

SARAJEVO

Armed Forces Mark Tenth Anniversary



BiH Defense Ministry marked the 10th anniversary of the formation of a single military in the country at the House of Armed Forces in Sarajevo

BiH Armed Forces were created on December 1, 2006, at the end of a successful defense reform that merged the entity armies, the Army of the Federation and the Republika Srpska Army.

Officials of the Defense Ministry and Armed Forces said that the BiH AF grew to be an example of successful joint work and overcoming barriers.

"So far, more than 4,000 young soldiers completed training in our training centers, and they

are ready to assist the citizens at any moment. Whether it is a natural disaster, land mine contamination or any other type of assistance, the Armed Forces have always been there to help them. I am proud that we have cleaned more than 29 million square meters of land contaminated with mines so far," said Chief of the Joint Staff of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, General Anto Jelic.

Despite significant flaws and problems, the Armed Forces is said to be one of the most

successful institutions in the country.

"I think they the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the embodiment of a BiH that we want. All three ethnic groups and different interests are represented in the AF, yet they work together with success. Our equipment is old. The country only one per cent of GDP earmarks for the defense, and we know that countries in the region earmark at least two per cent or more," said Minister of Defense Marina Pendas.



Zlatan Begic, professor: In the absence of sanction, the top government officials can ignore (the BiH Constitutional Court's) decisions. That opens the issue of absolute anarchy - if the top officials won't respect the Constitution and the Constitutional Court, why would any citizen respect any law



Miodrag Zivanovic, professor: The decision-making process in a number of (state) institutions should be changed, because nobody is happy with it. That will require political will. I would like to see the focus shifted on changing the mechanisms in those institutions, not only in the BiH Constitutional Court, but in others as well



Asim Mujkic, professor: Unfortunately, BiH has no secular political tradition, since the ruling ethno-nationalist paradigm was created on a religious source. Therefore, I understand the reaction of the (RS) political establishment to a secular decision (of the BiH Constitutional Court), because it is religious in its core

Regional Conference on Hate Crimes Sanctioning Held in Sarajevo

Regional conference on "Hate Crime - amending the Criminal Code of FBiH?" was organized in Sarajevo as part of the 16 Days of Activism campaign and marking of International Human Rights Day, 10 December

The participants at the event, which brought together regional and local experts in the field of criminal law as well as representatives of civil society and religious communities in the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, discussed issues related to the international obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the field of legislation on crimes motivated by hatred, and experiences of the countries in the region (Croatia and Serbia) in sanctioning such crimes.

"Those are crimes that are committed in BiH on the basis of prejudice and hatred towards different minority groups, be it ethnic minorities, the returnee population or LGBT people," said the executive director of the Sarajevo Open Center Sasa Gavric on behalf of the conference organizer.

He pointed out that the members of those groups are often targeted in attacks and that the situation calls for a prompt action - improvement of the legal framework and stricter sanctions in cases that are found to have been motivated by hate, thus providing protection to members of minority and vulnerable groups. Gavric said that it is necessary to access the corresponding amendments to the Criminal Code of the Federation of BiH, or develop and adopt specific



amendments, which was, among other things, the focus of the conference.

At the same time, he expressed expectation that the amendments will be sent into procedure by the end of the year in the FBiH Parliament, because there is clear support of the ruling majority in that respect, and given the fact that the hate crimes are already sanctioned under the legislation of RS and Brcko District.

Snjezana Ivandic-Ninkovic from the Associations for Democratic Initiatives (ADI), a member of the coalition for the fight against hate speech and hate crimes, also insisted on an efficient, adequate prosecution and severe punishment for crimes motivated by hatred. She warned that such crimes must be prevented and stopped, which is of particular importance for BiH in the context in which prejudice often has religious, ethnic, or gender origin.

BiH Forming a Team for Negotiations with Croatia

Council of Ministers of BiH should appoint a new negotiating team at their next session and define key steps for adjusting the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Croatia, which is one of the two final conditions for a credible application of BiH for membership in the EU, Dnevni avaz reports. After BiH received a positive progress report from the European Commission, the country has two more conditions to fulfill to apply for membership in the EU, and those are adjustment of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Croatia in part of trade exchange and determining a coordination mechanism.

Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic

Relations of BiH Mirko Sarovic told Avaz they are already taking actions to fulfill this first condition.

"We have received a conclusion of the BiH Presidency which requests us to redefine our negotiating position and to appoint a new negotiating team. We are already working on a roadmap, that is, key steps we should take, and we will prepare that for the next session of the Council of Ministers. We expect it to be adopted so the team can start working on new negotiating positions," said Sarovic.

The aim of the new negotiating team is to try and find a compromise between demands of Croatia, the EU and BiH.

DAILY MARKERS

By Vlastimir Mijovic
Senior Editor

(Un)necessary BH Army

BiH Armed Forces (AF BiH) mark today the tenth year of existence. On this occasion, the military command praised itself and said the AF BiH showed that they can address a number of security and other challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the world.

Obviously, they used too big words. AF is mainly engaged in helping citizens in crisis situations (such as floods), destruction of weapons that were left over from the war that ended in 1995, including the demining of a part of our territory. Of typically military activities, there is only participation in international military missions. AF was so far part of the missions in Ethiopia and Eritrea, Iraq and Afghanistan, and Congo and Mali, with around 900 members.

The greatest success was, in fact, the very formation of the AF BiH. According to many, the military reform is the most successful implemented reform in BiH by now. Ten years ago, more than 400 thousand soldiers, divided into three armies (the Army of Republika Srpska, the Croatian Defense Council and the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina) were discharged in just a few months. A professional army of about 10,000 soldiers was created, which has nearly as many members today.

BiH spends about 300 million KM annually on the Armed Forces. The budget is said to be too high and used mainly for "paying" four thousand officers and sub-officers, and 6 to 7 thousand professional soldiers. They, according to those opinions, would be no reliable protection in a military conflict. Therefore, the RS seeks abolition of AF, or demilitarization of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The closest to the truth about the real value of the AF BiH, and its purpose, is in fact its presence in the NATO forces once BiH becomes a part of that military-political alliance. But, that day is not yet in sight, and our military still has only symbolic value, in addition to its humanitarian success.

