



Police bust organised crime group in Sarajevo Main suspect on the run

Police arrested seven persons who are believed to be members of an organised crime group in Sarajevo. Eleven locations were searched, a significant quantity of documents seized, one vehicle and computer confiscated. The operation follows a complex investigation led by the Cantonal Prosecution.

The operation, which started on 8 January, was carried out upon an order by the Sarajevo Canton Prosecution and Court on the grounds of alleged extortion, violent behaviour and threat to the general security.

"There are grounds for six more crime acts but in the interest of the investigation I cannot reveal which ones," says Canton Sarajevo Prosecutor Oleg Cavka.

The Sarajevo Canton preliminary proceedings judge ordered one-month detention for five suspects, while warrants have been issued for another four that are still at large, including the main target, Muhamed Ali Gasi. Gasi is believed to be the leader of the organised crime gang.

Asked to comment the operation and explain why the main suspect was not arrested, Prosecutor Cavka points at the fragmented police system, slow bureaucratic procedures and leakage of information.

Says Cavka: "I have never been dissatisfied with the cooperation between prosecutors and police but after what I have witnessed in the past days I can certainly say that I am not satisfied with the structure of the police in BiH."

Two police forces are involved in the operation and need to be coordinated by the prosecutor.

"In my opinion the Federal Police are slower and more sluggish when it comes to swift actions, but it rarely happens that information gets leaked. If you look at the Cantonal Police I can say that they have better procedures and are therefore much faster but - unfortunately - what often happens is unplanned leakage of information."

Cavka points out that the Federal Police has to comply with complicated bureaucratic procedures ahead of any operation, while their cantonal colleagues can get into action upon a phone call.

"This problem can be solved with the harmonisation of police procedures, which would ensure that all police forces react in the same manner. Had this been the case, it would not have happened that we had arrest warrant for nine persons and four are still at large," said prosecutor Cavka.

The search for the main suspects will continue. ■

By Monja Koluder

Editorial

I am very happy to open this year's first edition of the Mission Magazine and would like to seize this opportunity to wish you all the best for this new phase in EUPM's history.

Under General Coppola's leadership the EU Police Mission has achieved a lot in the last two years. EUPM's targeted approach in the fight against organised crime has yielded concrete results. Your monitoring, mentoring and inspecting activities have made a difference, insofar as they have contributed to bringing BiH law enforcement agencies closer to EU standards.

With the stagnation of reform processes in the country, the whole of last year has been particularly challenging for EUPM and the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina in general. I must say I have been quite preoccupied about the country's future. The country started to lag behind its neighbours and was in danger of becoming more and more isolated. Luckily, the recent initiation of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) has brought Bosnia and Herzegovina back on the European track.

Initiating may sound technical, but it is of great symbolic importance after months of political paralysis. The leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina have shown that they are capable of solving problems and overcoming difficulties.

By virtue of the Action Plan on Police Reform, BiH leaders have reiterated their commitment towards police reform and established a clear roadmap in order to reach that aim in a timely manner. Within the next few months, the EU Police Mission's role in assisting BiH law enforcement agencies in that process will be of crucial importance.

Respect for the rule of law is one of the core principles of the European Union and the establishment of a professional, modern and multi-ethnic police structure is primordial with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina's aspirations towards a European future.

We are in the midst of a series of positive results and we have to use this momentum to help Bosnia and Herzegovina sign a Stabilisation and Association Agreement in the near future. This will be a catalyst for change and a confirmation of the prospects of EU membership.

Since 2003, EUPM has proved successful in assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path towards the European Union. I am confident that you will all continue to show that ESDP missions can make a real difference. ■

By Javier Solana,
European Union High Representative



■ Javier Solana

Reshaped structure for EUPM III

In the next two years, EUPM will work according to the same mandate and the same principle of co-location, with four regional offices, respectively in Banja Luka, Mostar, Sarajevo and Tuzla. However, in order to facilitate the achievement of EUPM's objectives, the structure of the mission has been reshaped.

A transition phase, in which internal responsibilities, positions, means and resources will be reassigned, and a system of success indicators developed, started on 1 January and will last until 29 February 2008.

A reinforced Police Reform Department

Led by a high-ranking police official, the Police Reform Department will:

- a) provide the strategy and develop concepts for the mission on the ongoing reforming process;
- b) provide guidance to implement the police reform process and harmonise the legal framework for all police bodies in BiH;
- c) develop projects to strengthen the existing police structure and increase their operational capacity.

