** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Tuesday, 15 April 2014**

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**LOCAL PRESS**

**Vulin once again banned from entering Kosovo and Metohija (*RTS*)**

The Office for Kosovo and Metohija has stated that outgoing Serbian Minister without Portfolio in charge of Kosovo and Metohija Aleksandar **Vulin** was denied entry to Kosovo by the authorities in Pristina on Tuesday and called on the international community to finally do what they are mandated to and have this problem solved once and for all. Vulin was supposed to visit Kosovo at the invitation of RTK 2, a television channel broadcasting program in the Serbian and minority languages, to speak at the television’s office in Pristina on the topic of one year since the agreement on normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, signed in Brussels on 19 April 2013. “Pristina’s negative decision contributes neither to the implementation of the Brussels agreement, nor to mutual trust, nor to the vitally important normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, unlike the efforts made by the Serbian government and the minister in charge,” the release said. The Office has called international community representatives to condemn the decision to ban Vulin’s arrival in Kosovo and to finally do what they are mandated to so that he could freely visit the province. Another reason for the minister’s visit to RTK 2 is to address the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija and send them happy Orthodox Easter wishes.

**Report by Inquiring Committee on misuse of funds for Kosovo and Metohija (*Tanjug*)**

The report of the Inquiry Committee of the Serbian parliament, pointing to the misuse of public funds in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija in the period between 2000 and 2012, was adopted on Monday by a majority vote of committee members. Nearly 3 billion Euros was allocated from the Serbian budget or 53,102,503 Dinars every day over a period of twelve years. Eight MPs voted for the report, Marko **Jaksic**, MP from the ranks of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) voted against it, while four MPs - from the Democratic Party (DS), Together for Serbia and independent MP Zoran **Ostojic** - refrained from voting. The misused funds were intended for the recovery efforts following the 2002 earthquake in the Kosovo Morava River basin district, for the acquisition of houses and flats for the housing needs of internally displaced persons (IDP) in the Kosovska Mitrovica district, for building infrastructure and facilities enabling the return and sustainable living of IDPs, as well as for health care, education, and funding of the local self-governments and public companies. The report does not specify the total amount of misused funds, but only individual amounts and items. The largest portion of the funds - 25.6 per cent - was spent through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, 21.1 per cent were spent through the Ministry of Health, while 17.59 percent were used to service public debt. Only 18.42 percent of the budget funds were allocated through the Kosovo and Metohija Coordination Center and the Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija over the 12-year period. The Inquiry Committee spent 7,500 Euros on the preparation of the report, which the new parliament is expected to adopt. One of the objections referred to the seven-month delay in the presentation of the report, and the Committee chairman Momir **Stojanovic** explained that local elections in Kosovo and Metohija and snap parliamentary elections in Serbia have been held in the meantime and that nobody wanted to politicize the report, which is why it is presented on this day.

**New parliament convocation to include 12 parties from 7 lists (*RTS*)**

The new convocation of the Serbian parliament, whose constitution will start on Wednesday, will include presidents of 12 parties from seven lists who will take an oath of office. Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) leader Aleksandar **Vucic**, Serbian Socialist Party (SNS) leader Ivica **Dacic** and Movement of Socialists leader Aleksandar **Vulin** will attend the initial sessions of the new parliament. Democratic Party leader Dragan **Djilas**, United Serbia leader Dragan **Markovic**, New Party leader Zoran **Zivkovic**, Greens of Serbia leader Ivan **Karic**, Together for Serbia leader Dusan **Petrovic** and Christian Democratic Party of Serbia leader Olgica **Batic** will also attend the sessions. The MPs will include League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina President Nenad **Canak**, Party of Democratic Action of Sandzak President Sulejman **Ugljanin** and Party for Democratic Action President Riza **Halimi**. The officials, who take up a ministerial or some other executive office, will have to resign as MPs. New Democratic Party leader Boris **Tadic**, Serbian Renewal Movement leader Vuk **Draskovic**, Social Democratic Party of Serbia leader Rasim **Ljajic** and New Serbia leader Velimir **Ilic** will not have a seat in the parliament. Once the constitution is over, which includes oath taking and appointment of speaker, deputy speakers, secretary general, members of working bodies and standing parliamentary delegations to international institutions, the formation of the new government will follow. This should be preceded by the adoption of the law on ministries, which sets forth the formation and number of ministries, and according to announcements the new Serbian government, which should be formed by 27 April, will have 16 or 17 ministries.