Masterplan

Republika Srpska economy will inevitably collapse, with political implications, if the ruling elite don't change their approach to running the government and managing economy

The current focus on projects shows its limits in the fact that despite the "triumph of will" in the form of impressive buildings across the RS, we could still "win all the battles but lose the war".

Also, all the battles are far from won. Recently, an acquaintance asked me how to tell which banks in the RS are problematic. I told him, half-serious, that he should see the list of banks in which the RS government has a share (Bobar Banka, Banca Srpske, Pavlovic Banka) and avoid those.

The list of the RS government's failed investments, in which millions were sank, is far longer than the three banks. The Olympic Center Jahorina, whose negative financial results appear in the media every now and then, was a decent company that had no problems running the business; it employed 160 people and even made profits - until the RS government invested 41 million KM. Everything was downhill after that. Needless to mention other less financially demanding but worse failed projects, like Nova Romnija.

Still, the RS citizens must ask what the cause of those failures is, because the way tax money is spent determines our present and future. I have no intention to comment on politics and political games. Also I don't believe that it was pure crime and that somebody wasted hundreds of millions in tax money to stash a several million for themselves or persons close to them. One needs to be hopelessly stupid and primitive to pursue the policy of "killing the cow for one steak", and without any long-term political ambition. Although the local political scene features some interesting characters that the rough sea propelled from the bottom of social ladder, where they should have remained for good, it can't be said that our politicians are stupid and short-sighted in general. Even more so, the political scenes in neighboring countries (Serbia, Croatia) also have colorful characters, perhaps even more than we have.

So, what is the reason for such big and obvious failures of the RS government? According to my opinion - the lack of an economy masterplan.

That lack is not unseen in young countries or para-state structures. The first thing that the EU father Jacques Delors insisted on when he was turning an economy community, the

EEC, into a para-state supranational structure that the EU is today, was the transfer from financing projects to financing programs, which happened in the so-called first Delors package of 1988-1993.

We need a similar qualitative transformation. The RS has been functioning for more than two decades and it never developed a long-term development program or an industry policy (there is a significant difference between the two). The circumstances in which the RS was formed explain that partially. First there was the war, and then the international protectorate that stripped the RS, and

partly BiH, from part of sovereignty in the economy policy, which left little room for planned action. There was one attempt at writing a mid-term development strategy, paid generously by the RS government, and it failed miserably, which was expected considering the way it was written. As a young university assistant at the time, I watched the representatives of institute in charge of writing the important document bargaining with professors, literally in hallways, on their engagement; the strategy that was supposed to be an integral document was fragmented so that each of those professors could take part and make money easily (some of the best professors refused to take part because of that approach). Almost a decade later, the expensive document is still unfinished.

Yet, that shouldn't discourage us. Although many educated and talented young people leave the country, some of them stay. And even those who left are emotionally tied to the RS or BiH and they would gladly help the local authorities build their capacities to change things for better, especially if they were paid at least something for that.

The situation will start changing for better when the local authorities are no longer a firefighter that proves he can implement individual projects (never fully proved), but the authorities that can implement a program of economy recovery and development in the form of a series of individual projects. Of course, that means that some projects and interventions will be abandoned because they don't fit in the "big picture", and the projects that get launched will have to be monitored more vigorously, which will require more responsibility in the sense of hiring competent, not loyal people for the implementation of projects.



By Marko Djogo
Nezavisne Novine, Banja Luka

HIGHLIGHTS

❖ Prime Minister of the Federation Fadil Novalic met in Sarajevo with Political Director for Southeast Europe in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain Jesus Santos Aguado, who will attend the meeting of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The meeting was attended by Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to BiH Bosco Gimenez Soriano and his deputy Javier Blanco.

❖ A seven-day training in the field of security policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, organized by the interagency working group of the Council of Ministers in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, started in Sarajevo. It is the 11th training session organized by the two institutions, and is conducted for the staff of the BiH institutions, especially those who will be engaged in the construction of the system and mechanisms for the effective operation of the security sector.

❖ The State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA) and Faculty of Criminology and Security Studies signed a cooperation agreement at the official premises of SIPA BiH. The Agreement was signed by Director of SIPA Perica Stanic and Dean of the Faculty of Criminology and Security Studies, Professor Nedzad Korajlic. Students of the Faculty of Criminology and Security Studies will be able to visit the SIPA and attend lectures in the field of organized crime, terrorism and other forms of crime, within which SIPA investigators will present practices, as well as lectures in other areas within the scope of SIPA.

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Regional Cooperation Is Crucial in the Fight against Trafficking in Persons

BiH Security Minister Dragan Mektic, Ambassador of Italy to BiH Ruggero Corrias and Head of the International Organization for Migration in BiH and sub-regional coordinator of the IOM for the Western Balkans Gianluca Rocco stressed the importance of regional cooperation at a press conference on the occasion of the completion of the regional project "Strengthening the fight against trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling in the Western Balkans"

Mektic said that human trafficking requires a comprehensive and coordinated response of all structures and levels of government and the coordination and cooperation of all actors involved in fighting human trafficking. "It is not enough just to achieve good mechanisms of coordination, mutual cooperation within one state, but it is very important to establish such mechanisms of cooperation at the regional level.

The key thing in combating this type of crime - human trafficking, is regional cooperation, establishment of quality mechanisms and tools for an international or regional cooperation in the fight against human trafficking in order to provide an effective response to this type of crime at regional and expert level," said Mektic. In his words, it is necessary, which was the essence of this project, to strengthen regional capacities.

"The key thing is regional cooperation and creation of regional networks of experts through joint investigations, police and prosecution teams," said Mektic.

He added that they promoted the report with the recommendations resulting from the project "Strengthening the fight against trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling in the Western Balkans".