The Department will be structured as follows:

- the *Strategic and Planning Unit* will provide the strategy and plan for the Department on the following: facilitate the implementation of the new Police Reform agreement; reinforce institution-building within the existing police bodies; establish concepts for the implementation of policing projects.

- the *Legal and Regulatory Unit* will provide support for the drafting of agreements and legislation for all phases of the preparation and implementation of police restructuring. In addition, as part of EUPM's police reform efforts, the other main role of the Legal and Regulatory Unit will be to offer support to further harmonise and develop existing police legislation at all levels. The Unit will also monitor the adoption and implementation of police legislation.

- the *Government and Parliament Liaison Unit* will monitor development in Parliaments and Governments regarding police reform issues, lobbying for the relevant legislation. The Unit will strive to strengthen the role of EUPM with BiH elected officials, aiming to address the mission priorities in the most efficient way.

- the *Donor Support Unit* will provide advice on police funding projects, coordinating efforts with major contributors, such as the European Commission, ICITAP and other international actors.

Criminal Justice experts on the field

Within the Anti-Organised Crime Department, the Criminal Justice Interface Unit will be strengthened and will primarily be responsible for enhancing the coordination and cooperation between the police and prosecutorial authorities in coordination with the EUSR. Criminal Justice experts will operate at all levels in the country and be deployed both at the Main Headquarters (3 Advisers) and the Regional Offices (14 Advisers in total).

Redeployed Political and Legal Advisers

The Head and Deputy Head of Mission's offices will be supported by a core team of advisers under the chain of command of the Head of Mission.

Political and Legal Advisers working in EUPM's four regional offices will report to the Chief Advisers of their respective regions.

Once the personnel resources are fully in place, the new structure of the mission will be assessed through a six-monthly review process, and adjusted to fulfill its mandate. From 30 June 2008 onwards, the mission will start transferring competencies from ESDP to Institution-Building instruments. ■

By Ann Vaessen

¹ The Operation Plan (OPLAN) refers to EUPM's final objectives as its desired 'end state': a sustainable police restructuring and reform process; sustainable state-level agencies and, last but not least, a sustainable and effective capability to fight organised crime.



Working group sets basis for seven BiH Police bodies

A Working Group on Police Reform was formed following a meeting of the six leaders of BiH's main political parties in Laktasi in December 2007. This is another major step towards the implementation of police reform and hence towards the signature of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union.

The Working Group will set the legal basis for the establishment of seven Administrative Units within the existing police structure at the state-level. One law will regulate the establishment of four Administrative Units, namely the Directorate for Police Coordination, the Independent Board, the Public Complaints Bureau and the Police Complaints Board, while a second law will regulate the Forensic Institute, the Police Academy and the Police Support Agency.

Since its creation, the Working Group has already held two sessions, and established firm deadlines for the submission of legislation. The members received the first drafts of the laws on 10 January and will hold a new meeting in mid-January to discuss the proposals.

Chaired by BiH Minister of Civil Affairs Sredoje Novic, the Working Group consists of FBiH Premier Nedžad Brankovic, representative at the BiH House of Peoples Hazim Racic, Police Academy Director Taib Spahic, SIPA Deputy Director Sead Lisak, BiH Minister of Justice Barisa Colak, Border Police Director Vinko Dumanic, RS Interior Minister Stanislav Cadjo, RS Police Director Uros Pena and Goran Lujic, on behalf of the Brcko District Mayor.

Their work is observed by the EU Police Mission, the Office of the High Representative and the United States Embassy in BiH.



■ Sredoje Novic, Chairman of the Working Group

"The decision of the working group's technical experts strictly follow the political agreement, led only by the BiH politicians," explains Simonetta Silvestri, the Deputy Head of EUPM's Police Reform Department. "We are not and have never been involved in the police reform political process differently from the previous two commission on Police Restructuring EUPM's role in this process is as international monitor - as for the US Embassy and the OHR - is We do not give our opinions, comments or inputs."

