** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Wednesday, 16 April 2014**

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**LOCAL PRESS**

**Nikolic: Our task is to live and not to wage wars (*RTS*)**

Serbian President Tomislav **Nikolic** said at a central celebration of the Day of the Serbian Army, in Uzice, that our task is to live and not to wage wars and die. He pointed to the recent statements of NATO officials, who caused immense sufferings in Serbia in 1999 and have now admitted to having acted, in the case of air strikes on Serbia in 1999, without the consent of the UN Security Council. There can be no justification whatsoever for the bombing of a sovereign country, an UN member-state, for the killing of its children and the destroying of its heritage, Nikolic emphasized. They had better admit that the true reason for the bombing was the creation of an Albanian state in the territory of Serbia, underlined Nikolic. April 23 is marked as the Yugoslav Army Day in remembrance of the day in 1815 when the Second Serbian Uprising broke out, which was a turning-point towards the creation of a modern Serbian state and army.

**Why SNS wants Dacic and Tadic (*Danas*)**

Simple math says that the leader of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) Aleksandar **Vucic** doesn’t need either the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), or the New Democratic Party (NDS), or Ivica **Dacic** or Boris **Tadic** to form the new government, yet, it seems that he needs them for something. Political analysts are divided in the opinion as to who could mean more to Vucic – Dacic or Tadic. They say that the SPS leader would be welcome over the negotiations with Pristina, while the NDS leader would contribute with his staff, but in the foreign affairs. Dejan Vuk **Stankovic** opines that the future prime minister needs more the SPS leader politically over the dialogue in Brussels. “Dacic demonstrated ability to negotiate with both the Albanians and EU representatives. At the same time, he will also have the role of neutralizing the uncomfortable situation that will be created with the electoral body following the solution on Kosovo,” Stankovic tells ***Danas***. When it comes to Tadic, in his opinion, there is no reason why would the Progressives need him in the government “except in the case of the search for a broader political consensus for amending the Constitution or for engaging Tadic’s staff.” The Director of the Center for Policy Studies Milan **Nikolic** opines differently. Even though it is difficult to say anything about the future government since negotiations are underway, he thinks that Vucic needs more Tadic than Dacic. “Tadic is needed in the Foreign Ministry since he has good connections in the international community, he is recognizable and thus he can do a good job,” Nikolic tells Danas. He says he doesn’t see how the authorities would need Dacic, but that he will certainly not receive the Interior Ministry again.

**Remains of 400 Albanians in Rudnica? (*Politika*)**

The building of “Kosmet-put” (Kosmet road) in Rudnica near Raska, underneath which there is believed to be a mass grave of Kosovo Albanians killed in 1999, was demolished, while works on lifting the upper layers of soil on this location will commence tomorrow, in search of mortal remains. The mentioned facility was built right after the NATO aggression on the FR Yugoslavia, which points to the attempt to cover-up the crime. The fact that the digging of the foundation was on the very grave during the construction of the building speaks of the fact that it is certain that the constructors had to know, or at least suspect, about its existence. According to some estimates, there could be between 250 and 400 bodies of Kosovo Albanians at this location, but the Chairperson of the Commission for Missing Persons from the region of former Yugoslavia Veljko **Odalovic** tells ***Politika*** that for the time being it is unknown where the grave is located, much less whether and how many mortal remains are there. “For the two identified Kosovo Albanians, out of the six discovered bodies so far, we needed between four to six weeks in order to establish their identity. We will need 60 working days to search the entire location, and then if we find the bodies, the identification process may last up to four to six weeks,” says Odalovic. The Commission for the Missing has in its records another 1,716 unresolved cases of the missing in the region of Kosovo and Metohija, while 527 are Serbs. The search of the regions that are assumed to be hiding the bodies of abducted and killed Serbs and non-Albanians is slow, and EULEX is in charge of the search, in cooperation with the Serbian War Crimes Prosecution. “There are several locations where, according to our information, the graves with the bodies of Serbs and non-Albanians may be located. One of them is Mt. Bajgora, which used to be one of the strongholds of the KLA. Then Mt. Cicavica where some places should also be examined, as well as locations near Djakovica and Klina,” says Odalovic. There are still waiting for an answer as to what happened to six missing Yugoslav army members in the region of the Kosare watchtower at the border towards Albania, where fierce battles took place in 1999. “We have a clear request for this area to be explored; we have given the maps of this area to UNMIK, whose teams used to take part in the cleaning of the terrain, and to EULEX that is presently working on this project. However, only a small part of this location has been demined and with this pace of work it will take five, six years to complete the entire job,” says Odalovic. One of the locations that are believed to be hiding the bodies of killed Serbs is the Livocko Lake near Gnjilane. The Commission for the Missing is requesting the search of the terrain, because the previous one was, they believe, insufficient. “The lake was searched by divers, but there was sludge at the bottom and visibility was very poor. We are requesting new methods – water draining and search of the bottom of the lake, because we have information that the bodies of some Serbs, who were killed near this location, were thrown into this lake. Now we are waiting for a response from the authorities,” said Odalovic.

