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### Bosnia: Sex Trade Claims Spread

Another western organisation in Bosnia is hit by allegations that its workers were using prostitutes

By Julie Poucher Harbin in Sarajevo (BCR No 360, 21-Aug-02)

A Bosnian driver has alleged that he was sacked from a US-backed development project in Sarajevo after expressing discomfort at ferrying around prostitutes.

Edin Zundo has filed suit against KPMG Consulting over the termination of his contract six months early by its Barents Group division, claiming it was a result of his complaints.

The action, which is due in court next month, comes in the wake of other recent cases involving western companies operating in Bosnia and Herzegovina facing accusations against staff using prostitutes, as well as a major controversy over the UN's alleged involvement in the Balkan sex trade.

Zundo served as personal driver for a Barents IT manager before his sacking. According to Zundo, his Barents project supervisor told him, "You are not a good guy. You are not a good driver."

However, 27-year-old Zundo insists the real reason for his dismissal was that he complained of being asked to drive on unofficial business.

"I told [the supervisor] that I had a problem with [the IT manager], that I drove hookers in the firm's car," Zundo told IWPR. "He told me, 'No Edin, it's not your problem. Don't get involved'."

Zundo is now seeking compensation of one year's lost pay plus insurance. He claims that after losing his job with Barents, he was unable to find another job for twelve months.

The Virginia-based Barents works as a contractor for the US Agency for International Development, USAID, managing major programmes to help regulate and supervise Bosnia's post-war banking system.

The suit by Zundo was first brought in spring 2001 but allegations about the company were brought to wider attention with a recent report in Britain's Sunday Times newspaper.

The article quoted an anonymous British-based banker working on the same project, who had tipped off the US State Department with similar complaints. The US Embassy in Sarajevo investigated the matter, and ordered both the IT manager and the supervisor off the project in August 2001.

In a statement issued on August 12, 2002, in reaction to media reports, the US Embassy said that although a local police investigation had not resulted in criminal charges, its own internal inquiry "gave us sufficient cause to insist

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KPMG remove these individuals from their employment on a USAID assistance project".

It said that this was part of a "zero-tolerance policy" for employees and contractors "regarding involvement in prostitution or patronising locations where it is practised".

In response to enquiries about the issue, USAID referred IWPR to Barents. In a telephone interview, Ken Neal, a spokesman for KPMG Consulting/Barents Group in New York, told IWPR that the company had offered total cooperation to the US government inquiry.

"After a full investigation we were informed by the [local] authorities that none of the allegations were substantiated, " said Neal.

He added that although the men were removed from the project, they were not fired from KPMG but have both since left the company for "unrelated reasons". Neal claimed not to have heard of Zundo, despite the lawsuit.

Zundo, for his part, says local police never contacted him, although he says he spoke twice to an investigator attached to the US Embassy, and handed over a videotape.

Following a part-time assignment for USAID, Zundo says he started working as a full-time driver for Barents in February 2000. A few months later, he went to the airport with the IT manager to pick up his "girlfriend" who was arriving from Bratislava, Slovakia.

However, he became suspicious when the Barents representative and the woman, Susanne, did not recognise each other.

Zundo said she had apparently arrived without a visa, and diplomatic connections were used to get her through customs. He later recognised her picture on a website, Captain 69's Worldwide Escort Reviews, that he saw on the IT manager's computer.

According to Zundo, Susanne went back and forth between Sarajevo and Bratislava several times during the year, sometimes bringing friends.

Zundo told how he would drive them from the airport to the IT manager's house, in a vehicle with a USAID sticker and diplomatic plates, and claims he sometimes drove them to Mostar.

Both prostitution and trafficking - women being brought into a country and sold as chattels against their will - are big business in Bosnia. The International Organisation for Migration puts the number of trafficked women and girls in the country at 6,000-10,000.

Earlier this month Kathryn Bolkovac, a former human rights investigator for the UN's International Police Task Force, IPTF, won a lawsuit against DynCorp Aerospace UK Ltd.

Bolkovac claimed that she was fired by the company, which is the US State Department's personnel subcontractor for the UN Mission, in April 2001 because of a detailed email she sent to DynCorp and UN officials alleging international police complicity in trafficking women.

An industrial tribunal found that the company had violated the United Kingdom's provisions for whistle blowing, and will rule on the level of damages in October.

In a statement, Bolkovac's attorney, Karen Bailey, said, "She took on the big guns and won. The plight of trafficking victims is appalling, and Kathryn's case has gone some way to bringing it to wider attention."

DynCorp spokesman Chuck Taylor did not respond to inquiries from IWPR.

Kirsten Haupt, a spokesperson for the UN Mission to Bosnia, confirmed that in 18 cases IPTF police monitors have been "implicated in incidents of sexual misconduct by soliciting sexual services".

In each case they were sent home, but none were been expelled for involvement in trafficking, Haupt said.

Julie Poucher Harbin is freelance journalist in Sarajevo

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