She commended the Chairman's work and expects some considerable results by the end of February. ■

By Maja Milavic

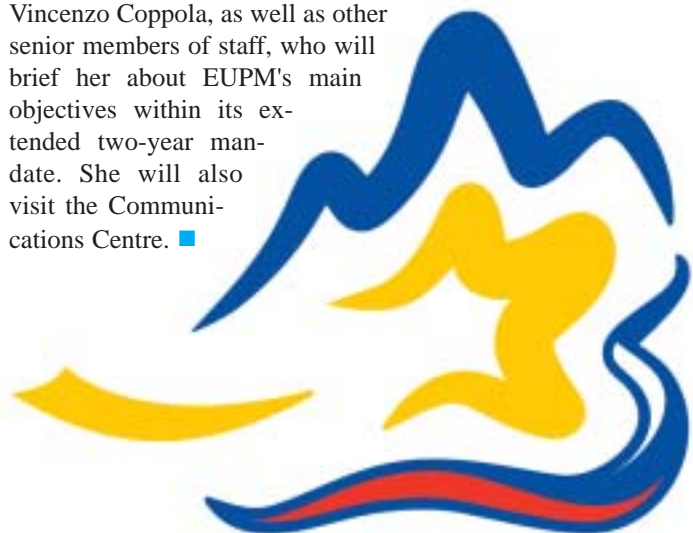
Upcoming events

Slovenian ambassador to visit EUPM

Her Excellency Natasa Vodusek, the Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia in Bosnia and Herzegovina, will pay an official visit to the EUPM on Monday, 14 January, from 2 to 4 p.m.

The Republic of Slovenia took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from Portugal on 1 January. In the next six months, Ambassador Vodusek will hence be the representative of the Council of the European Union in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

She will meet with Head of EUPM Brigadier General Vincenzo Coppola, as well as other senior members of staff, who will brief her about EUPM's main objectives within its extended two-year mandate. She will also visit the Communications Centre. ■



Newsbrief

SIPA has new director

The BiH Council of Ministers appointed Mirko Lujic as SIPA Director on 27 December.

As Nikola Spiric, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, pointed out, Ljubic was appointed "based on professional criteria and in consideration of the appropriate ethnic balance as agreed by the six major political parties." Lujic, a Bosnian Serb, is the former Head of SIPA's Department for Operational Support. The High Representative to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Miroslav Lajcak, welcomed this long-awaited appointment, stressing that "SIPA needs a strong management in order to become an efficient institution capable of fighting crime, including terrorism and organised crime." SIPA's previous Director, Sredoje Novic, left his post in February 2007 to assume his new responsibilities as a Minister of Civil Affairs. Since then, Sead Lisak, the Deputy Head of the Agency, had acted as its Director. ■



Pieter Feith was appointed Acting Civilian Operations Commander of the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC), the new Brussels-based operations centre for ESDP missions, on 1 August 2007. Upon his recent official visit to the EU Police Mission' Headquarters, we asked this Dutch diplomat and expert of the Balkans about the role of the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina... and the European Union as an increasingly important player on the world stage.

Could you tell us about the CPCC, the new structure within the General Secretariat of the Council that you have been heading since August last year?

The EU continues to improve its ESDP structures in order to reinforce its role as a global player. This is of course still 'work in progress' but bear in mind that EUPM was our first ESDP mission ever to be deployed! Since then, we have launched another 15 in only 4 years!! Our structures had not yet been adapted

An expert of the Balkans

Before joining the EU Council Secretariat, Ambassador Feith was working with NATO as a Dutch diplomat. During these years most of his time was consecrated to the Balkans. He has worked for the IFOR Commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina and also with NATO's response to the Kosovo crisis, including the deployment of the KFOR forces in Kosovo in 1999. In addition he was providing advice to the Secretary General and the North Atlantic Council on NATO's actions in the Balkans, in particular the SFOR presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Later on, as the Personal Representative of Secretary General Lord Robertson, he was involved in preventing conflict from breaking out in Southern Serbia in the spring of 2001 by achieving a cease-fire and voluntary disarmament of ethnic Albanian groups which resisted the entry of Yugoslav and Serb security forces in the General Security Zone. Following the same approach, they managed to create the necessary conditions for initiating negotiations on the Ohrid Framework Agreement during the summer of the same year by averting a civil war between the ethnic Albanian armed groups and the government forces of FYROM. ■

Interview: Pieter Feith, Acting Civilian Operations Commander

"We need a 'crime to pr

to this higher demand of more - in particular civilian - missions.