"The findings and recommendations in this report have certainly been one of the factors that were taken into account when we defined our future actions in this field. I believe that this project and its results made another positive step in



Ruggero Corrias

strengthening our capacities in the context of the fight against trafficking in persons," the minister said.

Italian Ambassador to BiH Ruggero Corrias also stressed the need for regional cooperation.

"Cooperation in the region, cooperation in intelligence, cooperation is the key," said Ambassador Corrias.

Sub-regional Coordinator of IOM for the Western Balkans Gianluca Rocco said that what he saw in the region is that, "the more the EU countries are trying to regulate the flow of migrants, surely there the more exists certain intent, or an attempt to somehow restrict and regulate these flows."

"The more you try to prevent, or select people, who are allowed to cross the border, or those who are not, the more it opens up space for traffickers and smugglers. This is what is happening now on the border between Greece and Macedonia," he stated. He pointed out that the presented report gives specific recommendations that can be used, and some of them have already started to be implemented.

Project Manager in the OIM office in Sarajevo Andrea Dabizzi presented the final report and the results of the research. He stated that what this migration crisis has shown throughout the region is that "one of the key elements for effective management of migratory flows in the region is cross-border cooperation". In his words, it is continuous dialogue and communication between countries, the exchange of information and data, as well as cross-border joint initiatives and activities.

"This is where our project comes in," he said, adding that the project started in July 2014 and it ends today.

Presenting the recommendations listed in the report, he said that they are divided into three chapters - general recommendations; recommendations on cross-border cooperation in identifying cases of international trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and recommendations on cross-border cooperation in the management and conduct of investigations of international cases of trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling. The Office of the International Organization for Migration implemented a regional project to strengthen the fight against trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling in the Western Balkans from July 2014 to November 2015. The goal of the project, funded by the Development Fund of the IOM and the Government of Italy, is to strengthen cross-border cooperation in identifying and investigating cases of trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling. IOM prepared a report with recommendations concerning the strengthening of cross-border cooperation, designed in collaboration with judicial and law enforcement agencies from all countries of the Western Balkans.

These recommendations represent areas that need improvement and a list of actions and measures proposed to the countries of the region to strengthen cross-border cooperation.

PIC Ambassadors to Meet in Sarajevo

Political Directors from the countries of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council will meet in Sarajevo today and tomorrow to review the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On Tuesday and Wednesday, the PIC Steering Board members will discuss the overall political situation in the country twenty years after the

conclusion of the GFAP, current challenges to country's progress, and how to advance the current reform agenda before Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On Wednesday, political directors of the PIC Steering Board will meet with the members of the BiH Presidency for a discussion on upcoming priorities of the country.

Crnadak Receives Ambassadors of France and China

BiH Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Crnadak received respectively Ambassador of France to BiH Claire Bodonyi and Ambassador of People's Republic of China to BiH Chen Bo

Crnadak and Ambassador Bodonyi talked about current political situation in BiH, with emphasis on decision of the Constitutional Court of BiH on Law on Holidays of Republika Srpska and today's meeting of the Peace Implementation Council in BiH. They also talked about BiH path towards the EU, support of France on that path and other current topics. Crnadak once again condemned terrorist attack in Paris, where 129 lost their lives, extended his condolences, solidarity and support to



Claire Bodonyi and Igor Crnadak



Chen Bo and Igor Crnadak

French people. He emphasized commitment of BiH to strongly continue fight against terrorism within the global action. During his meeting with Ambassador of PR China to BiH Chen Bo, Crnadak welcomed her to BiH and said he hopes that friendship and cooperation between the two states will continue improving. He emphasized the aim of BiH is to strengthen economic cooperation with China, and make it easier for BiH products to be placed on a big Chinese market and increase Chinese investments in BiH.

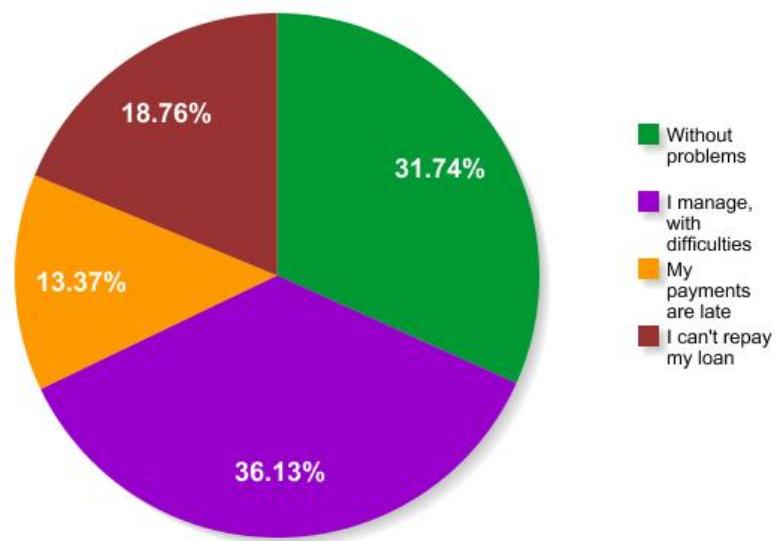
Film Week to Close Italy Culture Month in BiH

After the Farnesina Collection and "Verdi" Theater on the occasion of 20 years of Dayton, Italy Culture Month will conclude with screenings of films of the last season, within an event that started at the Art-cinema "Kriterion" and will last until December 3.

Film week, organized in cooperation with FICC - Italian Federation of Film Societies, this year includes a film "Italy in One Day" by Gabriele Salvatores, the first film social experiment made in Italy. Next is "Our Land" by Giulio Manfredonia with Stefano Accorsi, and "Chlorine", generally accepted and praised debut by young director Lamberto Sanfelice, presented at Berlinale and Sundance Film Festival 2015.

"Make a Fake" will close the film week - a comedy by Giovanni Albanese with Vincenzo Salemme, on world of contemporary art. Films will be titled in B/C/S and English languages. Entrance is free of charge, Embassy of Italy in BiH said.

