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Croatia Resolves Last Outstanding Issue with ICTY

ZAGREB, Croatia, Dec. 8 - Croatian General Ante Gotovina was arrested on the evening of Dec. 7, 2005, on the territory of Spain, four years after his indictment by the Hague War Crimes Tribunal. The peaceful arrest was conducted by Spanish police, in cooperation with Croatian authorities. The arrest was announced by Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte, who on that occasion thanked the Croatian and Spanish authorities for the cooperation.

The Croatian Government issued a press release immediately after being officially informed by the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague (ICTY), Carla Del Ponte...

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Defense Minister Rončević in Washington

Croatia Wins Davis Cup

FACT CHECK:
In 2005, 39% more U.S. tourists visited Croatia, as compared to the previous year.

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...of General Gotovina’s arrest on the Canary Islands: “Gotovina’s arrest in Spain represents an affirmation of the reliability of the assertions made by the Republic of Croatia that he was not within the reach of the Croatian authorities nor was he on Croatian territory. The Government’s statement also stressed that the credibility of the Republic of Croatia and all institutions of the Croatian State, as well as of its full co-operation with the Hague Tribunal, are hereby confirmed.” “All those who trusted and supported us in times when Croatia’s efforts to co-operate with the Hague Tribunal were being questioned, are now being proven right. It has now become evident that such doubts were unfounded,” read a portion of the press release.

The office of Croatian President Stjepan Mesić issued a brief statement on the arrest of General Gotovina: “The arrest of General Gotovina on the Canary Islands proves the well-foundedness of earlier statements by the President of the Republic, who resolutely claimed that the fugitive general was not hiding in Croatia.”

Prime Minister Ivo Sanader addressed the Croatian Parliament on Thursday afternoon to inform deputies about the arrest of the Croatian General. Elaborating his government’s position on the matter, Prime Minister Sanader said: “The case of General Gotovina is a matter of the rule of law and anyone who is indicted [by the ICTY] should face the charges, but also be presumed innocent.” He reiterated that Croatia was interested in establishing the full truth, stating further that the Homeland War was a war of liberation and that it was legitimate and just. Croatia was a victim of aggression and had the right to defend itself and liberate its territories. “Those are the truths that nobody will be able to challenge,” said Prime Minister Sanader.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović commented on the arrest in Brussels, at a meeting of NATO’s Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council: “This proves the credibility of the Croatian government and its institutions in the implementation of the Action Plan... The arrest also proves that information provided by relevant Croatian services were true,” said the foreign minister.

Following Gotovina’s arrest off the coast of Africa and his extradition to Madrid, he will be transported to the Hague where his trial date will be set.

Congressman Gallegly: Following Gotovina’s Arrest, NATO Doors Wide Open for Croatia

WASHINGTON, D.C., Dec. 8 - The arrest of General Gotovina has confirmed far beyond Croatia the assurances of Government officials in Zagreb that the fugitive general was not located on Croatian territory, said Congressman Elton Gallegly (R-CA). “I think that this is a very good day, because it removes a shadow from the Croatian government in the eyes of all those who thought that the government was dragging its feet and was not doing all it could to bring General Gotovina to justice. ... Never have I adopted a stand on Gotovina’s guilt or innocence, since this is something that needs to be ascertained in court. From the very beginning, my opinion has been that everything needs to be done in congruence with the law... The Croatian government has steadfastly repeated that all information it possessed pointed to the fact that General Gotovina is not in Croatia, and that the authorities were doing all they could to cooperate with the Hague Tribunal in order to extradite the general to the Hague. The arrest has confirmed that Gotovina was not in Croatia,” said Gallegly. Congressman Gallegly said that the arrest of the Croatian general should send a loud message to everyone who is working on the issue of Croatia’s integration into NATO. “I think that it is irrefutable that this event removes the main obstacle that has in this process thus far been a cause for concern among many, for an extended period... Of course, there will be no automatic accession, but the case of [Gotovina] has perhaps been the chief obstacle in the past”, said Gallegly.


President Mesić: Europe Inconceivable Without Croatia and Turkey

ANKARA, Turkey, Dec. 6 – President Mesić was on a two day visit to Turkey, where he met with his counterpart President Ahmet Necdet Sezer. The two presidents agreed that their respective countries were working to achieve their goal to join the EU. They have even begun accession negotiations on the same date. The Turkish media conveyed Mesić’s statement that Europe would be unimaginable without Croatia, but also without Turkey. The Turkish President stressed the importance of Croatia as a very important partner to Turkey. Both sides agreed on the necessity of boosting economic cooperation between the countries. In that sense, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development (HBOR) and the Turkish export bank Eximbank.