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**Successful cooperation of RS with UNDP (*Srna*)**

The Republika Srpska (RS) President Milorad **Dodik** has pointed out that the RS maintains institutional stability and financial liquidity. It was stressed during talks with the UN Resident Coordinator for B&H Yuri **Afanasiev** that past cooperation between the RS institutions and the UNDP has been successful. They announced future cooperation in realizing joint programs, the RS President’s cabinet said in a release. The RS Prime Minister Zeljka **Cvijanovic**, and Afanasiev voiced readiness to continue cooperation in future joint programs of the RS government and UNDP. They assessed in Banja Luka that cooperation between the RS government and this international organization is very good, the RS Prime Minister’s cabinet said in a release. They also discussed the preparatory activities for implementing the UN Framework Development Assistance Program for B&H between 2015 and 2019, which will refer to social inclusion, sustainable development, employment and rule of law.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**Serbia eyes renewed coalition of centre-right and Socialists (*Reuters*, by Ivana Sekularac, 15 April 2014)**

Serbia's centre-right Progressive Party, which won the March election by a landslide, said on Tuesday it had offered a place in a coalition government to the Socialists of outgoing Prime Minister Ivica Dacic, despite deep differences over austerity.

The two parties have been in government together since mid-2012, but the Progressives forced a snap election last month saying they needed a stronger mandate to overhaul the bloated public sector and stabilise Serbia's shaky finances.

The Socialist Party (SPS) has opposed radical belt-tightening, fearing a backlash from its support base among public sector workers and pensioners.

Nevertheless, Progressive Party (SNS) leader and Serbia's next prime minister, Aleksandar Vucic, said he had offered a place in a new coalition cabinet to the Socialists and a party of ethnic Hungarians.

"I expect them (the Socialists) to take a decision on their participation," Vucic told a meeting of his party.

The prospect may unnerve investors anxious to see Vucic keep to his promise to slash state outgoings and rein in the budget deficit and public debt, as Serbia tries to capitalise on the start of European Union accession talks and lure investment.

Vucic takes power on an unprecedented mandate from voters. His Progressives took 158 seats in the 250-seat parliament in the March 16 election. The Socialists came second with 44 seats.

Though he has enough seats to rule alone, analysts say Vucic wants to form a broader coalition to shore up support for the tough measures he is promising as Serbia seeks to clinch a new precautionary loan deal with the International Monetary Fund.

Partnership with the Socialists would also give the new government a two-thirds majority in parliament, enough to change the constitution if necessary.

The cabinet is expected to be installed by the end of April.

Slavica Djukic-Dejanovic, a senior member of the Socialist Party, said the party would decide on the offer in the next few days.

"(Party leader) Dacic is talking to Aleksandar Vucic intensively, and there is a good chance that we will participate in the future government," Djukic-Dejanovic told state news agency Tanjug.