You took a loan and you make the installment payments...



Witness Describes Bosnian Serb Attack on Women and Children in Zecovi



A state prosecution witness testifying at the trial of fourteen former members of Bosnian Serb military and police forces said approximately 50 women and children were detained in the basement of a house in Zecovi, near Prijedor

The witness said the house was torched by Bosnian Serb fighters. Defendants Dusan Milunic, Radomir Stojnic, Radovan Cetic, Dusko Zoric, Zoran Stojnic, Zeljko Grbic, Ilijia Zoric, Zoran Milunic, Bosko Grujicic, Ljubisa Cetic, Rade Grujicic, Uros Grujicic, Zdravko Antonic and Rajko Gnjatovic have been charged with committing acts of murder, torture, sexual violence, as well as destructing and confiscating property from the local residents of Zecovi, a village near Prijedor. Milunic was the commander of the Rasavacka Company of the Sixth Battalion of the 43rd Brigade of the Bosnian Serb Army. Stojnic was the commander of the reserve police station

in Rasavci. Radovan Cetic was the president of the Serbian Democratic Party and crisis committee in the village of Rasavci. The other defendants were members of the Bosnian Serb military, police and other formations.

Z21, a protected witness and survivor of the Zecovi attack testified at the hearing. Z21 said she was eight years old in 1992. She said she remembered a group of Serb soldiers came to Zecovi one day that year. "The women and children hid in a basement. Around 50 of us, maybe more. It was before dark and a soldier burst inside and forced us out," Z21 said.

She said she didn't know the soldiers. She said the women and children were

soon sent back inside.

"They torched the house. We started suffocating from the smoke. Two women banged on the door, wanting to get out. The men, our men, who were hiding in the woods, heard our screams and ran to the house and opened it. Then we all escaped to the woods," Z21 said.

She said she heard that her brother was killed a day later.

"The soldiers, the Serbs, they found us in the woods. The same ones that wanted to kill us. One of them told us to give him all our money. They took gold too. Then a truck came and we were sent to Travnik," Z21 said.

The trial continues on December 4.

Plea Hearings in Brnjic and Lipovac Cases This Week

This week, defendants who've been charged with war crimes in Odzak and Derventa are scheduled to appear before the Bosnian state court to enter their pleas. Damir Lipovac, charged with war crimes in the Derventa area, entered his plea on Monday. He was extradited from the Netherlands earlier this month. On Friday, December 4, a plea hearing will be held in the case of Marijan Brnjic. Brnjic has been charged with wartime rape under a new indictment and is currently awaiting a

verdict in rape charges in a separate case. On Tuesday, December 1, the first state prosecution witnesses will be examined at the trial of seven defendants charged with war crimes in the Ljubuski area in 1993 and 1994. The defendants are Ivica Kraljevic, Mate Jelcic, Slavko Skender, Stojan Odak, Vice Bebek, Vinko Radisic and Dragan Miloc.

On Tuesday, December 1, the defense will begin presenting evidence at the trial of Ekrem Ibracevic, Faruk

Smajlovic and Sejdalija Covic, charged with war crimes in the Srebrenik area. On Thursday, December 3, a status conference will be held in the case of Milisav Ikonic, Dragan Lubarda and Zoran Ilic. The defendants have been charged with wartime rape in the Rogatica area in 1992. Trials for crimes committed in Zvornik, Prijedor, Sanski Most, Bileca, Trnovo, Srebrenica, Livno, Mostar and other towns are scheduled to continue this week as well.

BiH Food Industry in Difficult State, Chance for Exporting to Germany

BiH food industry is in extremely difficult situation and is poorly competitive amid excessive import of products from neighboring counties and insufficient support of BiH institutions, said director of the Education Institute of the Foreign Trade Chamber of BiH Duljko Hasic

Speaking at a seminar titled "Doing business with Germany with focus on food industry", Hasic said goal of the gathering is to help entrepreneurs to prepare to enhance export and competitive capability.

"This way lecturers from Germany's International Business Center are conducting strategic preparations for international business activity in distribution, international business agreements, arbitrage and everything else related to preparation of marketing activities, finding a third market and improvement of export performances," Hasic stressed.

He added that coordination mechanism estab-

lishment and traditional trade are some of the conditions EU has set for BiH application.

"Our attitude is that BiH must have the same treatment as other EU states when it comes to trade and trade relations. BiH cannot accept conditions of trade relations with Croatia by the CEFTA agreement principle or full liberalization of 15 groups of products," Hasic underscored.

"If this happens, the food industry would be in a very difficult state," he said, adding that BiH already imports food worth over 2.5 billion KM and exports only 500 million KM. He went on to say that one of the prob-

lems is extinction of households, noting that out of 12,000 milk producers in BiH, only 5,000 remained.

Hato Brener, a representative of Germany's International Business Center, said that Germany, with 80 million residents, has great demands for food products.

"Germany imports 30% of food products from Europe and BiH, which is part of Europe, can partly please these demands. He suggested that it would be good for more BiH companies to appear at fairs in Germany, where they would set up contacts and showcase their products."

Adriatic Group Plans to Invest Six Million Euro in Next Five Years

Amir Bekic, general director of Adriatic Group, seated in Vienna, one of the leading European distributors of food products from former Yugoslavia has said that a great number of people from this territory, who left for Europe during the 90ties and later, kept consumer habits and demands and they make the majority of buyers of these products. He stressed that one should be realistic and admit that economies of EU countries are developed in the measure that producers from former Yugoslavia cannot be particularly competitive on that market. "However, the products we are distributing managed to find their place on shelves of shopping malls throughout Europe and succeeded to attract interest of local population. For example,

Swedes often buy Ajvar, Austrians Cevapi, etc," he noted. Bekic recalled that the beginnings of Adriatic Group are related to the establishment of Brajlovic 2002 company in Vienna, which has been producing meat products in that city and exporting them throughout Europe, because they were unable to do so from BiH. "Today we have distribution firms in Stuttgart, London and Rotterdam, as well as two big factories in BiH which deal with fruit and vegetable processing under Natura brand," Bekic said. The group also founded Agrona firm in Zivinice which deals with organization of primary agricultural production, first of all gherkin which has been recognized as a culture that can be exported in unlimited

amounts to the EU. "We established contacts with several factories in Germany, Austria and Croatia to which we delivered over 3,000 tons of gherkin this year," he added. He explained that the most wanted products from their offer are Vegeta, Argeta and confectionary products from Serbia.

