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SRSB Inaugurates New Navigational Equipment at Pristina Airport

PRISTINA---SRSB Bernard Kouchner today inaugurated the Instrument Landing System (ILS), other navigational equipment and new ground lighting facilities at Pristina's Slatina Airport.

The British Department of International Development (DFID) donated the equipment, valued at nearly nine million deutsche mark. Thanking DFID, Dr.Kouchner said that the equipment would not only improve flight safety but also go a long way in improving the communication and travel links of Kosovo with the outside world. It would benefit KFOR and UNMIK personnel as well as international NGOs and volunteers travelling to Pristina to help in the reconstruction of Kosovo. He said air traffic to Pristina was rapidly increasing. There are going to be more commercial flights, apart from the flights of the returnees to Kosovo.

The ILS will allow Pristina airport to meet international standards for instrument flight rules. It has been approved by the International Civilian Aviation Organization (ICAO). With the installation of this equipment, Slatina airport is equivalent to any all weather international airport.

Dr Kouchner also paid tribute to the victims of the World Food Programme air crash in November last year.

Currently, air traffic control continues to be handled by the Royal Air force of the United Kingdom and will handed over to Italian forces in June. In the meantime, local traffic controllers are being trained. The airport handles about 1000 passengers a day currently. Ten aircraft companies fly regularly to Slatina. A new company, Air Kosova will start its operations by the end of this month with two flights to Zurich. There will also be an air taxi service by the end of the month with flights to Thessaloniki, Ohrid and Skopje.

COMKFOR Lieutenant General Ortuno, who was also present for the ceremony, said the airport would be a great asset for KFOR and for the population in Kosovo.