**Serbia and Montenegro reach agreement on embassies (*Beta*)**

Serbian Foreign Ministry Secretary General Marko **Blagojevic** and his Montenegrin counterpart Predrag **Stamatovic** have reached an agreement on free use of facilities to be used by the two countries’ embassies, the Serbian ministry has said in a release. At the meeting held in Podgorica, Blagojevic and Stamatovic pointed to “exemplary cooperation in every respect,” yesterday’s release said. The general secretaries visited the future premises of the Serbian Embassy in Podgorica.

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**Inzko: RS will not break away, period! (*Klix.ba*)**

We will act so to guarantee sovereignty and territorial integrity of B&H, the High Representative in B&H Valenitn **Inzko** told ***Klix.ba***, in comment to increasing threats to the state of B&H, but also various parallels where B&H is placed under a question mark. According to him, **Dodik**’s threats will not change anything, or threats of any politician in B&H. “The Constitution absolutely clearly states that the Republika Srpska (RS) and the Federation B&H (FB&H), as two entities, are part of the sovereign state of B&H. Further, the Constitution doesn’t leave any room for secession of any entity. This puts an end to this debate. Threats to unilateral amendments of the constitutional order of the state and the story on holding a referendum in order to bring into question the foundations of the Dayton Accord are only a waste of time and are aimed at diverting attention from real problems faced by this country. Sovereignty and territorial integrity of B&H, as well as its constitutional order, are safe. Absolutely! I reiterated this a long time ago in an article, saying that the international community has the role of a guarantor and that we will continue to act so to guarantee this country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity,” says Inzko. Asked whether Serbia, with Aleksandar **Vucic** at its helm, is encouraging behind the scenes the stories on the separation of the RS or is this only Dodik’s policy, Inzko says that Vucic has stated on several occasions that Serbia respects B&H’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and that he has no reason to doubt his words. “On the contrary, I am convinced that B&H now, compared to the past 20 years, has the most favorable climate for the regional situation. B&H is in good relations with all of its neighbors. Thus, I have no reason to question the moves and motives of the authorities of neighboring countries when they claim that they are sincere in their wish to help B&H in resolving present problems so B&H could progress together with them. I specifically welcome the statement by Mr. Vucic that he, in the new capacity, intends to first visit B&H. That is a great gesture full of symbolism and I expect us to meet again in Sarajevo,” said Inzko.

**Priorities – fight against corruption and economy (*Nezavisne novine*)**

The key EU priorities towards B&H in the following period will be economic reforms and fight against corruption. At the session of the EU foreign ministerial council in Brussels, support was given to enlarging structural dialogue in B&H and anti-corruption issues, while the focus will be social-economic issues. The *Sejdic-Finci* ruling, which was always high on the list of the obligations towards B&H, is now behind the topics that refer to the fight against corruption and economic reforms. It is interesting there is implicit recognition of the Council that the *Sejdic-Finci* ruling will not be implemented before the elections, since they noted in their sixth conclusion as “post-election activities” the need for resolving this ruling, along with passing reforms that would improve the functionality and efficiency of institutions in B&H at all levels.

As the most important conclusion, the Council underlines its full support to the territorial integrity of B&H as a sovereign and united country, and confirms again support to its European perspective. “In line with the conclusions of December 2013, the Council expressed serious concern over the halt of B&H’s EU integration process over lack of political will of politicians and constantly present negative rhetoric,” reads conclusion number two. “In line with the past conclusions, the Council confirms again that all key conditions and criteria for B&H’s progress towards the EU must be completely fulfilled,” the conclusions read. The Council requests the B&H institutions and leaders to focus on issues of civil society and youth, to improve coordination in social-economic issues and fiscal policy, and to improve the business atmosphere. Support was given to the European Commission’s initiative “Compact for Growth” aimed at reviving the economic and creating new jobs. The Council didn’t miss to mention the need for creating an effective coordination mechanism. “This is crucial both for the Instruments of Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and the implementation of the temporary agreement on stabilization and association,” read the conclusions, expressing regret over the inability of the B&H authorities to fulfill European requests that led to loss of part of the money from the IPA.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**PACE Vote on Russia Splits Serbian Parties (*BIRN*, 15 April 2014)**

The Serbian delegation's split vote about Russian actions in Ukraine in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly has stirred controversy at home.