(Additional reporting and writing by Matt Robinson; Editing by Janet Lawrence)

**Serbia’s Vucic to Seek IMF Deal, Investment in Cabinet (*Bloomberg,* by Gordana Filipovic, 16 April 2014)**

Serbian Prime Minister-Elect Aleksandar Vucic vowed to cut spending and avoid debt restructuring before a vote on his government as he begins work on an international aid accord and European Union membership.

The 250-seat Belgrade-based parliament, which convenes today for the first time since a March 16 ballot, will be dominated by Vucic’s Progressive Party. With control of 158 seats, his cabinet is expected to win approval on April 27.

The new administration will have the strongest lock on power by a single party in more than two decades, when Slobodan Milosevic was still in control. Vucic will seek to persuade the International Monetary Fund to approve a standby agreement by the end of June and draw investors back to the biggest of the former Yugoslav republics.

“We will reach an agreement with the IMF, which we haven’t been able to achieve for years, and the deal will be possible because the IMF believes in our seriousness and commitment to reforms,” Vucic said in a press conference April 14. An IMF accord will show investors that “Serbia is a good place to be in.”

Vucic is counting on billions of dollars of investment from the United Arab Emirates to create jobs in an economy where one in four people is unemployed. EU accession will help raise living standards and per-capita economic output, which at 36 percent of the trading bloc’s average, trails that of the EU’s poorest member, Bulgaria, according to Eurostat.

**Falling Yields**

The yield on Serbian 10-year Eurobonds rose 2 basis points, or 0.02 percentage point, to 5.444 percent at 11:52 a.m. in Belgrade, data compiled by Bloomberg show. The cost of insuring Serbian government bonds against non-payment for five years using credit-default swaps fell 10 points to 310, the lowest level since June 20, 2013. It fell 78 points from 388 on March 14, two days before the vote.

The Washington-based lender suspended its loan program with Serbia in February 2012 when the country slipped on agreed fiscal targets. The deficit has since almost doubled and will rise to an estimated 7.1 percent of economic output this year.

Vucic pledged to embrace painful austerity measures endorsed by the IMF, which involve saving as much as 1.4 billion euros ($1.9 billion) in three years, cutting public-sector jobs and ending subsidies to 153 enterprises which employ about 60,000 workers and drain about $1 billion a year from the budget.

**Fiscal Priorities**

“Structural reforms and fiscal consolidation” come first, and there’s no need to restructure debts yet, Vucic said.

Serbia’s new cabinet will have 17 ministers, which will include former central bank Governor Kori Udovicki and Lazar Krstic, who will keep his post as finance minister, Vucic said. The Progressives will negotiate a coalition with the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, the biggest ethnic minority party to have entered parliament. The Socialists of former Prime Minister Ivica Dacic may also join, Vucic said.

President Tomislav Nikolic and central bank Governor Jorgovanka Tabakovic are also senior members of Vucic’s party.

The Progressives plan to achieve savings through cuts in travel allowances, restricted use of chauffeured cars, additional taxes on politicians’ income and a crackdown on the grey economy. Vucic’s popularity before the elections was bolstered by the arrest of Miroslav Miskovic, Serbia’s richest man, in December 2012 on accusations of abuse of state funds.

**No Work**

“The key problem of Serbia is that it does not offer jobs to its people, because there’s no work available,” Vladimir Gligorov, an economist at the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, said in Belgrade on April 14. “That is the biggest curse for a country and for an economy and such a situation is not sustainable.”

Once an ally to the late Milosevic, Vucic wants to make Serbia the third former Yugoslav republic to join the EU two decades after the violent Balkan civil wars. The country began accession talks in January and their success depends on mending ties with Kosovo, a former province that declared independence in 2008, and bringing the judiciary in line with EU norms, among other conditions.

**Serbian Leader Defuses Row Over TV N1 (*BIRN*, by Bojana Barlovac, 15 April 2014)**

Following tensions in Serbia over CNN's affiliate in the Balkans, TV N1, Serbia's likely prime minister told the US investment firm behind the station that N1 is welcome in Serbia.