Telemach Set to Acquire Local Peer Global Internet

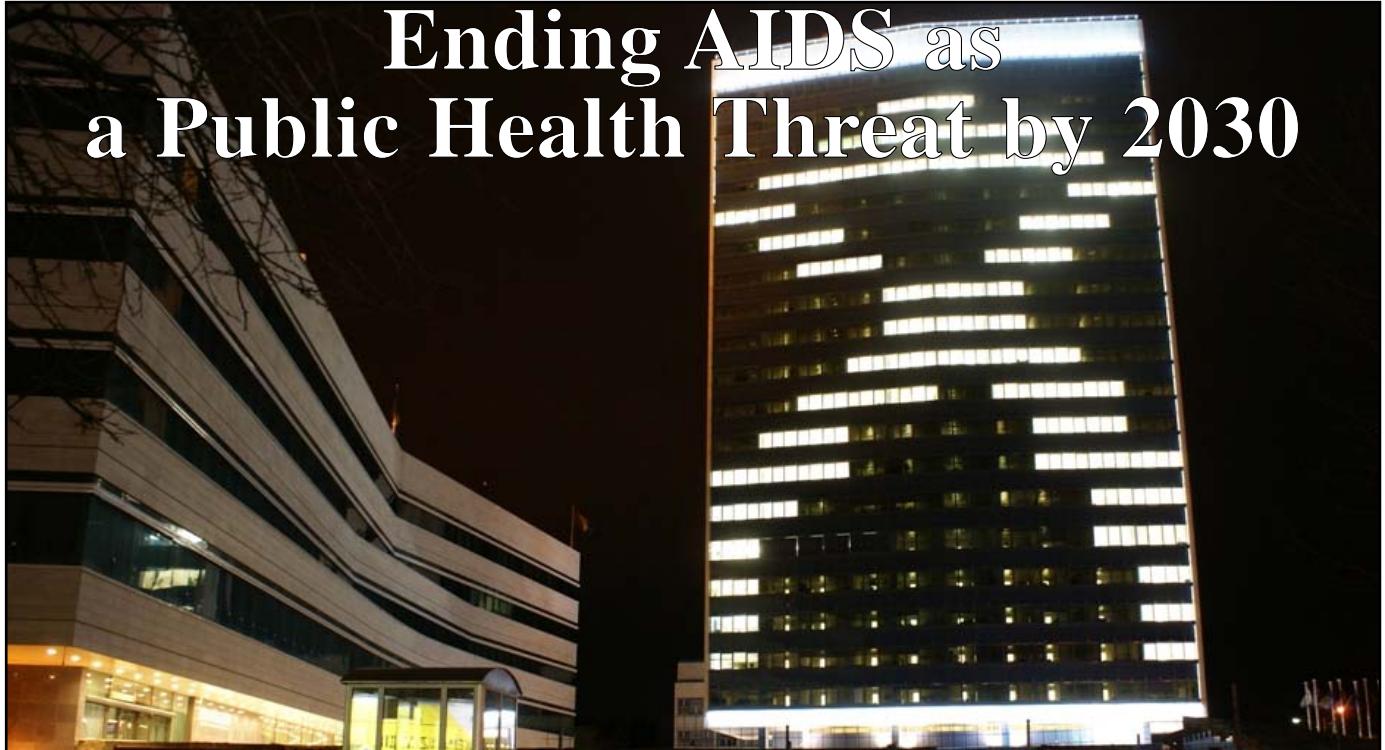
Cable TV operator Telemach is set to acquire local peer Global Internet Novi Travnik for an undisclosed sum. Telemach and Global Internet signed a memorandum of understanding on November 2 which outlines Telemach's plans to acquire a 100% stake in its peer, news portal Indikator.ba reported. According to Indikator.ba, Telemach has filed an application with the competition council seeking approval for the acquisition. In mid-2015, following the acquisition of majority stakes in several Bosnian telcos, Telemach BiH said it plans to invest tens of millions of euro in the acquisition and standardization of telecommunication networks and services in an additional 17 cities in Bosnia.

FBiH Gross Electricity Output Down 4.4% in First Ten Months

Gross electricity production in Bosnia's Federation edged down 4.4% to 7,756 GWh in the first ten months of 2015, the entity's statistic agency said on Monday. The entity's hydro power plants produced 2,848 GWh through October, up from 2,633 GWh a year earlier, while its thermal power plants generated 4,908 GWh, down 10.4% on the year, the statistics agency said in a statement. Electricity imports increased 80.5% on the year to 816 GWh, while

exports rose 32.4% to 2,626 GWh through October. In October alone, the Federation's electricity production fell 9.2% on the year to 723 GWh. Its hydro power plants produced 308 GWh, up from 240 GWh a year earlier, while its thermal power plants generated 415 GWh, down from 556 GWh on the year. Electricity imports rose to 179 GWh in October from 27 GWh a year earlier, while exports rose to 307 GWh from 196 GWh a year earlier.

Ending AIDS as a Public Health Threat by 2030



Many people living with HIV, activists, government workers and development partners are gathering in Harare, Zimbabwe, to share knowledge of what works in the collective fight against AIDS

Whilst HIV is a global threat, the epidemic remains a huge challenge in Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, where communities have been ravaged by AIDS, said in the statement the UNFPA Executive Director, Babatunde Osotimehin, on the occasion of World AIDS Day, 1 December 2015. This year, World AIDS Day coincides with the African conference on controlling HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

More Focus Needed on Prevention

Increasingly, HIV impacts adolescent girls and young women. They are vulnerable owing to violence, child marriage, lack of comprehensive sexuality education, inability to negotiate safe sex, and lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services - including condoms, HIV/STI testing and counseling, and treatment.

