

UNMIK



United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

PRESS BRIEFING

www.unmikonline.org

UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

Press Briefing Notes

06 February 2008

UNMIK Director / Division of Public Information Alexander Ivanko
KPS Spokesperson Veton Elshani
Captain (Navy) Bertrand Bonneau, Chief KFOR Public Affairs Officer
OSCE Spokesperson Elli Flen
EU Pillar Spokesperson Angela Griep

UNMIK Director / Division of Public Information Alexander Ivanko

Good morning everybody! I have two points for you, in the next 15 minutes the SRSG will meet with the Foreign Minister of Finland and the OSCE Chairman in office Ilkka Kanerva. The SRSG highly appreciates the work of OSCE here in Kosovo, especially the excellent job they did during the 17th November elections. And also our congratulations and I hope everybody will agree with this, to the winners of the Kosovo journalism prizes that were awarded on Monday, especially to Musa Sabedini who was voted best correspondent of the year and to Artan Mustafa who was voted the best journalist of the year. That's all I have.

KPS Spokesperson Veton Elshani

On the 5th of February 2008 at 16:00 the Unit against commercial crimes in Gjilan has arrested an official employee in the Civil Registration Centre in Gjilan. The reason for his apprehension or arrest is because of suspicion that he abused his office by enabling applicants through forged documentation to get ID cards as permanent residents of Kosovo. There are suspicions that for the services provided he took money so he was detained for 72 hours while the police are seeking a second person who is also suspect, the citizen of the Gjilan city also.

Captain (Navy) Bertrand Bonneau, Chief KFOR Public Affairs Office

Good morning, nothing special from KFOR today.

OSCE Spokesperson Elli Flen

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office and Finnish Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva is visiting Kosovo today. He is meeting the SRSG Joachim Rucker right now, and he will later have meetings with Kosovo political leaders. Minister Kanerva will host a press conference at 1600 at the OSCE HQ so I hope to see you all there!

Tomorrow at the Kosovo Centre for Public Safety Education and Development in Vushtrri/Vucitrn, the OSCE Deputy Head of Mission Mr. Markku Laamanen will present a Catalogue of Public Safety Training Locations and Facilities in Kosovo.

In addition, the OSCE will donate a Fire Truck to the Centre. The truck will be used to conduct training in high rise Fire and Rescue operations.

The event starts at 10:00 and you are welcome to attend.

EU Pillar Spokesperson Angela Griep

Good morning, I have no announcements.

UNMIK Director / Division of Public Information Alexander Ivanko:

Any Questions?

Scotsman: A question for UNMIK, slightly technical question, on some of the news behind Kosovo, Alexander is defense and defense related issues a reserved competence of UNMIK or is it just the oversight of KFOR or is it something that is dealt with by the PISG?

Alex: It's one of the issues that is dealt by the KFOR and by UNMIK and for example the Kosovo Protection Corp Coordinator is part of UNMIK.

Follow up: So it is I imagine under the mandate of KFOR and UNMIK its' completely illegal if any person, person's political party or any organization, company or anything within Kosovo to buy, deal or traffic in weapons?

Alex: That is absolutely correct.

RTK: The UNMIK so far does have something more than two thousand workers, locals, which includes Albanians, Serbs and everyone else. New EU Mission will have something more than one thousand, so when UNMIK leave, is there any plan for those two thousand that are going to lose their jobs?

Alex: Well, of course we're working very hard on trying to ensure that all staff members can find a job, there have been some training courses for Local Staff here conducted by UNMIK, there have been some fairs also conducted by UNMIK, but again as in any market economy, often it's up to the individual to try to find new employment.

Zëri: Alex, you have appreciated the work of OSCE, does the same apply for Mr. Guldumann personally?

Alex: Well, as any good manager, the SRSG of course supports all his senior staff, however, the SRSG has spoken on several occasions to Ambassador Guldumann and told him that some of his statements are, let me put it in this way, are slightly out of line with UNMIK Policy.

AP: Elli, would you say that the OSCE staff of the OSCE are now much more motivated that they get like a clear vision of their mission on a monthly basis?

Elli: Pardon, I didn't quite understand the question.

AP: Do you consider the OSCE staff being more motivated that they need to kind of revise their mission on a monthly basis?

Elli: Well, we don't revise the Mission on a monthly basis, we have our mandate automatically extended by the end of every month if in case no member state does not object to that in writing, of course, it's no point in denying that there are voices talking against our Mission and that might of course worry people of what is going to happen to their job place but I can speak as a Manager of a Press Office, I can see only very high motivation there and they are working very hard. And I have no problems with my motivation, so speaking for myself I still feel that important role in Kosovo and we have a lot of work to do and we are here to do some good, and that we want to continue with.

Beta: Has Finnish Minister Mr. Kanerva brought some news from Belgrade considering the extension of the Mission since obviously some of the talking points with Belgrade officials was the opposition of the Serbian Government to the extension of OSCE Mission in Kosovo?

