

International Agencies and BiH Partners Launch New Initiative in the Fight Against Organised Crime

The High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to BiH, Jacques Paul Klein, COMSFOR General John Sylvester, Federation Interior Minister Ramo Maslesa and Republika Srpska Interior Minister Dragomir Jovicic on Friday announced a new initiative aimed at strengthening the law enforcement authorities in BiH and enhancing their ability to tackle the regional menace of organised crime.

Under this initiative, the IPTF will begin joint training of "the elite of the elite" of the RS and Federation police forces so that they can take part in joint operations to combat organised crime. Initially, 25 officers from both Entities' police forces will come together for training at the SFOR base in Butmir.

"Thanks to the work of the IPTF and SFOR, both Entities now have well trained special police forces capable of carrying out sophisticated police operations," the High Representative told journalists. "But one of the greatest problems we face is that international and inter-Entity criminals operate right across BiH. To beat them, the law enforcement agencies in BiH will need to work together much more."

The High Representative said that joint operations would become possible when the Special Panel and Special Prosecutor for combating organized crime are up and running early next year.

Ambassador Klein noted that this initiative builds on foundations already laid through IPTF training and through efforts by UNMIBH to promote inter-Entity and regional

cooperation among police forces. General Sylvester added that in addition to offering a training venue at Butmir, SFOR will make available the expertise of its Multinational Specialised Unit, led by the Italian Carabinieri to assist in the actual training.

“Crime knows no borders,” Minister Jovicic said. “This initiative shows that the police forces of BiH know no borders either.”

Minister Maslesa noted that the BiH police forces have already secured a very low rate of crime, relative to the European average, and that this “would not have been possible without good cooperation among all of the police forces in BiH.”

The High Representative said more details of the joint training would become available closer to the launch of the programme in September.