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The image shows the flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which consists of a blue triangle with white stars on a yellow background, set against a dark blue background.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Borislav Paravac, a former Serbian member of Bosnia's presidency who faced war crimes charges, has been acquitted by a court. The accusations against him were linked to Bosnia's 1992-95 war, during which he was alleged to have played a role in crimes targeting non-Serb populations. These crimes, which took place in Doboje and Teslić in 1992 and 1993, resulted in the deaths of several hundred Bosniaks and Croats. However, the court determined that the evidence was insufficient to support the charges, leading to Paravac's acquittal.

A recent report by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR), a non-governmental organization operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia, has called for justice for Serb victims of the 1995 bombing on Petrovac Road. This attack occurred during Croatia's Operation Storm when Croatian Air Force planes bombed a column of Serb refugees fleeing the conflict. Several civilians, including children, were killed in the strike. The YIHR study underscores the persistent lack of accountability for those responsible, despite numerous appeals for legal action.

Bosnia also faced two tragic incidents in August. In one, a shooting at a high school in Sanski Most resulted in the deaths of three people, along with the shooter. In another incident, more than a dozen migrants drowned in the Drina River, adding to the country's recent sorrows.

Additionally, Bosnia saw a visit from the CIA director. However, no further details about the meeting have been publicly confirmed.

Sources:

<https://balkaninsight.com/2024/08/06/former-serb-member-of-bosnias-presidency-acquitted-of-war-crimes/>

<https://balkaninsight.com/2024/08/08/study-demands-justice-for-serb-storm-victims-of-petrovac-road/>

<https://www.rferl.org/a/serbia-bosnia-herzegovina-migrants-boat-accident-victims/33090335.html>

<https://www.rferl.org/a/shooter-at-bosnian-high-school-kills-three/33087050.html>

<https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2024/08/23/cia-director-goes-on-an-unannounced-balkan-tour-visits-sarajevo-belgrade-and-pristina/>



Montenegro

At the GLOBSEC 2024 Forum in Prague, Montenegrin President Jakov Milatović expressed optimism about Montenegro joining the EU by 2028, calling the target ambitious yet achievable. He highlighted Montenegro's progress in the accession process, having opened all negotiation chapters and closed three, while aligning closely with EU policies, particularly in security. However, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić voiced scepticism, doubting any new members will join before 2030, citing geopolitical factors and EU enlargement fatigue. Both leaders emphasized the importance of regional cooperation in advancing toward EU membership.

In Montenegro's 2016 coup trial, Russian intelligence officers Eduard Shishmakov and Vladimir Popov were accused of orchestrating a plot to overthrow the government and prevent NATO accession, allegedly involving Serbian nationalists and Montenegrin opposition figures. The plan purportedly included assassinating then-Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic, reflecting Russia's opposition to NATO's Balkan expansion. Despite the geopolitical implications, all defendants were acquitted by Montenegro's High Court in July. Although expectations of changes to the case in August were high, no further developments occurred.

Sources:

<https://www.dan.co.me/vijesti/politika/milatovic-crna-gora-u-eu-do-2028-godine-je-realan-cilj-vucic-nece-primiti-nikoga-ni-prije-2030-5257010>
<https://en.vijesti.me/vijesti/politika/722075/milatovic-clanstvo-crne-gore-u-eu-do-2028-realan-cilj-vucic-ne-vjerujem-da-cemo-do-tada-bit-clanice>
<https://www.rferl.org/a/montenegro-coup-trial-russia-nato/33033657.html>



Serbia

On August 29, 2024, Serbia signed a nearly \$3 billion deal to acquire 12 Rafale fighter jets from France during President Emmanuel Macron's visit to Belgrade. Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić described the agreement as a crucial step in modernizing Serbia's military, signalling a move away from dependence on Russian weaponry. Macron praised the deal as "historic," underscoring Serbia's strategic role in Europe and addressing concerns over potential technology sharing with Russia by offering full guarantees within the defence agreement. This acquisition significantly enhances Serbia's air force capabilities.

Accompanying the fighter jet purchase were rumours of Serbia selling its MiG-29s to Ukraine, but these claims were dismissed as false, having originated from social media. Serbia also received a visit from the CIA director, following a similar visit to Bosnia, though details of both meetings remain undisclosed.

In a separate development, Serbia announced plans to remove regional celebrities from its entry blacklist, aiming to improve relations with neighbouring countries. Serbian Interior Minister Ivica Dacić explained that this change, including lifting the ban on Croatian singer Severina, comes in response to diplomatic concerns and public pressure.

Tensions also continue domestically, as the Serbian government has accused Western powers of supporting anti-government protests linked to the opening of a lithium mine. Brussels has rejected these allegations, adding to the ongoing diplomatic strain.