Therefore, the EU Council of Ministers, on 18 June 2007, agreed on a new chain of command for civilian ESDP operations based on the establishment of a Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) within the Council Secretariat. The CPCC is headed by a Civilian Operation commander who, under the political control and strategic direction of the Political and Security Committee and the overall authority of the Secretary-General/High Representative, is responsible for the planning and conduct of civilian ESDP operations. The CPCC

is an Operations Headquarter with a similar chain of command to a military one. Through strategic direction and political control, it aims to improve the effectiveness of EU's actions abroad and to closer liaison with military staff whenever a 'mixed' staff-building capacity is required. Furthermore, it is expected to enhance the support and contacts between the headquarters in Brussels and the field mission.

You recently paid a visit to the EU Police Mission. What were your impressions?

I am very pleased with my trip to BiH! It is always very useful and productive to visit our missions and I hope to be able to return again shortly. My lasting impression is clearly that the EUPM is making an important contribution towards police reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that the mission has made excellent progress under the leadership of Brigadier General Vincenzo Coppola.

Your visit coincided with the initialling of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between the European Union and Bosnia and Herzegovina...

Yes. I was very happy to be in the country at that particular moment in time. Even if the initialling of the SAA may sound like a very technical move, it is of great symbolic importance for BiH, in particular after several months of political difficulties. There is now an agreed Action Plan on police reform and its implementation will be crucial for BiH in the coming months. It is further very encouraging that

the BiH Minister of Security and Deputy Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Tarik Sadovic, accepted the offer of General Coppola to assist in drafting the necessary laws in this regard. The agreement on the Action Plan is a significant step forward that I hope

will bring us closer to our objective of establishing a modern and effective police force in BiH. Police reform is without any doubts a key element to Bosnian citizens' approximation to the EU and I am confident that BiH leaders will continue to be committed to achieve this goal.

EUPM has just entered its 'third season'. You have been actively involved in drafting the Concept for Operations (CONOPS) for 2008 and 2009. What do you regard as EUPM's main challenges in the next two years?

EUPM has, in the last years, done an excellent job under challenging conditions. The mission's main objective will be to continue pursuing its tasks to raise BiH police standards in accordance with international and EU best practices. EUPM will also need to continue to contribute to the police restructuring/reform process in order to allow the country's progress in the SAA process. And, of course, EUPM should continue with its support in the fight against organised crime, especially by developing the capacities of state level agencies (SIPA and Border police). This should then lead to a smooth hand-over of EUPM activities to European Community activities.

We need to develop a combined top-down/bottom-up approach in which we not only advise the leadership but also have a sufficient footprint in the field.

ison' approach"

Back in 2003 EUPM was the first ESDP mission. What main lessons have been learned since then?

First of all, we have now a much better understanding that we have to follow a comprehensive and holistic approach - 'from crime to prison' - if we are to be successful in our civilian ESDP operations. In this respect, the planned ESDP mission in Kosovo will be a Rule of Law mission including not only a strong police presence but other components as well, such as prosecutors, judges and customs officials. Secondly, civilian crisis management has to address the full range of challenges, and I think the EUPM is now rightly doing just that. We have also learned that we need to develop a combined top-down/bottom-up approach in which we not only advise the leadership but also have a sufficient footprint in the field. At the end of the day, it is on the ground that we will have to make a difference. We have understood that we have, in our strengthening mandates, to strike the right balance between proactive monitoring with our local counterparts on the one hand and an ownership process which guarantees the commitment of the host state on the other hand.

What do you consider EUPM's main achievements?

EUPM has brought the policing sector in BiH a long way towards international standards, building upon the International Police Task Force's (IPTF) achievements. It has also significantly strengthened the interaction between the police and the justice sector in BiH. Furthermore, the mission has also dramatically improved the level of efficiency of the BiH police in tackling organised crime, especially through the support to SIPA and the Border Police, in spite of a still highly fragmented police structure. Finally, I would say that my impression is that the EUPM has an excellent reputation in BiH, as well as in the international community, and that the mission has contributed to enhancing the image of the EU in BiH. People trust you!

You have led the Aceh Monitoring Mission in 2005 and 2006. This was the

first ESDP mission in Asia. What did you learn from this experience, both from a personal point of view and with regard to the future of the ESDP?