Prime Minister Sanader Pleased with Croatian Foreign Policy Successes

RIGA, Latvia, Dec. 6 – In Latvia for a two day visit Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader and a top-level delegation met with Latvian leaders to discuss how to improve economic relations and to thank them for their support for Croatia’s EU aspirations.

Latvian Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis called bilateral relations between Croatia and Latvia dynamic, and singled out the Latvijas kugnieciba contract with the Croatian shipyard “3. Maj” on building new tankers. Cooperation on the arts is also promising, where an exchange of guest performances by both countries’ opera companies is planned. Kalvitis also noted the great interest that Latvian residents have in tourism opportunities in Croatia.

For more on the Prime Minister’s visit to Latvia, please see: http://www.leta2000.com/eng/news.asp?NewsID=2005120618212001DF8F397026232B4C
Defense Minister Rončević in Washington

WASHINGTON, D.C., Dec. 6 - 9 – Croatian Defense Minister Berislav Rončević, who was in Washington attending a Conference of the Southeastern Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM) process, met with U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld praised Croatia for the progress it had made in defense reform 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 U.S. Defense Secretary also thanked the Croatian government for its assistance in alleviating the consequence of hurricane Katrina and congratulated Croatia on the launch of accession talks with the European Union. The talks also focused on the continuation of defense cooperation between Croatia and the U.S., which Rončević said was Croatia’s most important bilateral partner in the defense and security area, and on Croatia’s desire to join NATO. Rončević reiterated that Croatia would triple its troop contingent in Afghanistan in 2006, and that the present 50-strong military police team would be reinforced with an infantry company. He went on to say that cooperation within SEDM was successful, adding that Croatia presided over the working group on defense and military support for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, border security and counterterrorism.

At the SEDM meeting, the Southeastern European countries [including Croatia] agreed to deploy their brigade in Afghanistan to serve as part of the NATO-led peacekeeping mission and supported the transformation of the international peacekeeping force in Kosovo in order to provide security during the upcoming negotiations on the status of the UN-administered province.

Minister Grabar-Kitarović Announces Increased Croatian Presence in Afghanistan

BRUSSELS, Belgium, Dec. 8 – Croatian Foreign Affairs and European Integration Minister Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović announced that Croatia was to increase the number of its troops deployed in Afghanistan during the annual meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). One of the topics of the Brussels meeting of the EAPC, which consists of NATO members-states and countries-partners, was NATO’s mission in Afghanistan, where Croatia will increase the number of its soldiers. Minister Grabar-Kitarović announced that she would soon travel to Afghanistan to visit members of the Croatian military contingent and talk with Afghan officials.

Minister Grabar-Kitarović: Croatia Supports OSCE Concept of Security

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia, Dec. 5 – A two-day annual meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) member-states was held in Ljubljana. As a multiethnic and multicultural country, Croatia strongly supports efforts by the OSCE in promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, the Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, said in her address to an OSCE ministerial conference in Ljubljana. “Croatia strongly supports the OSCE concept of security and a multidimensional approach that includes an important role of human rights and freedom, democracy and the rule of the law, and two other dimensions of security – political/military and environmental,” Grabar-Kitarović said highlighting Croatia’s efforts with the OSCE in combating illegal migrations, human trafficking and other issues. Grabar-Kitarović further stressed Croatia’s leading role in mine clearance operations in the region, adding that it was also a party to all international conventions on counter-terrorism. Speaking of the situation in Southeast Europe, Grabar-Kitarović underlined the importance of cooperation with the OSCE through its missions, saying that the organization had helped the region to largely transform itself from a zone of conflict into an area of cooperation.

Note: The Southeastern Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM) process began in 1996 as a regional initiative to serve as a bridge to Euro-Atlantic institutions, particularly NATO. Its stated objectives are to promote peace and stability in the region, enhance cooperation and regional security, and support NATO Partnership for Peace programs.

