


U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Treasury Targets Actors for Destabilizing Behavior Throughout the Western Balkans

April 11, 2022

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated seven individuals and one entity across four countries in the Western Balkans pursuant to [Executive Order \(E.O.\) 14033](#) . This is the second action OFAC has taken under E.O. 14033 targeting persons who threaten the stability of the region through corruption, criminal activity, and other destabilizing behavior. Today’s action reinforces Treasury’s commitment to promoting accountability for actors in the Western Balkans region engaged in destabilizing and corrupt behavior. Such corrupt behavior undermines the rule of law and economic growth, and it deprives people in these countries of opportunities and stability.

“The people designated today constitute a serious threat to regional stability, institutional trust, and the aspirations of those seeking democratic and judicious governance in the Western Balkans,” said Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson. “Combatting corruption around the world is a major priority of the Biden-Harris administration, and Treasury will not hesitate to use all tools at our disposal to hold corrupt and destabilizing actors accountable.”

As part of this action, the Department of State is designating individuals from North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina under Section 7031(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2022, instituting what is commonly known as a visa ban. The Department of State is also designating their immediate family members under 7031(c). This action renders them and their immediate family members ineligible for entry into the United States.

ALBANIA

Organized crime remains a significant threat in Albania, and criminal actors remain influential in Albanian politics, using money and violence to funnel support to preferred candidates.

Aqif Rakipi (Rakipi) is a notorious former Member of Parliament from Elbasan, Albania, who has a damaging and destabilizing influence on political processes in Albania. Multiple organized crime groups (OCGs) in Albania have offered money, gifts, or promises for jobs or concessions in return for votes for their preferred political party. Rakipi has long been involved in organized crime and is closely associated with one OCG, within which he exerted political influence, including through corruption. For example, Rakipi has utilized his political influence to nominate his cronies to key public positions in Elbasan and Tirana. Rakipi lost his mandate as a member of Albania's parliament after prosecutors confirmed his role in criminal activity under an alias. He is being designated pursuant to E.O. 14033 for being responsible for or complicit in, or for having directly or indirectly engaged in, corruption related to the Western Balkans, including corruption by, on behalf of, or otherwise related to a government in the Western Balkans, or a current or former government official at any level of government in the Western Balkans, such as the misappropriation of public assets, expropriation of private assets for personal gain or political purposes, or bribery

Ylli Ndroqi (Ndroqi) is a media owner whose assets were seized by the Albanian government in 2020 and 2021 for previous criminal activity. Ndroqi has utilized media outlets formerly under his control to extort and blackmail Albanian citizens through demands for money and advertising purchases in exchange for withholding publication of negative media stories. Additionally, Ndroqi has facilitated bribes on behalf of an entity seeking to do business in Albania. Ndroqi is being designated pursuant to E.O. 14033 for being responsible for or complicit in, or for having directly or indirectly engaged in, corruption related to the Western Balkans, including corruption by, on behalf of, or otherwise related to a government in the Western Balkans, or a current or former government official at any level of government in the Western Balkans, such as the misappropriation of public assets, expropriation of private assets for personal gain or political purposes, or bribery.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Following Treasury's [January 5, 2022 designations](#) of Milorad Dodik and one business entity under his control, OFAC today designated two more corrupt actors in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

Asim Sarajlic (Sarajlic) is a member of the parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and was until recently a high-ranking Party of Democratic Action (SDA) official in BiH. Sarajlic is the infamous subject of the "Asim affair," a political corruption scandal in which Sarajlic was

caught promising to secure a job for the wife of a party delegate in exchange for a requested vote on a political party position. Sarajlic has been indicted for additional offenses, including abuse of office and influence peddling.

Sarajlic has also abused his position in relation to BH Telecom, a large BiH state-owned enterprise. In this capacity, Sarajlic personally accepted from payment from job applicants in exchange for positions, and otherwise exerted inordinate influence over the hiring process. As part of this activity, Sarajlic recommended candidates who were reportedly severely underqualified, undermining the integrity of the company.

Sarajlic was designated pursuant to E.O. 14033 for being responsible for or complicit in, or for having directly or indirectly engaged in, corruption related to the Western Balkans, including corruption by, on behalf of, or otherwise related to a government in the Western Balkans, or a current or former government official at any level of government in the Western Balkans, such as the misappropriation of public assets, expropriation of private assets for personal gain or political purposes, or bribery.

