



# BALKAN WATCH

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## A Review of Current Events

**RUGOVA SENT TO U.S. MILITARY HOSPITAL.** Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova has been sent to the American military-run Landstuhl Medical Center in Germany. A UN official stated that the president was not in a very good condition, having suffered from flu-like symptoms and was very frail. Others are hopeful that the president will quickly regain his health. The Kosovo newspaper *Express* reported fears that the president might be suffering from lung cancer. Another newspaper, *Koha Ditore*, reported that his transport to Germany is a sign that his health is so poor that he will not be able to carry out basic presidential responsibilities. For a week prior to his transfer to Germany, Rugova had operated on a reduced working schedule. Rugova is expected to play a large role in final status talks which Kosovars expect will begin possibly later this year. His spokesman discouraged speculation, preferring that the press wait for a full diagnosis of the president's condition before making any judgment. Rugova is sixty-one years old.

**TWO KOSOVO SERBS MURDERED.** Two Kosovo Serbs were killed and two others wounded in a drive-by shooting in the village of Strpce on August 27. UNMIK chief Soren Jessen-Petersen said he was "shocked and appalled" by the crime and pledged to do everything possible to solve it.

**ALBANIAN ELECTIONS CONCLUDED.** Albanian officials have concluded the election process and the newly-elected Albanian parliament was scheduled to convene. Outgoing Prime Minister Fatos Nano resigned as chairman of the Socialist Party after the final election results were made public, while still taking note of his belief that the elections were still plagued by "violence and manipulation" after a second election was held in several districts which had experienced irregularities in the first round of voting. The OSCE welcomed the conclusion of the elections, with Chairman-in-Office and Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel stating he was looking forward to working with the newly-elected government, which will be led by former Prime Minister Sali Berisha. Berisha outlined his goals, saying that he hoped to cut taxes and streamline the bureaucracy.

**TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF NATO INTERVENTION IN BOSNIA.** Bosnian Muslims are marking the tenth anniversary of the NATO-led bombing campaign which began on August 30, 1995, against Bosnian Serb forces. The operation was the largest air operation in NATO history to that time and also the largest in Europe since World War II. The operation also led to the Dayton Peace Accords, which produced a peace agreement on November 21, 1995. Some survivors of the Bosnian Serb assault on Sarajevo and other

parts of Bosnia commented that NATO should have intervened militarily at an earlier stage of the conflict, which would have spared many lives and much destruction. Political analysts, such as Tanja Topic of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Banja Luka, noted that the operation was an example of how the United States could not leave conflicts to be handled only by Europe. Europe had failed to respond to the Bosnian conflict until the United States decided to take action along with NATO in 1995. The Bosnian War, which lasted from 1992 until 1995, claimed over 200,000 lives and created nearly two million refugees and internally displaced persons.

**SERBIA & MONTENEGRO DEFENSE MINISTRY THREATENS FINANCE MINISTRY.** Serbia & Montenegro's Defense Ministry has threatened to bring a lawsuit against the Serbian Finance Ministry. Finance Minister Mladjan Dinkic reportedly released some secret details about recent army contracts, signed by Defense Minister Prvoslav Davinic, claiming that the Defense Minister was mispending funds. The feud between Dinkic and Davinic is believed to be one part in an ongoing conflict between Serbian and Montenegrin officials not happy with the country's state union treaty. Montenegro has stated it plans to pursue full independence from Serbia. Dinkic believed that Davinic was purchasing army supplies at a level not necessary to Serbia & Montenegro's forces, while straining the country's limited finances. Dinkic cited an order of 74,000 helmets for a military force that only consists of about 28,000 soldiers. Davinic denied that the orders were excessive, stating that the Serbian Prime Minister and the President of Serbia & Montenegro were well-aware of the orders. Nonetheless, the office of Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica denied any knowledge of the orders being placed. Kostunica openly denounced Davinic, asking that details of the orders be made public. Davinic has also stated he would be willing to step-down once Serbian and Montenegrin officials are able to determine who would succeed him in office, a compromise that appears to be unlikely given continuing tensions between officials in Serbia and Montenegro.

**MONTENEGRIN POLICE DEPUTY KILLED.** Slavoljub Scekcic, formerly head of Montenegro's criminal police, was shot and killed by an unknown suspect. Scekcic was murdered outside his home in a suburb of Podgorica. The assailant apparently escaped in a car waiting nearby. Montenegrin officials rounded up approximately twenty suspects for questioning. Officials also noted that the killing took place in a professional manner, appearing to have been carefully planned.

**AL-QAEDA LINK IN BALKANS QUESTIONED.** After the arrest of Abdelmajid Bouchar in June at a train station in Belgrade, officials in Serbia and other countries in the Balkans have wondered whether there may be a strong al-Qaeda cell in the region. Bouchar was arrested as a suspect in the March 2004 Madrid train bombings while traveling southward in Serbia from the northern city of Subotica, located on the border with Hungary. Serbian officials have received a formal letter asking for the extradition of Bouchar to Spain. Serbia & Montenegro Human Rights Minister Rasim Ljajic told reporters that he may be extradited to Spain by mid-October. Bouchar will have the chance to appeal the extradition before a Serbian court.

**CROATIAN CRIME BOSS ARRESTED IN GREECE.** Greek Intelligence officials arrested Croatian criminal Hrvoje Petrac on a ferry bound for Italy. Petrac is believed to have assisted the criminal network supporting indicted Croatian war criminal Ante Gotovina. Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader hailed Petrac's arrest, claiming it was an example of the country's cooperation with the Hague tribunal.

## QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"What I'm saying is that I need full cooperation from Belgrade and Zagreb. Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro, in particular, have been cooperating with the tribunal only thanks to the international pressure. Full cooperation means Mladic, Karadzic and Gotovina are in The Hague."—Hague war crimes tribunal Chief Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte (*AFP*, 9/1/05).

"The United States left it to Europe to resolve this issue and it was not before it became clear that Europe couldn't deal with the war in its backyard that they acted. They gave a lesson to Europe on how to resolve problems."—Political analyst Tanja Topic, commenting on NATO intervention ten years ago in Bosnia (*AFP*, 8/29/05).

"We are here, suffocated with UNMIK over our heads, and Serbia over our necks. UNMIK is now six years here without a deadline. We want a deadline. To become independent from a stronger place you need action, not process."—Albin Kurti, Kosovar political activist (*Christian Science Monitor*, 9/1/05).

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