Elli: Minister Kanerva is at the moment meeting, well he is probably just finished the meeting at the OSCE HQ and (not readable) the SRSG, I suggest that you come at the Press Conference at 1600 hrs because then you will have the chance to ask him directly about what he, about what the messages in Belgrade were. I can only rely on what I read in media and I find it very very positive what I have read in the news, but 1600 hrs Minister Kanerva will be available for your questions and you are welcomed there.

Reuters: Alex, how is UNMIK precisely preparing for the possibility of declaration of independence and its response to that declaration? And secondly, has the SRSG asked Mr. Guldiman's dismissal?

Alex: No to second part. As we have said on numerous occasions, this is not an UNMIK issue as such. This is an issue that if it happens, when it happens not if it happens, we will ask for instructions from the Secretary General, and then based on those instructions we will either make or not make statements.

Reuters: Would it not be prudent to already ask for advice from the Secretary General with the promise of the declaration possibly within days?

Alex: I can tell you that there are several meetings happening in New York which will probably define UN policy on Kosovo and as soon as we have something more, I will give it to you, but that is all I have for the time being.

Zëri: Elli, let me put it this way: Has Mr. Guldiman's countdown already started?

Elli: No.

Glas Juga: Is it correct that the OSCE management has issued an order to its personnel that they should be cautious on the day of the declaration of independence, since there will be shooting, and secondly, why are the officials of the international community only warning their personnel and not the citizens of Kosovo?

Elli: First of all, I think that you are referring to the e-mail that was sent out to all OSCE staff, and I repeat, it was sent to each and everyone working in the OSCE Mission, no division between internationals and locally employed. It was to all OSCE staff, it was not an order, it was just a note saying that because publicly Kosovo leaders have said that there will be a declaration of independence within a foreseeable future, we gave some advice on how to act on this day. We did not warn for any shooting, we warned that there might occur some happy shooting and that is a completely different issue. And we also told people that if the declaration of independence comes on a working day, everyone will have a day off. Those who wish to celebrate can do that, and others can just do whatever they want. It wasn't an order, it was more a common sense note to tell people what will happen. Does that satisfy you?

Kosova Sot: Alex, did you send any kind of same e-mails to your staff, UNMIK staff?

Alex: No.

Kosova Sot: Will you be part of celebrations?

Elli: I represent the OSCE, which is a status neutral organization, so I don't have a stand on the status issue, so therefore I will not be part of these celebrations either.

Kosova Sot: What about you personally?

Elli: No.

Alex: I think it is an individual matter; it is up to individuals to decide what they do on that day.

RTK: We see some slight new measures of security in front of UNMIK building, did the level of security in Kosovo change, according to KFOR, or to KPS? Did the level change?

Alex: Ours didn't.

Veton: Artan, you are aware of the fact that we have carried out operational plan and we have said what are we prepared for, but there is no increase of the level of awareness. Nothing extraordinary.

Captain Bonneau: Same for KFOR, no increasing of measures.

Scotsman: Does KFOR know of the existence of any parallel security structures in the north of Kosovo, north of the river Ibar, and if it does, what is it doing to control, contain, eradicate, disburse or legitimize them?

Captain Bonneau: As you know, KFOR is the only legal security organization, with of course UNMIK Police and KPS here in Kosovo. We don't have any information about such parallel structures, and if this structure would occur, the existence would be confirmed, of course we would (inaudible)

Scotsman: When you say we have no knowledge of any parallel security structures in north of Kosovo, what has changed KFOR's knowledge on the north of Kosovo since, say 12 June 1999?

Captain Bonneau: What has changed, first as I already said here in this place, since 1999, since the arrival of KFOR here, we have tried do the best we can in order to ensure the safe and secure environment as you know, Kosovo wide and to consider Kosovo and we are still considering Kosovo as a multi-ethnic region, and it remains our task, our mission, and we are monitoring the situation not only in north but Kosovo wide, to ensure this multiethnic aspect of Kosovo.

Scotsman: So just to reassure me as a drop in visitor, the world's most powerful military alliance is perfectly sure and perfectly happy that there is no parallel security structures of any nation north of river Ibar?

Captain Bonneau: I think this question is not to be directed only to KFOR, because...

Scotsman: Yes, it is.

Captain Bonneau: No, for the security issue, the answer is no.

Scotsman: Good.

Kosova Press: A question for KFOR. You have said that it has changed for the better, but can you say that for the Albanians there? Most of the Albanians moved while you

were present in the northern part of Mitrovica. And for UNMIK, what is UNMIK doing in relation to the establishment of the Serbian Office in northern Mitrovica, you have said that you will provide us with information, do you at least have information what is that office doing?

