in place.
Regarding the tone of the campaign, the OSCE noted ethnically inflammatory rhetoric before the start of the campaign by both main ruling parties, VMRO DPMNE and its junior partner, the Democratic Union for Integration, DUI.
“The Prime Minister called on ethnic Macedonians to give VMRO DPMNE a clear majority of 62 seats to avoid pressure from the Democratic Union for Integration, DUI, and the DUI leader called on ethnic Albanians to give his party 25 seats so that they have more leverage in government,” the report noted.
On April 13, Macedonians will choose between four presidential candidates. A second round, pitting the two best-ranked candidates against each other, takes place on April 27, alongside snap general elections.

**Montenegro PM's Foes Complain to US Vice President (*BIRN*, by Dusica Tomovic, 3 April 2014)**

In an open letter sent to the US Vice President, on the occasion of his visit to America, a group of Montenegrin intellectuals, journalists and businessmen have denounced their Prime Minister as an enemy of Western civilisation.

In an open letter sent to US Vice President Joseph Biden on Tuesday, timed to coincide with his expected meeting with Djuknovic on April 8, the signatories of the letter told Biden that Milo Djukanovic represents "the antithesis of democracy, rule of law and the fundamental values of Western civilization.

"Montenegro deserves to have democracy and replaceable power like all of its European neighbours. Montenegro is the only ex-Yugoslav country in which the 'fall of the Berlin Wall' never occurred," the letter read.

The letter has been signed by the writer Balsa Brkovic, General Blagoje Grahovac, editor Esad Kocan, financial expert Ljubisa Krgovic, economist Dejan Mijovic, university professor Milan Popovic, businessman Zarko Rakcevic and the journalist Milka Tadic-Mijovic.

The Montenegrin Prime Minister is due to meet the US Vice-President during a three-day visit to Washington, focusing on the country’s NATO ambitions.

Djukanovic and Biden are to discuss Montenegro’s aspirations to become a full member of the Alliance at the upcoming summit in September in Wales in the UK.

Other details about Djukanovic’s planned visit to Washington have not been revealed. It is not known whether Djukanovic will meet other senior American officials.

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