

# YUGO NEWS



## Considering the Military Option (Part II)

(Continuing the article  
in the 6/93 issue)

### Sarajevo

Deteriorating conditions in Sarajevo could make peace talks irrelevant.

The Serb offensive launched on 7/21 south of Sarajevo has severed land routes. "If you control Mount Igman, you control the city," said a Pentagon official. Since then, the city has been supplied only by the airlift of a meager 175 tons of food per day.

Without military intervention, many of Sarajevo's remaining 250,000 inhabitants could starve as winter sets in.

### Targets

NATO approved a list of targets for bombing raids and agreed that a strike would first be subject to the authorization of the U.N. secretary general.

The bombing is supposed to be so "proportionate," so finely calibrated depending on Serb behavior, that the temptation for U.N. meddling will be strong. With all these caveats, no wonder many Bosnia hands think it's all just a bluff anyway.

The initial focus of the

raids would be the area surrounding Sarajevo. The allies approved a three-phase approach under which the first air strike would be limited. The second round of raids would hit tactical, battlefield targets such as artillery emplacements. Finally, if Serb behavior didn't change, a broader range of strategic strikes would be carried out against munitions dumps and command-and-control centers.

The list of possible targets was put together jointly by NATO and the U.N.

### Trigger

Trigger points would include renewed heavy shelling of Sarajevo, interruption of the humanitarian supplies being shipped to the city and cutoffs of the city's fuel, electricity or water.

### Land War

The allies make no mention of the other military measures that air strikes would almost certainly call for. Some skepticism is therefore in order. The bombers should be sent in only if the politicians know what the purpose is, and the soldiers are ready to do what the airmen cannot do, and all of us recognize the price that would have to be paid.

With the Serbs getting the lion's share of Bosnia, thousands of troops will be

deployed in the rugged mountains and forested valleys of Bosnia to stand precariously between the Serbs, Croats and Muslims.

Worst of all, any plausible intervention requires the cooperation of the Croats, who control the land between the coast and Sarajevo. But the Croats, now involved in their own land-grabbing contest with the Muslims, are less likely to cooperate than they might have been earlier.

### Quagmire

So far, most Western leaders have refused to even consider such sweeping military intervention, fearing that the U.S. and Europe would become bogged down in a Balkan "quagmire." (Something a military decision, for better or worse, would avoid).

But, ironically, a peace based on a partition may bring the West the very quagmire it has so studiously avoided.

### Guerrilla War

In Sarajevo, commanders barely know what their troops are doing.

What they are doing is fulfilling some of the worst fears about what might happen if Serbs and Croats carved up Bosnia, leaving Muslims in a sort of Gaza strip. With nothing to lose,

they have no reason to give up. One of the more fearsome armies in Bosnia now is the "Krajina Brigade." This is the army of the Muslim dispossessed. Their aim is not to carve out new land for themselves in central Bosnia - it is to defeat the weaker Croats first, before turning on the Serbs and fighting to return home.

Just as in neighboring Croatia, the presence of peacekeepers will do little to smother Bosnia's raging ethnic hatred.

### Conclusion

Those closer to the war have two big objections to air strikes. One is that it encourages the Bosnians to resist peace plans in the hope of rescue. The other is that, by inviting Serb reprisals, the air strikes could shut down the aid on which Sarajevo depends.

To put it in a less flattering way, the U.S. is offering to bomb the Serbs in order to persuade the Bosnians to surrender. This assumes that the Bosnians will conspire in their own demise, which belies Balkan history. And it assumes the Serbs will abide by any agreement, another leap of faith.

Whatever happens, military action must be coordinated with the U.N. in New York, and with peacekeepers and aid deliverers in Bosnia. Who would be in final control - NATO or the U.N. - remains in dispute.

### 6 August 93

The Serbs pledged to open Sarajevo, a condition set by the Muslims for their return to peace talks.

### 10 August 93

Geneva talks between Serbs, Croats and Muslims remained deadlocked. The U.S. is **"very skeptical"** of the chances for a rapid pullout of Serb forces around Sarajevo.

### 11 August 93

The Serbs retook positions on the heights around Sarajevo that they had turned over to the U.N. earlier this week. Asked by a reporter if Western threats had prompted their earlier withdrawal, Serb soldiers "burst out laughing."



### 12 August 93

Gen. Shalikashvili was appointed chairman of the JCofS. As the former CO of NATO, he was intimately involved in Bosnian planning. Taking his place is Adm. Boorda, former CO of NATO forces in southern Europe (those preparing for the air strikes).

*Note: These look like strong moves to prepare for action in Bosnia.*

### 13 August 93

The Serbs refused to complete their withdrawal

from the heights of Sarajevo until the U.N. declares them a neutral zone.