A vote last week in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, PACE, condemning Russian actions in Ukraine has caused divisions in Serbia, especially within the opposition Democratic Party.

With 145 votes in favour, PACE on Thursday passed a resolution imposing sanctions on the Russian delegation due to Moscow’s actions in Ukraine; 21 delegates voted against the resolution, and 22 abstained.

Three of Serbia's seven-member delegation voted for the resolution - two deputies from the Democratic Party and one from the United Regions of Serbia.

Three voted against - two from the Serbian Progressive Party deputies - while one deputy, from the Liberal Democratic Party, abstained.

After the vote, Dusan Spasojevic, chairman of the Democrats' Foreign Policy Committee and the party's international secretary, resigned on Monday from all functions in the party.

Spasojevic, a former ambassador to Turkey and former foreign policy adviser to President Boris Tadic, said the reason for his resignation was the vote of the Democratic Party members in favour of suspending Russia's voting rights at the PACE.

In a statement for Beta news agency, Spasojevic "deeply disagreed with the position of the deputies," adding he believed it ran contrary to the country's foreign policy interests and represented "a drastic deviation from the state-making and nationally responsible policies that all Democratic Party leaders conducted in the past."

However, Natasa Vuckovic, one of the vice-presidents of the party, on Monday said the Democratic MPs believed their vote had been "in Serbia's interest".

The vote did not stir tensions only among the Democrats. Other Serbian parties have also distanced themselves from the way their representatives in the PACE voted.
The United Regions of Serbia said it was distancing itself from PACE member Vladimir Ilic's vote, who voted to revoke Russia's right to vote in the organization until the end of the year.
The Liberal Democratic Party, LDP, meanwhile announced that the position of its deputy on the Russian resolution did not coincide with the party's views, which was that Serbia should align its foreign policy with the EU on the Ukrainian crisis.
Serbia's outgoing government is maintaining a diplomatic silence over the Russian and Ukrainian standoff, attempting to preserve good relations with both the EU and Russia.
Serbia started EU accession talks in January and hopes to join the Union in 2020. On the other side, Serbia depends on Russia on gas supply.

**Serbia Ruling Party Backs Republika Srpska Opposition (*BIRN*, by Elvira M. Jukic, 14 April 2014)**

The vice-president of the Serbian Progressive Party said that it would not forget the support it has received from Republika Srpska’s opposition Serb Democratic Party.

Nikola Selakovic, vice-president of Belgrade’s ruling Serbian Progressive Party, SNS, told a conference of the Serb Democratic Party, SDS, in Bijeljina on Sunday that it had his backing ahead of polls due in Bosnia and Herzegovina in October this year.

“We from the SNS do not like to interfere in others' internal political scenes and therefore not in the internal politics of Republika Srpska,” Selakovic said.

“However, we cannot forget the time when we in Serbia were an opposition party and when our friends and brothers from the SDS were first to respond to our every call. For that... the SNS is with you now,” he said.

Support from a Serbia ruling party is considered highly important in Republika Srpska, Bosnia’s Serb-led entity, and the chief of the ruling Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, SNSD, Milorad Dodik, has emphasised Belgrade’s significance on many occasions.

In recent years, Dodik was very close to Boris Tadic, the former Serbian President from the Democratic Party. At the Serbian presidential elections two years ago, Dodik supported Tadic, who lost to SNS candidate Tomislav Nikolic.

Relations with the Serbian ruling establishment have not been as close since then even though Dodik has paid several visits to Belgrade and met SNS chief Aleksandar Vucic.

Speaking at the conference attended by several hundred SDS supporters on Sunday, Selakovic also said that the SNS wanted to see Republika Srpska stable, in accordance with the Dayton Peace Accords which ended the Bosnian war – a situation which would bring stability to people living on both sides of the Drina river which divides the entity from Serbia, he insisted.