Indeed, the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) was a particular mission in many ways. It was the first EU-led mission in Asia and the first to be conducted in cooperation with five ASEAN member states. The AMM has proven that the EU can conduct a complicated and successful mission even far from its normal geographic sphere and without doubt there is a lot of experience and lessons to draw from AMM. In every part of the mission, we had jointly composed teams of EU and ASEAN monitors. Over 40 of our Asian monitors were Muslim and many of them spoke the Indonesian language. The ASEAN participation allowed for a regional legitimacy of the mission and they also had a better understanding of the local culture and customs. On the other hand, we Europeans have a larger experience from previous missions and this mutually reinforcing cooperation proved its worth. The objective of AMM was to contribute to a peaceful,

My impression is that the EUPM has an excellent reputation in BiH, as well as in the international community. You have contributed to enhancing the image of the EU in BiH. People trust you!

comprehensive and sustainable solution to the conflict in Aceh. The operative tasks of AMM were to monitor the implementation of various aspects of the peace agreement set out in the

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) on 15 August 2005 in Helsinki, Finland. This included monitoring the decommissioning of GAM armaments, the relocation of Government military and police forces, human rights, amnesty and the reintegration of GAM members, dispute settlement mechanisms and political reforms in Aceh.

What are your wishes for the future of the ESDP?

My wish is that in the future the ESDP will become fully effective in order to be an instrument for peace and stability, together with the United Nations and NATO, in helping people and victims in conflict situations. This is why it was created in the first place and this is what actually matters. ■

By Ann Vaessen



■ Ambassador Pieter Feith with High Representative Dr. Javier Solana

BiH Border Police has 100 new cadets

The Border Police of Bosnia and Herzegovina is currently selecting a new generation of cadets. The 100 newcomers will start a training session at the Border Police Academy in Sarajevo in April.

This year more than 1,700 applicants tried to get a job with the Border Police. A tough selection process has been created to select the best candidates. A career with the Border Police is attractive, yet not easy and full of challenges. Only the toughest can manage.

"Modern human resources management is key for the success of any police organisation as it affects the capabilities of the organisation to fight against organised crime," says Andrea Ebert, EUPM's Human Resources and Internal Control Adviser with the Border Police. *"It is therefore important to really invest in human resources and to provide police officers with good professional training."*

With 25 percent of border police officers having to work far away from home, work at the border is sometimes hard to cope with. Some of them travel up to 500 km to their duty stations, which mean that they have to leave their family for longer periods of time.

This is not only affecting the motivation and moral of the people concerned, it also has serious implications on the organisational structure and causes staffing problems.

"The Border Police lack about 480 officers," says Vinko Dumančić, Director of the BiH Border Police BiH. Some officers have left the service to find better jobs with more convenient working conditions.

In order to rectify the situation the Border Police decided to address its staffing problems with EUPM's assistance. A special



■ Applicants before the running test

working group was established in June and came up with a strategy. New measures and policies were developed and concrete activities are now being implemented in order to improve the working conditions, thereby increasing the motivation and moral of Border Police officers. The new measures should have a positive impact on the operational results.

"Police officers need to be trained constantly and the border control system needs to be organised in accordance with European standards," says Tarik Sadovic, BiH Minister of Security.

And Ebert adds: *"I agree. The basic training of the cadets can only be a starting point. Criminals' modus operandi changes. They adapt quickly and are very flexible and creative when it comes to organising their 'businesses'. Police officers need to keep up and must be willing to constantly learn and develop new skills. This is certainly challenging but also makes the job very interesting."* ■

By Asim Sahinpasic

Did You Know?

The concept of the BiH Border Police is based on Germany's Federal Police, which has an excellent reputation worldwide. Besides EUPM's assistance, the German government provided a lot of logistical support, equipment and training to the Border Police in BiH. They donated cars, boats, surveillance equipment and other useful tools. They also provided regular training sessions for the management staff, Mobile Support and Control Units (MSCU), bomb squads and helmets. ■

Selection criteria

Candidates must have BiH citizenship, a secondary school diploma, cannot be older than 35 and must be in a good physical and mental condition. They should also possess a valid driving license and be good swimmers. A broad general knowledge, foreign language skills and computer literacy are also required.

Applicants have to go through a demanding fitness and swimming test, a general knowledge exam and a final interview. Medical check-ups and drug tests complete the selection procedure. Once selected, SIPA screens the candidates.

The process lasts for approximately six months and takes place in a fair and transparent way. ■

Newsbrief

Police solve child abduction case in one day



The BiH police solved the abduction case of a three-month-old Roma baby from the Butmir settlement in Sarajevo in just one day.

Immediately after the child's disappearance was reported to the police, on 5 January, SIPA launched a search operation in cooperation with the police forces of the RS and Canton Sarajevo.