Globally every year, there are 380,000 new HIV infections among girls and young women aged 10-24, constituting almost 60 per cent of all new HIV infections. Fifteen per cent of all women living with HIV are aged 15-24. Clearly, our responses to HIV must address the needs of adolescent girls. Addressing restrictive social norms that prevent women and girls from accessing sexual and reproductive health information and services and owning their sexual health is

crucial. Concerted efforts are needed to change these gender norms and to make communities safe and supportive for young women and girls.

People living with HIV and key populations at risk also need to be empowered to help end stigma, discrimination and violence, advocate for removal of punitive laws, and increase access to justice and sexual and reproductive health services. UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, supports greater investment in integrated HIV and sexual and reproductive health services, including for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission, and progress is being made. More focus is needed on HIV prevention, especially among young people, and on family planning for women living with HIV, which leads to fewer HIV-positive infants. HIV control and management continues to be a central plank of global strategies to improve women's, children's and adolescents' health. We know what works and we know how to deliver evidence-informed prevention programs - combining biomedical approaches, such as the provision of condoms and voluntary medical male circumcision; behavior change so that people make informed choices about their sexual lives and practice safe sex; and structural change to tackle bad laws and policies, inequalities, violence, stigma and discrimination. Prevention champions play an important role - individuals who

speak out and encourage communities to reduce their risk, take control and stop further transmission of the virus.

Leave No One Behind

The Sustainable Development Goals call on us to leave no one behind. Investment is needed in local data and services to ensure that we reach the most vulnerable. We must invest in the holistic development of adolescents through education, health, employment and psychological well-being. We must ensure people in humanitarian crises, conflict and other emergency situations have access to an effective package of sexual and reproductive health services, including for prevention and treatment of HIV and STIs. We must intensify programming with key populations to reduce their HIV burden and protect the whole community.

UNFPA continues to support governments and community organizations to strengthen integrated maternal and child health services, as well as community-led responses. We support the human rights of key populations to live free of violence, stigma and discrimination and to freely access services in order to protect their health, the health of their sexual partners and dependents, and ultimately, of the whole community.

By focusing on what works, and by working together, we can end AIDS by 2030.

Jews Celebrate 450 Years of Survival



Living in a country once marred by sectarian conflict, Jewish leader Jakob Finci says his 1,000-strong community "feels safe" 20 years after the end of the Bosnian War, reports the Times of Israel

Since arriving in Sarajevo in the mid-16th century, Jews have constantly had to manage the challenge of being a minority within a complex inter-ethnic puzzle in a region affected by war, communist ideology and - in later years - sectarian conflict.

As such, the survival of a Jewish community for 450 years in the middle of the Balkans is something really remarkable, said Jakob Finci, president of the Jewish community in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Community

To commemorate this nearly half a millennium achievement, Finci initiated a series of anniversary events in the capital last month. Part cultural, part academic, it included the inaugural exhibition of Edward Serotta's photographs of the 1992-1996 siege of Sarajevo, titled "Survival in Sarajevo," as well as a two-day international conference and private tours to see the world-famous Sarajevo Haggadah in the city's National Museum, an institution that had remained closed for years due to lack of funds.

Born to a Sephardi family in 1943, in Rab, an Italian concentration camp during World War II, Jakob Finci has been described as a "living legend." Although officially retired, the 72-year-old lawyer

and former Bosnian ambassador to Switzerland works tirelessly for the Jewish community.

Finci was one of the founders - and current president - of the Inter-Religious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was established in 1997. Its membership reflects the country's Islamic, Christian and Catholic communities.

Although the small Jewish community currently only numbers approximately 1,000, Finci said that Jews are also equal partners amid a majority Sunni Muslim population because of their long tradition and presence in the region.

"I think this is very important, especially taking into account all the activities during the last war when we were able to help non-Jews," he said.

"We really did our best to help everyone without questioning who they were, what was their religion or anything else." Finci's office is located in Sarajevo's Jewish community center. Unusual for a Jewish institutional building in Europe, it has no security.

"Here, [in Sarajevo] we feel very safe," he remarked.

When Sarajevo was besieged during the war, the building, which also houses a synagogue, became a focal point for the community. In 1991, La Benevolencija, an old cultural and welfare organization was re-

established with Finci as vice-president. A non-sectarian humanitarian aid agency, it operated out of the center, providing food and medicine to the population, regardless of their religious or ethnic background.

Crucially, La Benevolencija - and Finci - managed to arrange the evacuation of over 2,000 people, organizing 11 mixed convoys of Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims and Jews.

Jewish neutrality was advantageous as it meant Finci and his team could obtain clearance from all the necessary parties. Finci recalls traveling with numerous sets of documents, prepared to produce whatever relevant papers were needed at any given moment.

The reaction of international Jewry at the time was tremendous, he said, in particular the help given by CBF (the Central British Fund, now World Jewish Relief) and the JDC (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee).

Harmony and Co-Existence

"Life here was really saved by these two organizations working together," Finci explained, during what would be the longest siege of a city in the history of European warfare: 1,425 days.

Both charities continue to play a significant part in the community's develop-

ment. Finci believes that the Bosnian Jewish community, in Sarajevo in particular, is characterized by a unique sense of harmony and co-existence.

"We try to live together, to stay as Jews but [at the same time] we are accepting of different religions, different opinions," he said. Finci claims that it is these values that have resulted in Bosnia and Herzegovina being "one of the few countries that is absolutely free of anti-Semitism."

He also denied that there is increased Islamophobia in the country, unlike in the rest of Europe. That is not to say that relations are tension-free. Events in the Middle East can have an impact. During the last Gaza campaign, Operation Protective Edge, there were pro-Palestinian demonstrations in the city. However, he added, such demonstrations never marched past the Jewish community center as a mark of respect.