Aleksandar Vucic, Serbia's likely next Prime Minister, on Tuesday told David Petraeus, chairman of the Global Institute of the KKR investment firm, that its first direct Balkan investment - a new cross-border TV station, N1, - was welcome in Serbia.

According to the Serbian government, Petraeus told Vucic that KKR wished to increase its investment in Serbia and turn Belgrade into a center for digitalisation in the region.

Petraeus's visit comes at a time of growing tensions in Serbia as N1 prepares to start programmes in May.

On April 7, the Serbian tabloid Informer, which is close to Vucic's Progressive Party, accused the US of trying to subvert Vucic by setting up N1.

According to the newspaper, the main figure in the alleged US campaign aimed at undermining Vucic, was Petraeus himself, a retired US General and former CIA chief.

The new TV station, the CNN's affiliate in the Balkans, plans to broadcast in three countries - Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia - expanding to other other Balkan countries in future.

The main financial investor behind N1 is United Group, the leading pay TV platform in Southeast Europe.

This includes SBB, the largest cable operator in Serbia, the largest cable operators in Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina - Telemach Slovenia and Telemach BiH - along with Total TV, the largest satellite platform in the region.

In October 2013, the global investment firm KKR, based in New York, acquired SBB/Telemach Group as its first direct investment in Southeast Europe.

The Serbian authorities have meanwhile clearly been unimpressed with the idea of N1 .

Following public discussion of the draft Law on electronic media, the government changed the draft in order to hamper the station from operating.

However, the draft law is currently in Brussels awaiting approval before it can go to a vote in the Serbian parliament, BIRN has learned from the Culture Ministry.

Meanwhile, BIRN has learnt from N1 that the station and its founders have decided to remain silent on the dispute, and N1 is continuing preparations for a start to broadcasting.

**Political Clash Mars Macedonia Election Campaign (*BIRN*, Sinisa Jakov Marusic, 16 April 2014)**

Police said they would press charges against six people for instigating a politically-charged clash on Tuesday in Skopje amid the campaign for presidential and early general elections.

Macedonian police said they would charge six people over a brawl that took place on Tuesday in Skopje’s Lisice district between supporters of the main ruling VMRO DPMNE party and the opposition Social Democrats, SDSM.

The affray erupted moments after the opposition Social Democrat presidential candidate, Stevo Pendarovski, left the area.

During his stay there, as part of his campaign, VMRO DPMNE party supporters could be heard shouting insults and booing from nearby surroundings.

“Just ignore them and don’t be afraid. This is not a normal way of communication,” Pedarovski told his supporters before he left, after which they were surrounded by the unfriendly group.

The brawl erupted minutes after he left, when the VMRO DPMNE supporters attacked the group that had greeted Pendarovski.

This has been the first such incident caught on TV cameras since the campaign started some 20 days ago.

“The clash happened after a short verbal dispute after the end of the rally of the candidate Stevo Pendarovski in Lisice when several people traded punches,” the police said in a press release.

The main opposition party denounced the alleged attack on its members.

Social Democrat leader Zoran Zaev angered ruling party supporters earlier that day when he said his party would soon provide documents proving corruption on the part of the ruling party, involving Prime Minister and VMRO DPMNE leader Nikola Gruevski.

“This happened after we raised the question of corruption linked directly to Prime Minister Gruevski. We suspect this was the inspiration for the incident,” SDSM vice president Radmila Sekerinska told the media.

The ruling party has not commented on the incident but previously said the opposition’s recent allegations of corruption were a “complete lie” that was being used “to cover the shameful election defeat” of the opposition.

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

Incumbent president Gjorge Ivanov, who is running for a second term for VMRO DPMNE won 449,000 votes, while the SDSM candidate, Pendarovski, came second with 326,000.

Ivanov and Pendarovski will now go head to head in the second round, which takes place in April 27, alongside the early general election.

The opposition has said it believes foul play was responsible for the convincing lead that Ivanov obtained in the first round.

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