For more information on the conference, please log on to: http://www.osce.org/conferences/mc_2005.html
When General Repinc gets the expected approval, he will be the highest ranking Croatian national serving in the United Nations or any international peace mission in the world. [Photo: Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the UN]

NEW YORK, N.Y., Dec. 7 – United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan has informed the Security Council of his intention to appoint Croatian General Dragutin Repinc as commander of the UN peacekeeping mission in India and Pakistan. Major General Repinc’s appointment is expected to be formally approved by the UN Security Council soon, in which case he would take up his post in January next year. Repinc’s selection can be seen as a contribution to the promotion of Croatia’s international image and important in the context of the country’s efforts to join NATO and its ambitious to become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in the 2008-2009 period.

For the official web site of the UNMOGIP Mission in India and Pakistan, please visit the following web site: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmogip/

News in Brief…

- Croatian Justice Minister Vesna Škare-Ožbolt and her Serbian counterpart Zoran Stojković signed a protocol on cooperation between the justice ministers of Croatia and Serbia.
- The Croatian government adopted the 2006-2008 Pre-accession Economic Program (PEP) to ensure continued and faster economic growth and development and improve the standard of living.
- The Croatian Ministry of Culture plans to use higher budgetary allocations for the construction of several museums and libraries across the country, including the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb.
- The 14th Anniversary of the establishment of the Croatian Air Force and Air Defense was marked in the air base in the northern coastal city of Pula.
- Vukovar officials are planning EUR 40 million in new investments for the river port on the Danube.
- The port will add to the growing economic activity in this area.

- Representatives of the Croatian government and the OSCE Mission in Croatia presented in Banja Luka on Dec. 7, 2005 the Croatian government’s media campaign encouraging the return and reintegration of refugees and displaced people, which is aimed at acquainting returnees with conditions for their return and their rights.

“Where there is a place for everybody” is the slogan of a public awareness campaign on reconciliation and the return of refugees to Croatia. [Photo: www.osce.org/croatia]

- A consortium consisting of the MIAB company from the coastal city of Šibenik and the Cetina company from Sinj signed a contract with the European Commission’s Delegation on infrastructure construction in the Podi business zone in Šibenik. The European Union will finance the project with EUR 1.55 million.
- The Croatian language is on the official EU web site, in the latest version of the thesaurus Eurovoc 4.2 from 2005. The latest version of the thesaurus is available in Croatian and 16 languages of members’ states on http://europa.eu.int/celex/eurovoc.
- Vodatel is planning to introduce a new digital television network, eTV Media Center, that should hit the market sometime next year.
- The Croatian daily Poslovni dnevnik (Business Journal) is once again available on the Internet. The newspaper, which can be accessed on http://www.poslovni.hr, was first published on March 1, 2004 in Zagreb, and is intended for businessmen, covering major political stories with special emphasis on economic news.
Croatia Wins Davis Cup

Croatian tennis player Mario Ančić (left) did not hide his emotions after winning the deciding match against Michal Mertinak in Bratislava. [Photo: Večernji list]

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia, Dec. 2 – 4 – Croatia won the Davis Cup for the first time when Mario Ančić beat Slovakia’s Michal Mertinak 7-6 6-3 6-4 to give Croatia a 3-2 victory in the finals held in Bratislava’s Sibamac Arena. In three days of first class – sometimes nail-biting tennis – Croatian players won two singles matches and the doubles, against the Slovaks. This puts Croatia among just 12 nations to have won the greatest team prize in more than 100 years of professional tennis, and one of the most venerable trophies in sports in general – the Davis Cup. It is also the first time ever that the Davis Cup has been won by an unseeded nation. Slovakia and Croatia were both surprise finalists, beating far stronger nations on the way to the top.

Klapa Sinj Wraps Up U.S. Tour

Klapa Sinj performing in Washington, D.C. [Photo: Embassy of the Republic of Croatia]

WASHINGTON, D.C., Dec. 7 - Croatian male vocal ensemble Klapa Sinj has exceeded all expectations on its premiere concert tour in the United States, covering New York, Washington and Chicago. The long-awaited U.S. performance of the group was organized with the purpose of introducing klapa music, a traditional form of a cappella singing from the Dalmatian region of Croatia, to U.S. audiences, while at the same time promoting this forming as another export brand of Croatia. Klapa Sinj performed together with Nenad Bach, a Croatian composer, rock musician and producer living in New York, whose efforts to bring this form of music outside Croatian clubs and restaurants abroad made Klapa Sinj’s U.S. tour possible. Lead singer Mojmir Čačija said that this is Klapa Sinj’s first performance on U.S. soil and that he considers it a great accomplishment not only for his group, but also for klapa singing in general. "We want to take klapa singing around the world," he said.

