



THIS WEEK...

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U.S. Congress Endorses Croatia's Speedy Accession into NATO



Prime Minister Ivo Sanader (left) with Rep. Elton Gallegly during his visit to the U.S. in July 2005. Congressman Gallegly was the principal initiator of 'HR 529', calling for Croatia's accession into NATO as soon as possible. [Photo: Embassy of the Republic of Croatia] (Story on Page 2, full text on page 7)

Meeting Rončević - Rumsfeld



Croatian Minister of Defense Berislav Rončević (left) with the U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld [Photo: Jamie Bowman] (Page 3)

Did You Know?

This week we bring you some interesting facts about Croatia that may surprise you. For example, did you know why the Patriots won three Super Bowls in the past four years? Of course, it is because Head Coach Bill Belichick has Croatian roots, a country which is also the home of world explorer Marco Polo, inventor of the ball-point pen Slavoljub Penkala, creator of the modern torpedo, Ivan Lupis, and have to Plavac Mali - a grape varietal - which confirms the Croatian ancestry of the California zinfandel.

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2006 World Cup in Germany

Group F:
Brazil, **Croatia**, Australia, Japan

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Presidents Mesić, Marović for Keeping Visa-Free Regime



President Mesić (right) with President of Serbia and Montenegro Svetozar Marović during his visit to Zagreb. [Photo: Večernji list]

ZAGREB, Croatia, Dec. 13 – President of Serbia and Montenegro, Svetozar Marović, came on a working visit to Zagreb where he met Croatian President Stjepan Mesić. Both expressed interest in maintaining the visa-free border regime into 2006. President Mesić said that the aim of President Marović's working visit was to work on consolidating on bilateral relations. "Of course we have to aspire to further building our relations; of course we are aware of issues which still exist. However, I am pleased to confirm the firm will and commitment of both sides to go on," said Mesić. Mesić highlighted that on the road to Europe, which is our desire and destiny, we have to cooperate and support each other, adding Croatia did not want to run away from the region yet wanted to be in a region which was European in every sense.

"Croatia – Towards an Economy of Knowledge"



Prime Minister Sanader (center) with Iвица Mudrinić, CEO of HT (right) and Minister Jadranka Kosor at the conference on knowledge-based economy in Zagreb. [Photo: www.htnet.hr]

ZAGREB, Croatia, Dec. 12 – Experts from Ireland, Slovakia, Finland, the World Bank and the EU gathered at the Croatian-sponsored conference "**Croatia – Towards an Economy of Knowledge.**" The goal was to use international know-how to formulate a development strategy for the country based on **knowledge** and **education**. It would not be good to observe the economy of knowledge without considering the social dimension of such a development model as well", Croatian President Stjepan Mesić said at the conference. He also mentioned that a national development plan should be adopted by March next year and its purpose should be an increase in employment

and growth rate. "The economy based on knowledge offers the best chance of responding to the new global environment, adding that the introduction of an economy of knowledge is expected to give additional impetus with regard to EU entry", Prime Minister Sanader said. The goal of the conference was to use international know-how to formulate a development strategy for the country based on **knowledge** and **education**.



The world's largest economies are based on knowledge and education – Croatia recognizes the importance of those aspects. [Photo: www.htnet.hr]

For the Government's statement on the conference, go to: <http://www.vlada.hr/default.asp?gl=200512120000015>

U.S. House of Representatives Recommends Croatia's Entry into NATO at Earliest Possible Date



Croatia received congressional support for NATO membership, one of its main foreign policy goals. [Photo: Washington Post]

WASHINGTON, D.C., Dec 15 - The U.S. House of Representatives adopted a resolution recommending Croatia's admission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as soon as possible. The resolution 'H. Res. 529' acknowledges the progress Croatia has made in meeting political, economic, military and other requirements for NATO membership, and recommends the country's integration with NATO. The text of the resolution, which was unanimously adopted in the House of Representatives, reads that "with complete satisfaction of NATO guidelines and criteria for membership, Croatia should be invited to be a full member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization at the earliest possible date". Croatia has made significant progress since its independence in strengthening its democratic institutions and respect for human rights and the rule of law, and is commended for its contribution in the fight against

global terrorism as well as for its constructive participation in the U.S.-Adriatic Charter. Croatia is seen as a reliable partner of the United States actively contributing to the stabilization of southeastern Europe. The document also praises Croatia's government for cooperation with the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague, recalling that in October the European Union decided to open accession negotiations with Croatia based on the assessment that Croatia met the political and economic criteria for candidacy in the EU, including that Croatia was fully cooperating with the tribunal. The resolution assesses that Croatia can give a significant contribution to NATO and that it has already sent its contingent to Afghanistan "as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in support of the war against terrorism". The document goes on to say that Croatia "is participating in the Proliferation Security Initiative with like-minded nations across the world to prevent the flow of weapons of mass destruction, missile systems, and related material".