Sources:

<https://balkaninsight.com/2024/08/29/serbia-signs-deal-to-buy-french-fighter-jets-as-macron-visits-belgrade/>

<https://balkaninsight.com/2024/08/28/serbia-will-take-regional-celebrities-off-entry-watch-list-minister-says/>

<https://www.rferl.org/a/serbia-lithium-mining-protests-european-union/33086180.html>



Kosovo

The European Union has cautioned Kosovo against reopening the Mitrovica bridge without consulting international partners, particularly through the EU-mediated dialogue with Serbia. Prime Minister Albin Kurti's government has been refurbishing the bridge, which divides the ethnically polarized city of Mitrovica, a move that has heightened tensions. Kosovo Serbs are concerned that reopening the bridge may threaten their security, and U.S. Ambassador Jeffrey Hovenier warned that unilateral action could provoke violence and endanger NATO peacekeepers, including U.S. troops. Responding to international pressure, Kurti softened his stance, emphasizing the importance of coordinating with global partners. The bridge has been a long-standing point of contention, following agreements from 2015 and 2016, which originally aimed to open it for traffic in 2017.

Additionally, Kosovo experienced a visit from the CIA director, following similar visits to Serbia and Bosnia, though no details of the meeting have been publicly confirmed. In late August, Kosovo further fueled tensions by closing five institutions serving the Serb minority, citing orders from the Ministry of Administration to halt "illegal activities." The U.S. expressed concern and disappointment over the closures, viewing them as violations of Kosovo's laws and constitution. These actions have further strained relations between Kosovo and Serbia, deepening the ongoing diplomatic crisis.

Sources:

<https://balkaninsight.com/2024/08/16/eu-warns-kosovo-as-mitrovica-bridge-standoff-goes-on/>

<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/08/31/a-rundown-of-the-latest-nominations-for-eu-commission>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/aug/31/protest-from-us-after-kosovo-closes-serbian-offices>

The image shows the flag of North Macedonia, which features a red field with a golden sun in the center. The sun has eight rays extending to the edges of the flag. The text 'North Macedonia' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font in the lower-left corner of the flag.

North Macedonia

Austria has requested North Macedonia's assistance in investigating an online terror threat linked to a Taylor Swift concert in Vienna, traced back to North Macedonia. Authorities from both nations are collaborating to identify the source, raising concerns over concert security, which led to the cancellation of performances. Based on CIA warnings, Austrian police were able to arrest several suspects and foil the planned attack.

The U.S. is monitoring North Macedonia amid fears of political destabilization, driven by tensions between the government and the Albanian opposition over constitutional changes required for EU accession. The U.S. has expressed support for North Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration but is worried about potential unrest. Washington has called for political dialogue and stability in the country to prevent destabilization during this critical period.

North Macedonia's government plans to appoint new members to its joint historical commission with Bulgaria, which was created to resolve longstanding historical disputes. The commission, however, has struggled with political interference, as both sides blame politics for hindering progress. Dragi Gjorgiev, the North Macedonian co-chair, announced he would not seek another term due to the tense political climate, even if he was not officially removed. His Bulgarian counterpart, Angel Dimitrov, confirmed that Bulgaria's representatives would remain unchanged, emphasizing the political nature of the conflict. Despite difficulties, the commission continues its work to address these historical issues.

Sources:

<https://apnews.com/article/taylor-swift-cia-vienna-concerts-foiled-attack-7e454af63efcff2a3ab0a20c718aba8d>
<https://balkaninsight.com/2024/08/08/austria-asks-north-macedonia-to-help-probe-taylor-swift-terror-threat/>
<https://balkaninsight.com/2024/08/20/us-keeps-an-eye-on-north-macedonia-amid-destabilisation-fears/>
<https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/bugarija-istorija-komisija/33094031.html>



Albania

Jorgo Goro, the ruling Socialist Party's candidate, secured victory in the mayoral election of Himara, Albania, following a rerun of the local vote. Himara, a coastal town with a notable Greek minority, has long been a politically sensitive region, where tensions between Albanian and Greek national interests often surface. The rerun was mandated after allegations of irregularities emerged during the initial election in May. Goro's win represents a significant achievement for Prime Minister Edi Rama's Socialist Party, further strengthening its hold on local governments throughout Albania. Opposition parties and some members of the Greek minority expressed concerns over issues such as expired identification cards and restrictions on media filming during the election process. Goro's victory continues the Socialist Party's dominance in Albanian politics, though they still face strong and vocal opposition.

In a separate matter, Italy and Albania have been engaged in long-term negotiations over a migration agreement to establish holding centres in Albania for asylum seekers aiming to reach Italy. The proposal, now implemented, aims to alleviate the pressure on Italy's overcrowded migrant facilities by processing asylum applications outside Italian borders. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has voiced concerns about the legality and human rights implications of these offshore centres. In response, it has been reported that UNHCR will monitor the two detention centres for the first three months to ensure respect for human rights and prevent abuse of the relocated migrants.

Sources:

<https://balkaninsight.com/2024/08/05/albania-ruling-party-candidate-wins-himara-local-elections/>

<https://apnews.com/article/unhcr-italy-albania-migration-deal-holding-centers-fbeaab9f558ec543906b0d225134456f>