Gordana Tadic (Tadic) served as Chief Prosecutor of the State Prosecutor's Office of BiH from 2019 to 2021. In 2021, she was officially removed from her position by the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council following her failure to assign cases to prosecutors through an automated case distribution system designed to prevent prosecutor assignment decisions based on personal or political reasons. In addition, Tadic reportedly used her position as Chief Prosecutor to promote her own personal and familial interests. Furthermore, she allegedly collected state housing fees through a fictitious contract.

Tadic was designated pursuant to E.O. 14033 for being responsible for or complicit in, or for having directly or indirectly engaged in, actions or policies that undermine democratic processes or institutions in the Western Balkans.

MONTENEGRO

Svetozar Marovic (Marovic) was the President of the Serbia and Montenegro common state from 2003–2006, and served as former deputy president of the Montenegro Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) until 2015. Marovic was arrested by Montenegro authorities in 2015 for suspected involvement in large-scale corruption cases relating to construction projects in the municipality of Budva. Montenegro prosecutors accused Marovic of using his influence as a senior official in the DPS to approve a series of property purchases and construction deals that reaped large gains for several companies but caused significant losses for the local

government. In 2016, Marovic signed two plea deals admitting to all the corruption charges against him. He was sentenced to multiple years in prison and was ordered to return over \$1 million to the state but fled to Serbia before serving his sentence.

Marovic was designated pursuant to E.O. 14033 for being responsible for, or complicit in, or having directly or indirectly engaged in, corruption related to the Western Balkans, including corruption by, on behalf of, or otherwise related to a government in the Western Balkans, or a current or former government official at any level of government in the Western Balkans, such as the misappropriation of public assets, expropriation of private assets for personal gain or political purposes, or bribery.

NORTH MACEDONIA

Nikola Gruevski (Gruevski) has been convicted and remains a suspect in numerous cases of corruption, and has been accused of abuse of office, money laundering, and other offenses related to his time as the prime minister of North Macedonia from 2006 to 2016. He has continuously evaded capture for his 2018 conviction by a court in North Macedonia on corruption related charges, which represents a serious setback for accountability for corruption and corruption-related activities in North Macedonia. Gruevski is the owner and director of Hungarian company **I.C.I.C. KFT**, which is registered as a limited liability company in Pecel, Hungary.

Gruevski was designated pursuant to E.O. 14033 for being responsible for or complicit in, or for having directly or indirectly engaged in, corruption related to the Western Balkans, including corruption by, on behalf of, or otherwise related to a government in the Western Balkans, or a current or former government official at any level of government in the Western Balkans, such as the misappropriation of public assets, expropriation of private assets for personal gain or political purposes, or bribery. I.C.I.C. KFT was designated pursuant to E.O. 14033 for being owned or controlled by Gruevski.

Sasho Mijalkov (Mijalkov) is the former chief of counterintelligence in North Macedonia. Mijalkov allegedly engaged in a vote rigging scheme and an expansive illegal wiretapping operation targeting 20,000 people, including opposition politicians, judges, and journalists, that provided political and economic gain, and which precipitated a two-year political crisis in the country by revealing alleged government interference in the judiciary, control over several media outlets, and election interference. In February 2021, given his role as lead organizer of

the wiretapping scheme, he was convicted by a court in North Macedonia of criminal association, abuse of office, and receiving a reward for illegal influence. Subsequently, in April 2021, a court in North Macedonia convicted Mijalkov of abuse of power over a surveillance equipment procurement deal.

Mijalkov was designated pursuant to E.O. 14033 for being responsible for or complicit in, or having directly or indirectly engaged in, actions or policies that undermine democratic processes or institutions in the Western Balkans.

SANCTIONS IMPLICATIONS

As a result of today's action, all property and interests in property of the designated individuals or entities that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons must be blocked and reported to OFAC. OFAC's regulations generally prohibit all transactions by U.S. persons or persons within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of designated or otherwise blocked persons. U.S. persons may face civil or criminal penalties for violations of E.O. 14033.

The power and integrity of OFAC sanctions derive not only from its ability to designate and add persons to the SDN List, but also from its willingness to remove persons from the SDN List consistent with the law. The ultimate goal of sanctions is not to punish, but to bring about a positive change in behavior. For information concerning the process for seeking removal from an OFAC list, including the SDN List, please refer to OFAC's [Frequently Asked Question 897](#).

[For detailed information on the process to submit a request for removal from an OFAC sanctions list.](#)

[For identifying information on the individuals and entity designated today.](#)

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