Meeting Rončević – Rumsfeld Successful



Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld offered his Croatian counterpart, Minister Berislav Rončević, support for Croatia's NATO membership. [Photo: Jamie Bowman]

WASHINGTON, D.C., Dec. 6 – During his visit to Washington Croatian Minister of Defense Berislav Rončević met U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld praised Croatia for the progress it had made in defense reforms on its path to NATO and thanked Croatia for a planned increase in its military contribution to the NATO-led peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan. The talks also focused on the continuation of defence cooperation between Croatia and the U.S., which Rončević said was Croatia's most important bilateral partner in the defense, and on Croatia's desire to join NATO. Rončević also said that Croatia would triple its troop contingent in Afghanistan in 2006.

Warren Miller Presents a Report on the Jewish Heritage Sites in Croatia

WASHINGTON, D.C. , Dec. 13 - Croatian Ambassador in the U.S., Neven Jurica met with Warren Miller on Tuesday, Dec. 13, 2005. On that occasion, Warren Miller presented Ambassador Jurica with "Preliminary Report - Jewish Heritage Sites in Croatia". This report outlines the basic information about Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, and Jewish monuments located in the Republic of Croatia. Warren Miller was pleased to note that the governments of

the United States and Croatia signed a bilateral Agreement on the Protection and Preservation of Certain Cultural Properties earlier this year.



Croatian Ambassador Neven Jurica (left) with Warren Miller, the Chairman of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad. [Photo: Embassy of the Republic of Croatia]

Note: Warren Miller is the Chairman of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad. Recently, on Oct. 7, 2006 Prime Minister Ivo Sanader awarded Warren Miller with the "Order of the Morning Star" with the Marko Marulić Image, award that was bestowed by the Croatian President Stjepan Mesić, for Chairman Miller's outstanding contribution in culture. Warren Miller described the medal as the expression of respect for the millions who disappeared in the Holocaust, to those who managed to survive it as well as those who fought against the Holocaust. In this context, he praised Croatia and its leaders for the efforts they had invested in promoting cultural pluralism and remembrance of the Holocaust, and voiced hope that Croatia would continue to be an important transatlantic ally of the U.S.

Croatian Government Allocates 26.2 Million Kuna for Bosnian Croats

ZAGREB, Croatia, Dec. 14 – The Croatian government decided to allocate 26.2 million Kuna for education, culture, science and health programs from Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Prime Minister Sanader reiterated Croatia would do everything to help Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina preserve their status as an equal, constituent and sovereign people in that country. Saying that Bosnia and Herzegovina is conducting talks about amendments to its Constitution, Sanader said Croatia would take part in those activities and would do all it could to help Croats preserve the status of an equal people. Sanader said under the Constitution and the Dayton Agreement Croatia was entitled to provide for Croats in the neighboring country, respecting Bosnia's autonomy and sovereignty.

IMF Supports Government Strategy for 2006

ZAGREB, Croatia, Dec. 15 – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission fully agreed with the Croatian government and the National Bank (HNB) regarding economic estimates and possible risks, and supports the

Government strategy for 2006, stated Head of the IMF mission in Croatia Dimitri Demekas at a press conference held following a ten-day visit of an IMF delegation to Croatia. He hailed the “ambitious and realistic objectives regarding the State budget and the deficit, curtailment of running up debts abroad and structural reforms.” The Mission is leaving Croatia with a very strong impression that the Government and HNB have control over the economy, and that they are fully concentrated on it, added Demekas. This was the second inspection of the Stand-by Arrangement with Croatia. Considering the arrangement expires in March 2006, the mission will give its recommendations for the possible extension of the arrangement to the later part of next year, Demekas concluded.



