

## ITALIAN-BALKAN MAFIA

**Pukanic Killed by Millions from Tobacco Smuggling**

The mafia killed the chief editor of a Montenegrin weekly and 4 days later, Croatian Nacional weekly's co-owner was killed.

ZAGREB, CROATIA - Italian media are still extensively reporting about the mafia-style killing of the co-owner of the Croatian weekly "Nacional" and marketing officer Niko Franjic. As many as two dozen media publish articles about the murders every day and during the past holiday a smaller number of daily news sites and independent news sites carefully followed the course of the investigation in Croatia. But there is no official information from the state prosecution and the Antimafia administration in the city of Bari, where an investigation is being conducted into the smuggling of cigarettes from Montenegro to Italy and the harbouring of Italian mafia members in Montenegro. Due to the holidays of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, electronic media in Italy published more or less the same information as the Croatian media.

It is still unknown if the court records about Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic and other suspects have been filed as state prosecutor Giuseppe Sclesi said they would be for Trieste's "Il Piccolo" daily. But whenever the records are filed, it does not mean that an investigation will not be continued and charges filed against Djukanovic once his diplomatic immunity expires.

**100 million euros transported by an armoured truck from Cyprus to Lichtenstein**

It is doubtless that the safe of the state prosecution in Baari contains many depositions and documents with information that 1,000 tonnes of cigarettes had been smuggled every month from Montenegro to Italy in the period from 1994 to 2002. According to information published by the Italian news agency ANSA, tens of millions of euros ended up in Switzerland, Montenegro, Cyprus and Lichtenstein. For example, some 100 million euros made from organised crime and cigarette smuggling was located in a Bank of Cyprus account number 0385-41-097039-48 for the payment of various services and investments. The money was transported to Lichtenstein in a huge armoured truck.

No media in Italy published who killed Pukanic and Franjic and as regards who ordered the murders, they also do not mention names, but in reading reports and commentaries, readers can conclude they all point towards Montenegro.

But has been written and is still being written about the smuggling of cigarettes in which, according to what judiciary officials have said so far, both former and current Montenegrin state officials are involved, including the former Montenegrin president and current Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic.

Since Dusko Jovanovic, the chief editor of Montenegro's weekly "Dan" and Ivo Pukanic, co-owner and journalist of Croatian weekly "Nacional" were both killed, and the weeklies wrote most about the cigarette smuggling, then it is definitely possible that whoever commissioned the murders is from Montenegro. This, of course, still needs to be proven, but when witnesses are killed, evidence becomes thinner and mafia bosses become happier.

**Serbian reporter insulted the Croatian president in La Voce**

La Voce, the first independent on-line daily in Italy, published an article entitled "Croatia: Who Killed Pukanic" in which the author writes that strong Balkan mafia is being the murder and mentioned the mafia's connections in Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The author mentions the Serbian Zemun clan and the fact that Zagreb is talking



about a connection between Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo. The article states that the mafia deals with international smuggling of drugs, weapons, cigarettes and human organs.

The article interestingly mentions a new criminal organisation headed by a Qazim Osmani, aka Felix. The Osmani clan, according to the article, struck a deal with Croatia's Adris Group and Montenegro's mafia clan to control the black market in the Balkans so they could get on the Iranian market. There are also other clans which the Uncensored news site wrote about and mentioned a former Croatian minister Franjo Greguric and the Adris Group.

La Voce's article severely criticised the propaganda of Croatian President Stjepan Mesic who spoke against the Bosnian Serb entity of Republika Srpska and its Prime Minister Milorad Dodik. The article also said Mesic was arrogantly attacking "terrorists" who disturb the peace of Croatians, adding that he should watch his own back because, since he could not save Ivo Pukanic, he might not be able to save himself from revenge of the transversal mafia. The text also says that this was not a terrorist act by the Serbian and Albanian mafia and blames it all on Croatia which, the article writes, is connected with the Montenegrin Osmani clan.

As the article was signed by Biljana Vukicevic, we decided to find out where so many accusations against Croatia and President Mesic are coming from. We discovered that Vukivevic is a reported for the [rinascitabalkanica.com](http://rinascitabalkanica.com) news site seated in Republika Srpska's Banja Luka with news articles in Italian. Apart from the Serbian reporter, four Italian reporters who are correspondents in Bosnia, Albania, Montenegro and Serbia, also write for the news site. Evidently one of them recommended Vukicevic to La Voce.

Of the few news sites who continued to write about the Pukanic and Franjic murders over the holidays, most relayed or recommended an extensive analytical article published by the Osservatorio Balcani news site on October 31, under the headline "Either Us or Them". It is certainly one of the most objective articles in Italian media. It is interesting that the author of the article is a reported from Osijek, Drago Hedl. Those who cited his analytical article underlined quotes by Slavenka Drakulic published in London's "The Guardian" and by Heni Erceg and Jelena Lovric, which some Croatian media also published.

"But the question is how long this 'strong motivation' shown by the Croatian authorities the past few days in searching for Pukanic's killers will last and whether they will suddenly deflate if trails in the fight against organised crime lead to high places in government", Hedl writes at the end of the article.



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