### 16 August 93

The Serbs completed their withdrawal from Mount Igman.

The first medical evacuees from Sarajevo arrived in Europe.

### 17 August 93

Bosnia's factions agreed to let the U.N. administer postwar Sarajevo - but only after a final settlement is reached on the division of Bosnia.

### 18 August 93

Bosnian peace talks stalled because of differences over control of Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia.

### 19 August 93

... Then again, maybe they didn't. UNPROFOR reported that there are still Serb troops on Mount Igman.

### 20 August 93

Mostar received its first aid in two months, but the convoy wasn't allowed into the besieged Muslim quarter.

Izetbegovic refused to sign any future peace accord unless the Croats and Serbs lifted their sieges of, respectively, Mostar and Sarajevo. Milosevic said that "all conditions" (like imminent Muslim collapse?) were in place for a final settlement.

### The Ecology of War

The overall complexity of a military intervention - in terms of consequences if not pure operations - is direct-

ly proportionate to the degree of cultural difference between the intervening power and the object of intervention, all other factors being equal.

In Vietnam, instead of exploiting a culture's strengths, we undermined them.

In Somalia, the cultural-political system automatically sought to achieve balance, as does any ecosystem. Starvation, massacres and violence are a "natural" response to systemic disruption, the largely unconscious attempt by a human "ecosystem" to right itself and find a new balance. Often the wisest choice, when confronted with such distant horrors, is simply to let nature take its course.

In failing to analyze the total system we entered, we neglected to foresee the effects our interference would have beyond the immediate "feel-good" results of delivering a bit of rice.

The U.S., in its mix of good intentions and pride, is simply bothering a human ecosystem that is in the process of seeking its own balance. The organic process is ugly. But neglect by the outside world may be the only way to achieve lasting results.

The reactions we are witnessing are horrifying, but they are only so extreme because the system was artificially held out of balance for so long. (A natural example is the Mississippi River flooding, made more severe in large part because of extensive damming and leveeing). With

our sumptuous Euro-American concern for individual fates, we may be prejudicing the fate of nations.

Unless we want to cause immense, if inadvertent, "environmental damage" to the foreign states and regions where we deploy, we must learn to develop an overview both breathtakingly wide and profoundly deep. We must understand the man behind the arms and the culture behind the man. We must learn the ecology of intervention.

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### 23 August 93

"If we don't manage to get victory at the negotiating table the only thing remaining to us is to achieve it on the battlefield. There is no third way, either negotiations or war," said Izetbegovic.

✦ ✧ ✧

An infantry platoon from the Berlin Brigade will man two OP's in the 15-mile U.S. sector along Macedonia's easternmost border with Serbia. The platoon will also send out 5-man patrols, which will last 6 to 36 hours. The patrols are designed to "see and be seen," said the CO of the U.S. task force in Macedonia. The task force marks the first time U.S. combat forces have served in UNPROFOR. The UNPROFOR CO intends to use the U.S. troops as a reserve to be inserted into trouble spots as a **warning to Serbia**. "It is more serious for the Serbs if they do something with Americans here," he said.

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### 24 August 93

The Serbs still have 120 soldiers on Mount Igman.

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There are 55,000 Muslims, including 30,000 DC's, in Mostar on the verge of starvation. Hospital conditions are desperate. The Croats said they would let a U.N. relief convoy in.

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### 25 August 93

Mostar is now the U.N.'s "#1 priority." Croats want to make Mostar the capital of a Bosnian Croat state.

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### 26 August 93

A U.N. relief convoy entered Mostar. Thousands of exhausted **Muslims mobbed the trucks** as they pulled to a stop. Only 2/3's of the supplies were destined for Muslims; the rest, inexplicably, (a bribe perhaps?) will be given to the relatively well-supplied besieging Croats. The USAF, meanwhile, began relief air-drops.

✦ ✧ ✧

Bosnian forces **attacked a UNPROFOR patrol** on Mount Igman. The French peacekeepers caused an undetermined number of casualties, forcing the Bosnians to withdraw.

✦ ✧ ✧

Soil and plant sample were gathered by UNPROFOR after an alleged Muslim **gas attack** on Serb positions in the eastern Bosnian town of Boskovici. According to the Serbs, they were attacked with Chlorine-filled 120mm mortar shells. The effective radius of the gas was said to be 65 feet.

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### 27 August 93

Fearing renewed Croat attacks, Muslims prevented the U.N. relief convoy from leaving Mostar.