Head of the IMF mission in Croatia, Dimitri Demekas, praised the Croatian government’s economic strategy for 2006. [Photo: www.poslovni.hr]

More about the IMF on Croatia please see: <http://www.imf.org/external/country/HRV/rr/index.htm>

Sixth Anniversary of the First Croatian President’s Death

ZAGREB, Croatia, Dec. 10, 2005 – A commemoration attended by top state and Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) officials was held in Zagreb on the sixth anniversary of the death of HDZ founder and first Croatian President Franjo Tuđman. The current HDZ leader, Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, said the contribution of Tuđman and Croatian veterans to the independence and defence of Croatia must not be forgotten. “I am not calling on you to live in the past, but to learn from it so that we can avoid the traps which will certainly be put on Croatia’s path also in the future,” he said. “Our history was difficult, but we always knew how to come out of a difficult situation and preserve Croatia’s statehood thanks to the brave Croatian sons who led the Croatian people through history, and one of the greatest was Franjo Tuđman for everything he did for Croatia and the Croatian people and our future,” Sanader said. The Prime Minister called for consensus on Tuđman’s role in the creation of Croatia, in its defence from Greater Serbian aggression, and in the country’s reconstruction, because he ran the show and knew what had to be done, which the Prime Minister Sanader underlined was undeniable. “As time goes by, criticisms of Tuđman fade away and his achievement and legacy stay.”



“The legacy of Franjo Tuđman will be written in golden letters in the history of Croatia,” said Prime Minister Sanader on the sixth anniversary of the first President of Croatia, Franjo Tuđman. [Photo: www.iskon.hr]

Note: Franjo Tuđman established the HDZ in 1989 and became its first president. After the first democratic, multiparty elections in 1990 he was elected Croatian President. He was directly elected Head of State in 1992 and 1997. Under his rule, Croatia was internationally recognized, became a member of the United Nations, and was defended from Greater Serbian aggression and occupation during the 1991-95 Homeland War. Tuđman died on Dec. 11, 1999.

Direct Flights Between U.S. and Croatia Expected Soon



Main terminal building of the Zagreb-Pleso Airport. Soon, the airport is expected to accommodate direct flights from the U.S. [Photo: www.zagreb-airport.hr]

WASHINGTON, D.C., Dec. 14 - The U.S. and Croatia will be connected by direct flights starting in May 2006, once ongoing negotiations with U.S.-based North American Airlines are completed. New York (JFK) and Zagreb (Pleso) will most likely be connected bi-weekly, starting May 20. We will keep you updated on this development in the coming months, as more information becomes available.

2006 World Cup in Germany

LEIPZIG, Germany, Dec. 9 – The final draw for the 2006 FIFA World Cup took place on Dec. 9 in Leipzig. Croatia is drawn into Group F with Brazil, Australia and Japan.



We hope that the captain of the Croatian national soccer team, Niko Kovač, will have reason to celebrate in the 2006 World Cup in Germany. [Photo: www.iskon.hr]

Overview: Croatia reached their third successive FIFA World Cup finals by finishing top of European qualifying Group 8, undefeated and with seven wins recorded in ten matches. Despite only gaining independence and joining FIFA the following year, the Croatians already have considerable pedigree in the international arena. As teenagers Zvonimir Boban, Robert Prosinečki, Davor Šuker, Robert Jarni and Igor Štimac played their part in Yugoslavia's capture of the FIFA World Youth Championship in 1987, and this talented generation of players was in their prime eleven years later when Croatia played at their first FIFA World Cup finals in France. The result was a thrilling run to the semi-finals, which included a 3-0 quarter-final victory over Germany before France beat Miroslav Blazević's side in the semi-finals. There was some consolation with a 2-1 win against the Netherlands in the play-off for third place, where Šuker struck his seventh goal of the finals to secure the Golden Shoe. Four years later, the Croatians' second finals adventure was not so successful, apart from a victory against Italy little else went right in Korea/Japan 2002 where Mirko Jozić's side lost to Mexico and Ecuador and went home early. Under Jozić's successor, Otto Barić, Croatia reached the UEFA EURO 2004 finals but again exited at the group stage. Hence the appointment of Zlatko Kranjčar, whose son Niko is one of the team's rising stars. Introduced amid some skepticism, Kranjčar Jr underlined his promise with a goal and an assist in the 3-1 win in

Bulgaria in June 2005 and provides the flair in an otherwise functional three-man central midfield. Elsewhere, the likes of Igor Tudor and brothers Niko and Robert Kovač bring experience while wing-backs Darijo Srna – who scored four goals in qualifying – and Marko Babić provide a genuine attacking threat, delivering a quality service to star striker Dado Pršo, Croatia's five-goal top scorer in their Group 8 campaign.