Optimistic About the Future

This attitude goes some way to explain the response following an incident at a demonstration held two or three years ago, when a placard depicted a Magen David [Star of David] equaling a swastika.

"We sent a letter to the newspaper saying that these signs cannot go together," explained Finci.

An immediate apology was issued and nothing of that nature has happened since, he said.

The Holocaust had a profound affect on the community. Before World War II there were a reported 14,000 Jews in Bosnia, 12,000 of them in Sarajevo. After the war, approximately 2,000 returned.

Once the Bosnian War began in April 1992, many Jewish families left Sarajevo. Finci's wife chose to stay and support him in his work, but when their 13-year-old son narrowly missed being hit by a bullet as he walked on a stairway at home, they made the difficult decision to send him to Israel where his older brother was already living. The Fincis, like many others, expected the war to be over within a few weeks. But that didn't happen and his sons never came back and now live in the US with Finci's four granddaughters. Although Sarajevo will always be home to his sons, he said, he is under no illusion that they will return.

Finci acknowledged that there are many challenges facing the predominantly aging Jewish population. Political stagnation, a

weak economy and high unemployment also mean that many young, educated people find it difficult to get jobs and consider leaving to seek opportunities abroad. Some are unrealistic, Finci said, believing that their university education will immediately grant them access to a better future overseas and are surprised when they get there that they can only find work washing dishes in a restaurant.

Finci is optimistic about the future, though, and pointed to encouraging signs of regeneration. Twelve new babies were born in the Jewish community in the last year (in the previous 20 years there had been no more than 10). This baby boom is largely due to the return of a younger generation who, as children, had been sent away during the war. The challenge now, said Finci, is to keep this next generation in the community, to provide for their children - there is talk of setting up a kindergarten - and to ensure they are raised as Jewish, as many are from interfaith marriages.

As a respected public figure, Finci was elected in 2000 to chair a national committee charged with the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission. Two years later he was appointed as head of the Civil Service Agency. However, his political ambitions were thwarted when he learned that he was unable to run for president.

"Our intention is to stay"

Under the Dayton peace agreement that ended the war in Bosnia on December 14, 1995, membership to the parliament's upper house or presidency is reserved for one of the three ethnic groups: Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs. Minorities, or "others" outside these constituent groups, such as Jews and Roma, can be MPs, he explained, but may not stand for higher political office. Finci, and Dervo Sejdic, a member of the Bosnia's Roma Council, appealed to the European Court of Human Rights to overturn the law. Six years after the 2009 ruling, they are still waiting for Bosnia to implement the judgment, which found that certain provisions of the Bosnian constitution and election law discriminate against minority groups.

Until then, Finci will continue to fight for equal rights and the Jewish community.

"We've been here 450 years and our intention is to stay another 450. The flame of Jewish life won't leave Bosnia," said Finci.

Turkey's and Federation's Education Ministries Ink Cooperation Agreement



Minister of Education and Science of the Federation of BiH Elvira Dilberovic met in Istanbul with Minister of Education of the Republic of Turkey Nabi Avci and they signed a Cooperation Protocol, FENA reports from Istanbul. Cooperation Protocol of Ministry of Education of the Republic of Turkey and Ministry of Education of the Federation of BiH and Yunus Emre Institute firstly refers to Turkish language learning in BiH schools.

The meeting was attended by four cantonal ministers of education and directors of cultural institutions.

"Aim of the protocol is to deepen and improve cooperation between Turkey and BiH," Minister of Education of the Republic of Turkey Nabi Avci told FENA.

He added that the agreement also includes twinning of several Turkish and Bosnian schools.

Federation Minister of Education and Science told FENA she believes that the protocol deepens the existing cooperation between Turkey and BiH. She assessed this document at the same time commits all participants to help each other in achieving goals defined by it.

Dilberovic announced that signatories of the protocol will start implementing certain activities next year, including the summer school which students from Turkey will attend. Exchange needs to go in both directions, she said, and children from Turkey will learn something more about customs and culture of BiH. She emphasized that Turkish language is studied in seven cantons of BiH in certain schools, and it is still not studied in Canton 10, West Herzegovina and Posavina cantons.

Biden Remembers Tito

Has the US - quite busy these days with multiple crises in the Middle East - intentionally renewed its interest in the Balkans, or are analysts reading too much into the fact that two of the highest officials from Washington found the time to visit two of the region's capitals within a single week?

Vice-president Joe Biden was in Zagreb on November 25, while Secretary of State John Kerry is travelling to Belgrade on December 3. Neither visit is bilateral. Zagreb was hosting the Brdo-Brijuni summit, a regional forum established 2013 gathering leaders of the former Yugoslav republics, together with Albania and Kosovo. Belgrade is the venue for an OSCE ministerial meeting. But it is also true that the US presence on both occasions could have been at some lower level. The Zagreb gathering was dedicated to the two most pressing and interlinked issues of the day, the refugee/migrant crisis and terrorism.

Not Shy of Interfering

The unprecedented wave of people from war zones in Syria and Iraq and of others seeking a better life from as far as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, North Africa included, use the "Balkan route" to reach north Europe. This has strained local institutions and services and destabilized relations between neighbors, as was shown by the recent episode of border-closing and heated verbal exchanges between Croatia and Serbia. Biden, 73, a veteran of American politics and diplomacy, mentioned in Zagreb that he "remembered Tito" (his first visit to Yugoslavia was while its famous president was alive), but his main message was that America is not renewing its interest in the Balkans for the simple reason that "The US has never left".

So, who is right: Biden or the political pundits? Actually, both.

US diplomacy is paying close attention to the Balkans, which Washington started doing (reluctantly at first) during the traumatic disintegration of the former Yugoslavia.