"All of us who are parents will recognise the emotions that the abduction of a child will instigate within us as human beings," says Brian Donley, EUPM's Chief Adviser to SIPA. *"At the onset of this operation SIPA took the lead, but would have not been successful without the support and cooperation of the other law enforcement agencies involved. But above all we have a child reunited with its mother which is a satisfactory conclusion to a difficult situation in the shortest possible time available."*

The child was safely brought back to its parents. As to the alleged perpetrator, a 42-year-old woman from Banja Luka, she is suspected of international human trafficking and will be kept in custody for a month. ■

Coppola: BiH criminal justice system has to be improved without delay

Over 100 police and judicial professionals from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina met in Sarajevo on 13 and 14 December to enhance cooperation within the BiH criminal justice sector in the fight against organised crime and corruption.

Branko Peric, President of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of BiH, said that the results achieved in the fight against organised crime and corruption gives no reason for pride. *"We have only 5 percent of economic crime and corruption-related cases we have registered in 2007? We have no big cases resolved. And, when cases come to the court, some of them end with acquittals and many others get annulled. Citizens must be wondering what we are doing."*

A new philosophy of work and a different interpretation of the Criminal Procedure Code are therefore needed. *"We need better planning, clear strategies, formalised relationships and good internal procedures."*

Obstacles identified, solutions proposed

Participants agreed that the successful resolution of organised crime cases requires mechanisms that will enable faster, more efficient and more direct information exchanges between investigating bodies.

"Police officials must perceive prosecutors' cases as their own and be dedicated to their successful resolution and vice versa," Peric went on. *"Prosecutors and police must be a winning team."*

Furthermore, it was suggested that the existing Criminal Procedure Codes be har-

monised. The reason is two-fold: to eradicate inconsistencies in processing organised crime cases in different parts of the country on the one hand, and to avoid any overlapping of competencies on the other.

Currently, police and prosecutors experience problems processing so-called 'inter-entity crime cases'. The Republika Srpska legislation, for instance, demands more elements for a crime to be treated as a case of organised crime. Thus, the very same crime act can have elements of organised crime in the Federation, but not in the Republika Srpska or the Brcko District.

"One of the suggestions was also that the Federation's Prosecutor Office establishes a specialised department to be in charge of the most severe forms of organised crime," said Valerie Wahl, EUPM's Criminal Justice Interface Unit Coordinator.

As far as the fight against corruption is concerned, participants expressed readiness to contribute to the drafting of the *State Law on Anti-Corruption* with a view to establish an efficient and independent state-level Anti-Corruption Agency. This would position the fight against corruption on the national agenda and thus proclaim national interest.

"The Ministry of Security has therefore been urged to forward a draft Law to all law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices of BiH for review," Wahl explained goes on.

Furthermore, it was suggested that all law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices adopt internal anti-corruption strategies and implementation plans so as to curb corruption inside the police and subsequent-

ly improve their reputation and credibility.

"Once adopted, these strategies will set a framework for the establishment of anti-corruption departments within the respective institutions," Wahl explains.

Recommendations must be implemented

"Recommendations made by professionals based on their every day work aim at intensifying the fight against organised crime and at rooting out corruption. Ultimately, this will lead to a better-functioning criminal justice system," said Brigadier General Vincenzo Coppola, Head of the EU Police Mission. *"I therefore expect the local authorities to implement them without delay."*

Within the next two years, the EUPM will continue to focus on the improvement of police-prosecutors relations. In addition, the Mission will aim at bringing the entire justice sector, courts in particular, aboard. It is the Mission's view that the organisation of such conferences should be institutionalised and it stands ready to assist the process.

This was the third conference organised upon the initiative of the EU Police Mission in order to establish better coordination mechanisms between the police and prosecutors in the fight against organised crime. The conference was organised in conjunction with the EU Special Representative, the BiH Prosecutor's Office, the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council and the State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA). ■

By Monja Koluder

Newsbrief

EUPM soon to have 'Protocol Room'

EUPM will soon have its own 'Protocol Room' for meetings, conferences, press conferences, as well as VTC conferences. It should be inaugurated at the end of January.

Conveniently located near the Headquarters' main entrance, the room will be branded with a large roll-up banner with the EUPM logo and fitted with special equipment, such as projection- and PA systems, special lights for press conferences and outlets for press equipment.