Game schedule:

June 13, 2006 – Berlin: Brazil vs. **Croatia**

June 18, 2006 – Nuremberg: Japan vs. **Croatia**

June 22, 2006 – Stuttgart: **Croatia** vs. Australia

For the complete information about 2006 World Cup in Germany, please visit:

<http://fifaworldcup.yahoo.com/06/en/w/team/overview.html?team=cro>

News in Brief...

- By implementing the EUR 1.5 million CARDS 2002 project on the development of internal financial control in the public sector and internal audits, Croatia has made significant progress in the establishment of a responsible, efficient and transparent state administration, which effectively manages public budgetary funds.
- The European Commission has already granted the first direct financial support to the Croatian economy, a sum of EUR 51 million, under the ISPA program. Almost half of these funds will be going to the Karlovac County for investment in environmentally friendly water treatment processes. The second part of the funding will go towards the modernization of the railroads between Vinkovci and Tovarnik in Slavonia.
- The German government will give Croatia EUR 2 million for bilateral technical assistance in 2005, according to an agreement signed in Zagreb on Dec. 14, 2005. The money is intended for projects regarding a vocational education system, the integrated management of the coastal area, and a cadastral system.
- Croatia's best woman skier and three-time Olympic winner Janica Kostelić has been named the best female athlete of 2005 by the French Academy of Sports.



Female athlete of 2005 by the French Academy of Sports: Janica Kostelic. [Photo: www.iskon.hr]

Did You Know?

- The fist tie was worn by Croatian soldiers. Croatian soldiers serving in the 17th century French army were called **Royal Cravate** because of the fabric they wore around their necks. **Cravate – or neck tie** - later entered into everyday vernacular in countless other languages.
- The Republic of Dubrovnik, on Croatia's southern tip, in 1776 was the first country to recognize the new republic of the United States.
- **Marco Polo**, one of the world's greatest explorers, was from the island of Korčula, Croatia.
- **Slavoljub Penkala**, Croatian, invented the ball point pen and fountain pen.
- The unit of magnetic induction is **tesla**, named after inventor Nikola Tesla, who is from Croatia.
- The first **torpedo** was constructed by **Ivan Lupis Vukić** in the 19th century in Rijeka, Croatia.
- **Bill Belichick & Nick Saban**, two Croatian Americans - Coaches in the NFL (National Football League, USA), are very successful with their teams playing American football. Let us cite Bill Belichick "...I think it just makes this division, which is already very tough, even that much tougher. You know, two Croatians in the division, Joe, that's not something you see everyday. [Laughter]..." (from an interview given to Joe Benigno and Sid Rosenberg WFAN, sports Radio 66AM New York, January 5, 2005). Bill Belichick is a 3 time Super Bowl coach of New England Patriots, while Nick Saban led LSU to NCAA Football Championship in 2003, and currently is coaching NFL's Miami Dolphins.



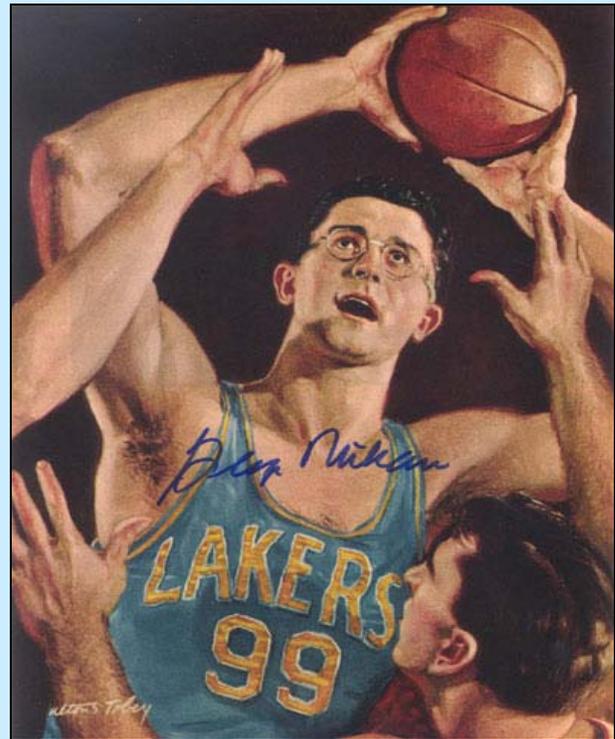
Bill Belichick celebrates with the NFL's best player, quarterback Tom Brady, following one of their many victories. [Photo: Matthew J. Lee, Boston Globe]

- Croatia is the only country in the world with no mountain above 2,000 meters (though with probably the most beautiful mountain in Europe – Velebit) and with the world's top skier - **Janica Kostelić**.
- Croatia has no tradition in hockey. However, one of the greatest hockey players of today is Colorado Avalanche's **Joe Sakic**, Canadian Croat. Both his parents are from Croatia (his father is from Imotski, and mother from Lika).