Mojmir Čačija (left), of Klapa Sinj, Croatian Ambassador to the U.S., Neven Jurica, and Nenad Bach, a Croatian composer, at Croatian Embassy reception following Klapa Sinj’s performance in Washington, D.C. [Photo: Embassy of the Republic of Croatia]

The Washington concert, which was held at the Kennedy Center, was attended by hundreds of visitors and a Croatian Embassy delegation headed by Ambassador Neven Jurica. U.S. performances were sponsored by the Croatian mineral water producer Jana (which has recently appeared on the U.S. market), and the Kennedy Center performance was also realized with the support of the Croatian Embassy and Croatian House, based in Washington, D.C.

To listen to the Kennedy Center performance, please go to: http://www.kennedy-center.org/search/search_results.cfm?keyword=sinj

“We are all Croatia”: Croatian fans express their national pride during the Davis Cup. [Photo: Večernji list]

For more on Croatia’s Davis Cup victory in the U.S. media, visit: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/05/AR2005120500169.html http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/sports/sports-atp-davis.html

To see the latest Davis Cup rankings [Croatia #1], go to: http://www.daviscup.com/ranking/current.asp
WASHINGTON, D.C./SAN FRANCISCO, California, Dec. 4 - The Washington Post observes in last Sunday's edition that when it comes to vacationing in Europe, "Croatia is quickly climbing the ranks." Three time zones away, on the morning of the same day, readers of the San Francisco Chronicle woke up to John Flinn’s report from Dubrovnik, the majestic "Pearl of the Adriatic," which he concludes with a reflection from a moment captured on one city square near the Rector’s Palace, amid the sounds of a student piano and flute recital: "I had to work my way through the warren of narrow alleys and passageways to escape the crowds... As [the students] played their Dvorak sonatas, I was hypnotized by a flock of pigeons swirling around and around the square, as if in time to the music. For a brief interval, I was lost in the magic of the moment..."

The city walls of Dubrovnik provide a view of the Croatian resort’s medieval Old Town – and the bright new roofs on the more than 500 buildings damaged in the 1991-1992 conflict. [Photo: John Flinn/San Francisco Chronicle]

Just as Croatia is 'climbing the ranks' compared to other European destinations - as is evident from much more frequent reports on its tourist industry in the U.S. press - Dubrovnik is restoring its pre-war popularity with foreigners much faster than any other city in Croatia. The great popularity of Dubrovnik, rightly deserved, has sometimes overshadowed the fact that there are other attractive tourist destinations in Croatia, if less known to U.S. travelers. In Sunday's text, the Washington Post's Andrea Sachs, citing Nena Komarica, general manager of the Croatian Tourist Board's North American office in New York City, also recommends the less touristy coastal cities, especially Split, Trogir and Zadar in Dalmatia, and Rovinj and Pula in Istria, noting that the country has more than 1,000 islands and eight national parks. Citing Komarica, the Post lets you in on another secret: continental Croatia. "For a less treaded region, travel North and inland, toward Hungary. This area, says Komarica, is not as widely known as the coastline." Thanks to Dubrovnik’s undisputable rank as the strongest magnet for tourists in Croatia, we can expect that foreign visitors will soon discover countless other attractions in our country.

The 13th century castle of Trakošćan, located in a picturesque forest in northwest Croatia, is a popular weekend getaway for the local population seeking an escape from city life. [Photo: www.vip.hr]

To see full articles, please visit:
http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/12/04/TRGCVG0PQ81.DTL&h w=croatia&sn=005&sc=411
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/02/AR2005120200484.html

**Significant Increase of U.S. Tourists in Croatia**

WASHINGTON, D.C., Dec. 3 – More and more American tourists are visiting Croatia and this successful trend is expected to continue in 2006, the Head of the New York Office of the HTZ, Nena Komarica, said. Nearly 120,000 Americans spent their holidays in Croatia in 2005, which is a 39 percent increase over the previous year. “Many tour operators have told us that bookings for 2006 are already under way, and some are already sold out. We are sure that the image of Croatia as a popular destination will only grow stronger,” Komarica said, adding that even more Americans would choose Croatia as their holiday destination if there were direct airline services between the two countries.

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