SDS president Mladen Bosic told the conference meanwhile that it could be a risk to peace and stability to suggest, as Dodik has done, that there could be more than two political entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

“The story about [having] three or four entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina means giving up and leaving the Dayton Peace Accords,” Bosic said.

“A third, Croatian entity means leaving the Dayton Peace Accords... that is a too large a risk for Republika Srpska,” he added.
Even though the SNSD is the ruling party in Republika Srpska and the SDS is in opposition, the two parties used to make up a bloc in state-level institutions, before splitting last year over inter-party disagreements.
The SDS said last month that it planned to join forces with other opposition parties in Republika Srpska for the October polls in a bid to defeat the SNSD, which has held the ruling majority since 2006 – a move which could benefit from the support of the Serbian governing party.

**US ambassador to Kosovo hired by construction firm he lobbied for (*The Guardian*, by Paul Lewis in Washington, Lawrence Marzouk and Petrit Collaku in Pristina, and Erjona Rusi in Tirana, 14 April)**

EU diplomat criticises way Christopher Dell pushed through deal for Bechtel Corporation to build controversial highway to Albania

A US ambassador to Kosovo, who lobbied for the construction of a $1bn road through the war-torn country, has taken up a post with the American construction giant that secured the lucrative contract.

Christopher Dell, a career diplomat nominated by Barack Obama to represent the US in Pristina, was employed by the Bechtel Corporation, which he helped win a contract to build a highway to neighbouring Albania.

Dell took on a role as an African country manager with Bechtel late last year, months after ending a three-decade career at the State Department.

His employment at Bechtel, America’s largest engineering and construction firm, has ignited a debate over the controversial road-building project, named the "Patriotic Highway".

Pieter Feith, the senior EU diplomat in Kosovo when the contract was secured, criticised the way the US ambassador pushed through the deal, and has called for an inquiry. Feith accused Dell of withholding information about the Bechtel contract, and lobbying Kosovo to agree to what he describes as an ill-advised deal with a US company, which placed enormous pressure on the fledgling country’s budget.

It is routine for western ambassadors to push the business interests of companies from the countries they come from. But it is unusual for a former diplomat to land a job with a major corporation after using their sway to secure lucrative government contracts.

After he was appointed ambassador in 2009, Dell had huge influence in Kosovo, where the US is widely viewed as a supervising power and is feted for its role in securing independence for the tiny Balkan state. A statue of President Clinton adorns the capital, Pristina, and boulevards are named after George W Bush and other US officials.

As the International Civilian Representative in Kosovo between 2008 and 2012, Feith was the other major figure in the country, entrusted with wide-ranging powers by the US and EU, including the ability to overrule Kosovan officials. For several years, Feith and Dell served side by side, the two most senior foreign officials supervising Kosovo’s campaign for recognition as a sovereign state following the 1999 war.

At the time Dell was encouraging Kosovo’s government to sign the highway contract, Feith said he had grave concerns about awarding the enormous contract to a consortium consisting of Bechtel and its partner, Turkish firm Enka. Feith believed the deal risked undermining Pristina’s finances.

Feith said he clashed with Dell over the logic of an impoverished, nascent country undertaking such a huge infrastructure project, and instead argued that the money should be spent on tackling Kosovo’s unemployment rate, which stood at 40%.

Feith also said he asked to see details of the contract, which he believed was part of his mandate, but was denied access by the US embassy. “Information was withheld, and all of a sudden we were presented with a fait accompli of this contract being concluded and being a liability on the budget,” he told the Guardian.

The Bechtel-Enka deal was signed in April 2010, despite concerns from the IMF, the World Bank, EU diplomats, Feith, and the Kosovan government's own legal adviser. Dell and the State Department declined requests for comment. Bechtel defended its employment of the former ambassador and said any suggestion that his appointment was improper was “unfair and offensive”.

But Andrea Capussela, who served as head of Feith’s economic department in Kosovo and was a vocal critic of the road-building scheme, said: “Ambassador Dell's employment at Bechtel raises a rather serious question mark over the whole project.”

“This contract was irrational for Kosovo, and caused considerable damage to it,” he added. “The State Department would do well to investigate this."

Feith declined to comment on Dell’s employment at Bechtel. However, he did say a wider inquiry into the probity of the highway deal was warranted, although he did not specify which organisation would conduct such an investigation.