The main difference between the new 'Protocol Room' and the other conference rooms in the building is that this room will be used by EUPM exclusively. ■



Time to hit the slopes

With Sarajevo and most other cities in BiH smothered in smog and fog, the perfect week-end lies on the sunny slopes of the surrounding mountains.

While those who don't ski can stretch their legs in light hiking tours, enjoying the fresh air, the view and the dazzling whiteness (while wearing sunglasses and sunscreen, of course!), those who are privy to the little wooden planks can hit the slopes of more or less dizzying quality, or test their own patience in the more rewarding experience of teaching their child how to do a perfect snowplough turn.

You just need to choose the right destination for your preferred activity, and fortunately, those are plentiful in Bosnia!

Jahorina

Known as "White beauty", Jahorina has always been the favourite skiing destination for Sarajevans. It's the largest skiing area in the country, and its 20 kilometres of slopes serviced by eight ski-lifts can satisfy any skier and snowboarder, beginner to expert. The opportunities for those who shy away from skiing are abundant also - from hiking and snow-shoeing, to going for a ride on snowmobiles, or just enjoying the sunlight on the sun deck with a cup of hot chocolate in your hand. Ski schools offer week-end programmes for individuals, families, or children, and ski rentals are available at the hotels and by the slopes at an average of 25KM a day. Daily ski-lift pass costs 30KM, half-day ticket 23KM and night skiing 15KM. And after a day of skiing or hiking, you can relax with a swim, sauna, or a massage in one of the Jahorina hotels. A slight warning for hikers, though: due to its topography, it is easy to get lost in Jahorina during the winter, so do not wander away from the set paths without a guide.



Bjelasnica

For people here, Bjelasnica was always a place to go to show off your skiing expertise. With the steepest, most difficult slope of all BiH mountains - racing from 2,000 metres at the top to 1,200 meters at the base in a few minutes - it is quite a challenge and a thrill for an expert skier or snowboarder. Of course, the second leg of the run is easier and fit for intermediate skiers who do not mind being a bit less cool. And it is not all about the steepest slope, as within its 14 kilometres of slopes and five lifts, Bjelasnica also offers much for beginner and recreational skiers, families, and children, and it does not fail to satisfy those who prefer to trek, snowshoe, or just sit in the sun, taking in the beauty and sounds of the mountain with their morning coffee. Ski rentals and ski schools for all levels are available throughout the season, night skiing is organised on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Daily ski-lift pass costs 30KM, half-day ticket 24KM, night skiing 15KM. One ticket for the "baby" lift is 1KM, daily 10KM.



Igman

Igman leans on the north face of Bjelasnica, offering good but smaller slopes, and soft hills perfect for beginners and children. It

is ideal for families and even has horse-drawn carriage that rides through the snow. Ski rentals are available for as little as 12KM per day and the ski-lift passes are the same price as on Bjelasnica. Ravna Vala valley hosts a long cross-country route that was also used during the Olympics. Although the trails are not in the pre-war condition, they are more than suitable for terrific cross-country skiing, hiking and walking.



Vlasic

Sarajevo is not the only ski centre in BiH - Vlasic Mountain in Central Bosnia has come full swing in the past few years, becoming a great destination for all those who thrive on mountain tourism. With 14 kilometres of slopes of beginner and intermediate level and four ski lifts, Vlasic is a new playground for skiers and snowboarders, while its dense pine forests and soft, rolling hills on the high plateau make for a perfect walking and hiking terrain, preferably with a guide if you plan on exploring a little. Ski rental is available at the Babanovac Ski Centre, whereas hotel Pahuljica offers rental of snow mobiles and snow scooters. Daily ski-lift pass costs 22KM, half-day ticket 16KM, night skiing 12KM. Baby lift is also available for 12KM for the daily pass, and 8KM for the half-day pass. If you decide to take a bit longer a drive and visit Vlasic for some fresh air, don't leave the mountain without buying some Vlasic cheese (Vlasicki sir), a traditionally prepared, organic, white, salty delicacy. The road that goes from Travnik to Vlasic is lined with shops selling it.



For all Bosnian mountains, early mornings are the recommended time to get to the slopes as it gets quite crowded quickly during the week-end. At all mentioned ski centres you will find a full range of facilities including the medical centre with mountain rescue teams, information centres, restaurants and cafés, and skiing instruction in English. ■

By Sanela Osmanovic



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