- **Zinfandel** was often called the "mystery" grape because its European origins were oddly uncertain. Bottled wines bearing the varietal label "Zinfandel" appeared as early as 1883 in California. Hence, Zin is known as "California's grape". However, due to more recent joint efforts (2001) by U.S. and Croatian specialists, we know that the American zinfandel originates from Croatia, more precisely, from Kaštel Stari near the city of Split. There it is known under the names of **Mali Plavac** and **Crljenak**.

IN MEMORIAM

George Mikan (1924 – 2005), born in a Croatian family in Illinois (his both parents are from Vivodina near Karlovac), was the best basketball player in the USA in 1944. He was the first dominant "big man" in NBA, known as the "Gentle Giant" (208 cm, or 6 feet 10 inches). He was also one of the most effective scorers of his time, averaging 22.6 points per game over his nine year long professional career, with the then record of 11,764 points. The Associated Press voted Mikan the greatest basketball player of the first half of the 20th century. When Mikan's L.A. Lakers came to Madison Square Garden, the marquee simply advertised "*Tonight George Mikan versus the Knicks*" Even some NBA rules have been changed because of his superiority.



George Mikan was named one of the NBA's 50 Greatest Players in 1996 (on the occasion of 50 years of NBA), played four NBA All-Star games, and is in the Basketball Hall of Fame. [Photo: www.nba.com]

Most of the information is taken from the following web site:

<http://www.hr/darko> [Darko Zubrinčić]

H. Res. 529 ***In the House of Representatives, U.S.***

December 14, 2005.

Whereas the United States recognized the Republic of Croatia on April 7, 1992, acknowledging the decision of the people of Croatia to live in an independent, democratic, and sovereign country;

Whereas since achieving their independence, the people of Croatia have built a democratic society, based on the rule of law, respect for human rights, and a free market economy;

Whereas Croatia is a functioning democracy, with stable institutions guaranteeing the rule of law, human rights, and market economy;

Whereas Croatia has previously cooperated with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) by allowing NATO free access to its air space during NATO's 1999 military action against Serbia;

Whereas the United States has shown support for Croatia in many ways since its independence, including by providing Croatia with economic and military assistance that has contributed significantly to the continued success;

Whereas Croatia is a reliable partner of the United States, actively contributing to the stabilization of South Central Europe;

Whereas NATO's Membership Action Plan, which was launched in April 1999, is a program of assistance that provides both goals and a roadmap for countries aspiring to NATO membership;

Whereas Croatia was invited into the Membership Action Plan in May 2002 and has made substantial progress in attaining the necessary level of reforms required for receiving an invitation to start accession talks with NATO;

Whereas the United States, Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia are signatories to the United States-Adriatic Charter, which promotes Euro-Atlantic integration and commits the signatory nations to the values and principles of NATO and to joining the Alliance at the earliest possible time;

Whereas Croatia has sent troops to Afghanistan as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in support of the war against terrorism and has endorsed and is participating in the Proliferation Security Initiative with like-minded nations across the world to prevent the flow of weapons of mass destruction, missile systems, and related material; and

Whereas Croatia shares the common interests and values of the free and democratic world: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

- (1) the Republic of Croatia has made significant progress since its independence in strengthening its democratic institutions and respect for human rights and the rule of law;
- (2) Croatia should be commended for its progress in meeting the political, economic, military, and other requirements of NATO's Membership Action Plan, its contribution to the global war on terrorism, and for its constructive participation in the United States-Adriatic Charter;
- (3) the Government of Croatia should be commended for its ongoing cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia;
- (4) Croatia would make a significant contribution to NATO; and
- (5) with complete satisfaction of NATO guidelines and criteria for membership, Croatia should be invited to be a full member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization at the earliest possible date.

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