“We have been involved in the fight against corruption in Kosovo, and anything that can help, ex-post, to clarify, elucidate or provide transparency about what has happened is beneficial for the future of the young state,” he said. “If there is an investigation, I would welcome it.”

The government in Pristina argues that the Patriotic Highway has connected northern Albania and Kosovo, replacing crumbling mountain roads with a four-lane highway, and will provide an economic injection into the region. However, critics point out that its costs have more than doubled from the original estimate.

The initial offer was to complete the Kosovo section of the highway for $555m (€400m). The price subsequently rose to $916m (€660m), to pay for 102km of road. In the end, the project cost $1.13bn (€820m) for what turned out be only a 77km stretch of highway. By comparison, Kosovo's total government budget in 2012 was €1.5bn.

The highway project was completed last year, but it has been mired in allegations of corruption on both sides of the border. The Kosovo side of the highway deal is currently under investigation by the EU rule-of-law mission, Eulex, a source at the mission has confirmed.

Last week, the Albanian government announced it was launching a fresh corruption probe into the financing of its portion of the highway. The former minister of transport in Tirana, Lulzim Basha, was earlier cleared of "abuse of power" charges when the case against him was blocked by the supreme court over a legal technicality. He denied all wrongdoing.

There is no evidence to suggest Bechtel or Dell are implicated in the corruption investigations, the details of which are confidential.

The Kosovo contract was signed at a ceremony in April 2010. Among the officials present at the event was Dell, shown in a picture standing beside Kosovo’s controversial prime minister, Hashim Thaci, and behind Mike Adams, the president of Bechtel.

Sitting beside Adams is Kosovo’s transport minister, Fatmir Limaj, who is currently under investigation for corruption. Feith said he also clashed with Dell over Limaj, after he was placed under investigation for corruption by EU law enforcement officials in Kosovo.

Dell, who had little faith in the the EU investigation into Limaj, attempted to remove the minister from Kosovo with a diplomatic posting in New York or Washington.

Feith said he believed the move was effectively providing an allegedly corrupt minister with a “backdoor exit”, blocking a corruption investigation. Dell, on the other hand, is understood to have believed that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute Limaj. He believed that quietly removing Limaj from Kosovo was a more pragmatic and effective solution.

"I thought this was a bad idea, and I told him so,” Feith said of his conversation with Dell. “I thought this would strengthen the impression of impunity and not help our efforts to combat corruption.” In the end, Dell’s proposal to remove Limaj from Kosovo was never enacted. The transport minister was later arrested, and he has faced a series of war crimes and corruption charges, but has yet to be convicted of any offences.

A diplomat with a distinguished career serving across the world, including in Afghanistan, Zimbabwe and Angola, Dell left his role as chief of mission in Pristina in 2012 – two years after shepherding the Bechtel-Enka deal. He spent a brief period on secondment at the Pentagon, working for the US Africa Command, known as Africom, and stationed in Germany.

Bechtel initially made contact with Dell about possibly working for the company the previous year, in 2012. The company confirmed that at the time it made the approach he was still the US ambassador to Kosovo. According to Bechtel, Dell “immediately reported the conversation” with the State Department, in line with with US government regulations, and recused himself from matters relating to the company.

After his brief stint in Germany, Dell formally left the State Department, joining Bechtel in November 2013 as its country manager in Mozambique. There is no suggestion Dell did not comply with US “revolving door” regulations. While there is a one-year “cooling off” period before former ambassadors can lobby the US government on behalf of a private firm, they are not prevented from taking a job in the private sector with a company they helped secure a contract for.

There is no reference to Dell on Bechtel’s website, except for a picture of the former US ambassador at the contract-signing ceremony in Kosovo in 2010.

Michelle Michael, a spokeswoman for Bechtel, said of Dell: “His extensive knowledge and experience in the region [Africa] are an ideal fit with our current work and future opportunities there.”

She added: “As you likely know, one of the roles of US ambassadors is to promote American business interests. Chris spent more than 30 years as a public servant, and any suggestion that he acted inappropriately or otherwise failed to meet his responsibility as a public servant is both unfair and offensive.”

