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60 Bosnian Serbs Dismissed for Aid to War Crimes Figure

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LJUBLJANA, Slovenia, June 30 — Sixty Bosnian Serb politicians and officials, including the interior minister and speaker of Parliament, were dismissed Wednesday for their failure to arrest the region's leading war crimes suspect, Dr. Radovan Karadzic.

Lord Ashdown, exerting his authority as the international high representative for Bosnia, also froze the bank accounts of the main Bosnian Serb party, the Serbian Democratic Party, or S.D.S., and several major companies.

At a news conference in the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo, Lord Ashdown said that both the party and senior officials of the Bosnian Serb government were colluding to ensure that Dr. Karadzic was not arrested and handed over to the International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslavia at The Hague.

"The R.S." — Bosnian Serb republic — "has been in the grip of a small band of corrupt politicians and criminals for too long," he said.

In addition to the interior minister, Zoran Djeric, and the Parliament speaker, Dragan Kalinic, who is also the head of the Serbian Democratic Party, the list of those removed from office included mayors, police commanders and members of Parliament. The office of the high representative was given the power to suspend politicians and officials by the Dayton Accords, which ended the 1992-95 Bosnian war.

The accusation that police and government officials have cooperated to protect Dr. Karadzic is not new, and has been made repeatedly by Western officials and the war crimes tribunal's chief prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte. But the extent of the measures taken by Lord Ashdown took many by surprise.

"Nobody expected measures of such magnitude," said Senad Slatina, an analyst with the International Crisis Group, a political think tank with offices in Sarajevo. "He really struck at R.S. hard. If you go through the list in detail there is not a single large, publicly-owned company that has not been touched. These are the businesses that politicians find most attractive."

Dr. Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader throughout the war, was indicted in 1995 on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity, including ordering the execution of more than 7,000 Muslim men and boys in and around Srebrenica. An international arrest

warrant was issued in 1996, and Dr. Karadzic announced his retirement from politics days later.

Despite the presence of thousands of NATO peacekeepers — 60,000 at their peak and now around 7,000 — he has eluded many operations to arrest him.

A spokesman for the office of the high representative said government officials and company directors had been channeling public funds into their own criminal networks as well as providing support for Dr. Karadzic.

"Many of these figures straddle the area between the Serbian Democratic Party, and the criminal underworld," said Julian Braithwaite, chief spokesman for Lord Ashdown. "These are the shadowy figures pulling the strings behind the county."

Lord Ashdown said he had taken steps to freeze the party's bank accounts, more than 60 in all. He said that an additional \$622,000 of annual public funds given to the party would be diverted to institutions seeking the arrest of Dr. Karadzic and upholding law and order.

Proof that Dr. Karadzic "still enjoyed a financial relationship with the S.D.S.," which he helped found in 1990, had been provided by a letter written by Dr. Karadzic himself, Lord Ashdown said. He gave no further details about the letter.

Forty-eight of the people dismissed from their jobs on Wednesday could be reinstated once Dr. Karadzic is arrested, Lord Ashdown said.

Officials in Lord Ashdown's office said that the measures alone were unlikely to prompt Dr. Karadzic's arrest, and that many of those on the list would retain significant influence without their public posts. But deprived of public funds, the officials said, the cost of continuing to support their one-time leader would be much higher.

"They are paying a much higher price than they were yesterday," Mr. Braithwaite said. "We hope that they will conclude it is no longer worth it."