Less enthusiastically than some EU states, the US recognized the secession of Slovenia and Croatia (then helped the latter to clean itself from rebellious Serbs); Bill Clinton's administration entered into Bosnia's bloody conflict and ultimately brokered the 1995 peace in Dayton. Bombing Serbia in 1999 established the ground for Kosovo's independence, which came some years later. Nowadays, US ambassadors are a powerful presence in all regional capitals, not shy of

By Milan Misic
BIRN

interfering in local issues beyond diplomatic rules and protocols. The stated goal of Washington in the Balkans is stability (keeping it "in orbit", is the unstated goal), and so far, it is a success. The region is still fragile but less than it used to be. With Slovenia (from 2004) and Croatia (since 2013) in EU and NATO, the rest of the



Joe Biden

region is on a track leading to Brussels' door. The travelling speed varies. The EU magnet is not as strong as before, but in general, the accession process remains the tool for democratic, economic and institutional modernization of candidate countries. With some obstacles and frustrations, of course. The biggest headache is America's greatest success, Bosnia. Two decades after the Dayton Accords were signed, it is obvious that the price for stopping the war was cementing Bosnia's ethnic divide and establishing a dysfunctional state. Washington is frustrated by its inability to reopen Dayton and reorganize Bosnia, blaming this mostly on the Serb-dominated entity, Republika Srpska. The reality is that, with so many levels of governing bodies in the other entity, the Bosnian-Croat Federation, there are other vested interests that keep things the same. To the south, Macedonia is unable to move forward on its EU and NATO path due to the senseless name dispute with its neighbor, Greece, longtime member of the Western club. It is indeed strange that Washington is powerless as a mediator in this tangle.

Since Albania is already in NATO while

negotiating with the EU, and Montenegro is some steps behind, Washington is paying special attention to the biggest country in the region, Serbia, a country whose people adore Russia but who for all practical matters - travel, study, entertainment, trade and work - go to Western Europe and the US. Serbia vows that it will never impose sanctions against Moscow, but its Prime Minister, Vucic, who organized a military parade for President Vladimir Putin, visited him last month and in November traveled to Beijing, also performed a rare feat this year: officially entering the White House twice. The first time, in June, Vucic talked with Obama's National Security adviser Susan Rice, and the second time, in September, his host was Vice-President Biden. The latter visit was somewhat marred by a protest letter signed by a group of five congressmen alleging corrupt practices by some of Vucic's close associates. But in general, official Washington is happy with the current Serbian leaders. They are a positive surprise: the ex-Radicals are leading the country towards the EU, are improving relations with all neighbors, executing economic reforms and participating in the substantive dialogue with "Pristina" (code word for Kosovo government). That doesn't mean that Serbia is formally reconciled to Kosovo's independence: it is still too big a frog to swallow and a lot of work is still to be done (in Pristina as well).

Diplomatic Routine and Special Attention

Meanwhile, US-Serbia military cooperation is advancing, and the other day another chunk of ice was broken by the visit of Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, who was welcomed with bread and salt, traditional symbols of Serbian hospitality. Although Washington is on the alert for Russian moves to detach Serbia from the EU path, so far, the situation is under control. Because of that, Biden's and Kerry's visits to Zagreb and Belgrade are a matter of both diplomatic routine and special attention at the same time. The Balkans are under a Western umbrella, but the pouring rain outside is getting worse.

And we too remember Tito.

WEATHER OUTLOOK



Sarajevo

Today: Mostly sunny. High 11C.
Tonight: Low 5C.
Wednesday: Mostly sunny. Close to 14C.

Banja Luka

Today: Partly cloudy. High 14C.
Tonight: Low 7C.
Wednesday: Sunny. Close to 15C.

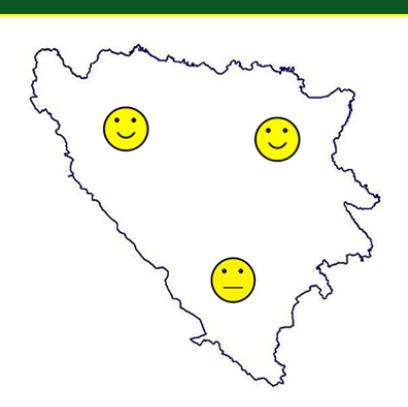
Tuzla

Today: Partly cloudy. High 12C.
Tonight: Low 6C.
Wednesday: Mostly sunny. Close to 14C.

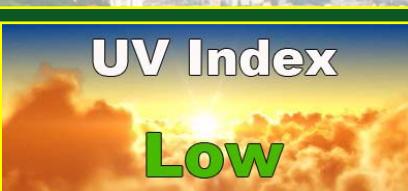
Mostar

Today: Cloudy. High 13C.
Tonight: Low 7C.
Wednesday: Sunny. Close to 15C.

BIO METEO



Air pollution in Sarajevo
MODERATE



GLOBE IN PICTURES



A woman swims in a partially frozen lake at a park in Shenyang, Liaoning province, China



A boy disguised as a member of The Beatles poses for a photo during an attempt to break a Guinness World Record for the largest number of people disguised as The Beatles in Chapultepec Park in Mexico City



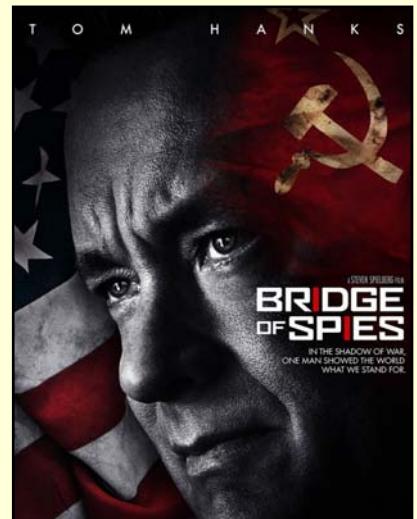
Demonstrators attempt to free a detained activist in Port-au-Prince during a protest against the results given by the Provisional Electoral Council, Haitian President Michel Martelly, and the candidate of the ruling party Jovenel Moise. The CEP confirmed that Haiti's presidential election will go to a runoff on December 27, between Moise and Jude Celestin



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