Earlier this year, the Kosovo government awarded Bechtel another contract, worth $833m (€600m), this time building a road to neighbouring Macedonia. The company said Dell played no part securing the Kosovo to Macedonia contract.

*This article was reported in partnership with the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, which is partly funded by Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC).*

**OSCE Sees 'Uneven Playing Field' in Macedonia Polls (*BIRN*, by Sinisa Jakov Marusic, 14 April 2014)**

International observers said there were only minor irregularities during the presidential vote but biased media coverage and the blurring of state and party activities were significant issues.

The OSCE/ODIHR monitoring mission to Skopje said on Monday that the polls were well administered and fundamental freedoms were respected with only “small procedural irregularities” and “instances of organized voting”, but the pre-election campaign failed to provide an even field for all political players.

The OSCE’s ambassador to Macedonia, Geert Ahrens, told a press conference that “there was a lack of political analysis and independent reporting and the public broadcaster failed to provide balanced coverage” before Sunday’s polls which saw incumbent President Gjorge Ivanov take a commanding lead ahead of a run-off vote later this month.

Ahrens said that Ivanov, who is running for a second term in office for the main ruling VMRO DPMNE party, had a “significant advantage in resources and predominance in paid advertising” over the other three presidential hopefuls.

In its preliminary report on the conduct of the elections, the OSCE calculated that while Ivanov had 23 hours of paid political advertising during the campaign, his main competitor, Stevo Pendarovski from the opposition Social Democrats, had only three hours.

The OSCE also noted the frequent presence of the prime minister and other government ministers at Ivanov’s presidential rallies.

“The [VMRO DPMNE-led] government’s clear support [for Ivanov] during the election campaign did not fully respect the separation of party and the state,” it said.

The OSCE said that the State Electoral Commission mostly ran the vote smoothly but that in some cases its members voted along party lines.

While the rhetoric at the start of the campaign was mostly moderate, the OSCE noted that as the election day approached, the tone became increasingly negative between the government and the main opposition parties.

In the ethnic Albanian bloc, the OSCE also noted a “stream of strong negative allegations”, mentioning that the junior ruling Democratic Union for Integration called on voters to abstain.

“The conduct of the campaign divided society along ethnic lines and the call by one ethnic Albanian party on members of this community not to vote is a matter of concern,” said Stefan Schennach, head of the delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, who also joined OSCE observers in Macedonia.

He said that putting a visible ink mark on voter’s fingers to avoid fraud "was not a good idea" in a situation where one party called on people not to vote, and that "invisible ink would have been better".

Addressing concerns about the country’s electoral roll raised by the opposition and some observers, who said that large number of voters were registered as residing at the same address where they do not appear to live, Ahrens told Balkan Insight that the international monitors had no way to check whether this was true.

“We only speak of matters we can check and testify [about],” Ahrens said, adding that the OSCE has no insight into the Police Ministry’s procedures for issuing ID cards.

Just as at the last year’s local elections, the opposition believes that these so-called ‘fictive voters’ are used to tip the election results in the government’s favour.

The OSCE/ODIHR monitoring mission for Macedonia’s presidential and early general elections is made of 20 long-term observers who will monitor the entire campaign as well as 300 short-term observers who are present during the two rounds of voting.

On Sunday, Macedonians chose between four presidential candidates in the first round.

According to preliminary results from the State Electoral Commission, Ivanov won 448,304 votes or 51.64 per cent of all the ballots cast.

His main rival, Stevo Pendarovski from the opposition Social Democrats, won 326,069 or 37.56 per cent of the votes.

The two men will compete in the second round which will take place in April 27, along with the early general election.

The other two candidates, Iljaz Halimi and Zoran Popovski, attracted much lower support, with 38,965 and 31,360 votes respectively, and are dropping out of the presidential race.

Late on Sunday, the State Electoral Commission said that the vote was held in a peaceful, fair and democratic atmosphere and that the only incident happened in the town of Negotino where one ballot box was smashed by an unidentified person.

Police spokesperson Ivo Kotevski said “these have been the most peaceful elections” the country has ever had.

His statement came despite reports by the local election monitors from MOST and CIVIL of a series of irregularities ranging from group voting, family voting and political propaganda at polling stations to political pressure on voters.

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