Captain Bonneau: One more time, the KFOR Mission is not dedicated to a part of Kosovo, it is Kosovo wide. You are right to say that we have some movement of population in Mitrovica north, but we also have movement of population from the south to the north. As I said our mission is to try to ensure safe and secure environment, and to ensure the multi-ethnic aspect of Kosovo. We are monitoring the situation, we are trying to encourage people to live together on a daily bases.

Alex: To be very general, let me say that there were several demarches by UNMIK, and by Contact Group members to Belgrade regarding some of the activities of the Serbian Government here in Kosovo. These activities also concern the office in north Mitrovica and we will continue dealing with this problem through diplomatic channels. That is what we are doing. I have nothing more to add to that.

Beta: A question for Mr. Bonneau, does KFOR have some instructions how it should behave in case that on the day of declaration of independence the Serbs do the same and proclaim their independence in relation to Kosovo? What would KFOR then do and how would it react?

Captain Bonneau: If such event happens, KFOR would react in the way it reacts every day, and we don't have a special measure to one community, we would react the same way to both communities. That is all, we are here, our mission is to secure them on that day like every day, of course being more cautious if this occurs on that day because of any kind of provocation, but we are confident of the good will of all inhabitants of Kosovo to live in a peaceful environment.

TV Most: Question for KFOR: Is it correct that representatives of KFOR have ten days ago visited many returnee villages in Kosovo, meaning Talenovac, Srpski Babush and Babljak so as to introduce the returnees with the activities that KFOR will undertake in case of declaration of independence, meaning to organize their evacuation and they have asked from the returnees to agree to such evacuation in such a case? Is this correct, I know that this is correct but are you informed about this?

Captain Bonneau: No this is not correct, there is no plan for evacuation of any kind of inhabitants in Kosovo in case declaration of independence.

AP: Question for the OSCE again: The chairman of the OSCE has reportedly told Finish public broadcaster YLE, that he supports Kosovo's independence. In what capacity was he speaking and how does that effect you status-neutral position of the Mission?

Elli: Minister Kanarva is also the Foreign Minister of Finland and he represents Finland in those statements. Again, I invite you to the press conference at 16:00 hours today and you can ask Minister Konerva directly.

AP: He is also the Chairman of the OSCE. I mean did he make it clear that he was speaking in the capacity of Foreign Minister, and how does that affect your Mission? You said that you were status-neutral.

Elli: I have not seen the reports that you are referring to now, so I hope that he made it clear that he was speaking as Foreign Minister of Finland. But again please come and ask him yourself today.

Kosova Sot: Veton, does KPS possess a plan? Is there a plan for KPS that on the day of independence to manage festivities that the OSCE is afraid of?

Veton: The KPS undertook all measures that if it comes to the unilateral declaration of independence or coordinated declaration of independence to manage pleasure or dissatisfaction. The KPS has conducted an operational plan for status which was also published in the media, so only the frameworks are the same because the content has changed due to different scenarios that might occur. But we will be throughout the territory of Kosovo and our main purpose is to preserve the lives, property and to preserve public law and order.

Elli: And we are not afraid.

Reuters: Question for both UNMIK and KFOR: when KFOR speaks about population movements from the north to the south and from south to the north, do either KFOR or UNMIK have any indication that these population movements are forced, that Albanians are being intimidated into moving to the south and vice-versa? And does UNMIK have any contingency plans in place for possible refugee movements?

Captain Bonneau: Okay, I was referring to the past when I was talking about population movement of course. And for the time being no, as you know we are encouraging people to stay where they are living currently, this is their country wherever they are, north, south, east, west and I

Scotsman: It is not a country yet.

Captain Bonneau: Yes it is still part of Serbia, it is a province. So we are considering our contingency plan, of course we (inaudible) publicly but of course we have to face different kinds of situations which could be possible and we will be ready to face them.

Alex: Mat, just to add, of course we have contingency planning for any eventuality but I think that we are jumping a gun a bit here, we are not aware of any plans of anybody to move, and we have actually encouraged that people should stay put, should be calm, and we are actually encouraging IDPs to return to Kosovo, not the other way round.

Reuters: If there are Albanians leaving the north, do you have any indication that they are leaving under any threat?

Alex: We have no indications of any movement of populations as of today at least.

Kim Radio: Question for OSCE, where do you have this information that on the day of declaration of independence the mobile phones will not be operating and that the roads will be blocked?

Elli: In the note it says that it is possible. So, we don't predict it in that way. We just think that if there is a declaration of independence, the streets will be full of happy people, who are moving somewhere to celebrate and if we can avoid movement at that time, it is easier for us. But we don't have that exact information. In the note it says it might be possible.

Alex: And a lot of people will be making phone calls I assume. Have you ever tried sending an SMS on New Year's? It is close to impossible, so...

Swedish News Agency TT: As a drop in visitor, I would also like to make it absolutely clear, before you spoke about movements of people, were you referring to something that is happening now or that is something that has happened in the past?

Alex: Actually, the question was referring to now, and our answer referred to now.