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### 28 August 93

Bosnian leaders condemned



the latest peace plan, saying it legalizes the gains of "force and genocide." The plan would give the Muslim-led government 31% of the republic. Serbs will get 52% - down from the 70% of Bosnia they now control - and Croats 17%.

No one has explained how the Muslims will be able to secure the resulting 'corridors' without clawing back some of their lost territory - or what will prevent the Serbs from sniping at, and eventually destroying, them. The peace plan enshrines Muslim vulnerability. Yet Western negotiators are pressing Izetbegovic to accept the plan. If not, aid could be cut off - and in a curious twist of history, the Bosnians would stand accused of prolonging the war.

✦ ✧ ✧

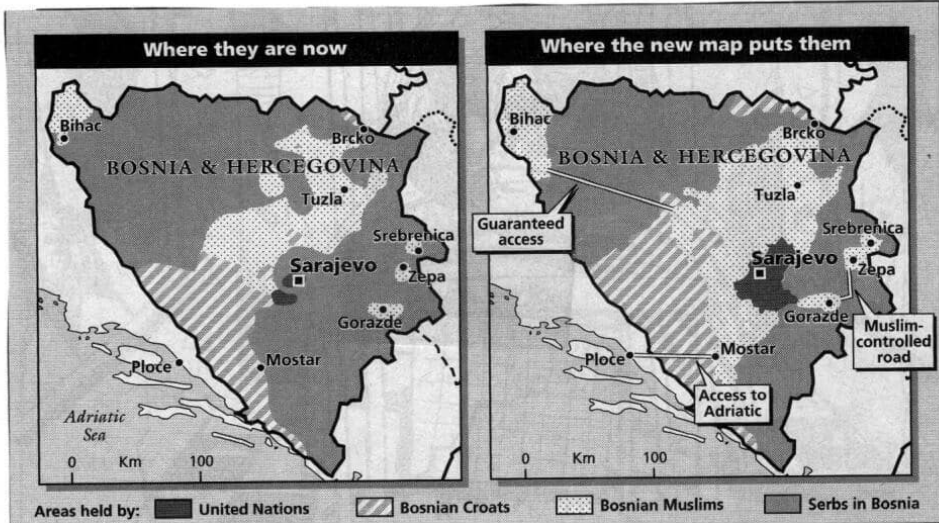
Desperate Muslims again prevented the U.N. relief convoy from leaving Mostar. "They are afraid of what will happen when the convoy leaves, and the consensus is that they have a point," said the UNHCR. Meanwhile, a relief column left nearby Medjugorje with water and commo for the U.N. personnel trapped in the city.

## 29 August 93

The U.N. relief convoy left Mostar after being trapped there for three days. 52 Spanish peacekeepers with 12 APV's had to stay behind. The U.N. CA chief didn't know how long the Spaniards would remain in Mostar.

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Izetbegovic urged an ad hoc Bosnian parliament to recognize that the dismemberment of Bosnia is inevitable. He said the current peace plan is a good basis



for further negotiations, but it can't be accepted as is. Meanwhile, the Bosnian Croat assembly simultaneously accepted the plan and declared a Bosnian Croat state. Bosnian Serbs also accepted the 31-52-17 plan.

## 30 August 93

Karadzic might be willing to make some marginal changes on the map, but he ruled out any more negotiations, saying further conditions from the Muslims would constitute a rejection of the plan. The Bosnian parliament defended its demand for changes to the peace plan, saying that any final deal may need NATO military backing.

## 31 August 93

The U.S. will provide troops to enforce a peace accord in Bosnia, but only after assurances that the plan is "fair" and "enforceable" said Clinton. He also would first "want to know whose responsibility it is to stay (and) for how long." (*Reacting, not acting and following, not leading* ...) What constitutes fairness and enforceability was not defined.

✦ ✧ ✧

The Bosnian assembly said it would need more **rad-**

**ical changes** to the peace plan, including: more land in eastern Bosnia, joint control of Mostar with the Croats and a land route to the Adriatic Sea.

## 1 September 93

Karadzic and Izetbegovic agreed to a cessation of hostilities as part of a five-point plan that also included prisoner exchanges and a telephone hot line between Serb and Bosnian military HQ's.

✦ ✧ ✧

In Mostar, after six days, the **Muslims released the Spanish peacekeepers** they'd held hostage. The U.N. sent in three new Spanish APV's in exchange. (*Hostage rotation?*)

## 2 September 93

Peace **talks broke off** after the Serbs and Croats rejected the Muslim's latest demands.

## 4 September 93

How might the Muslims react to the breakdown in peace talks? Desperate and battered, **Sarajevo** might be ready to sue for peace. So might other besieged towns, like Mostar and Srebrenica. But the mood in the rest of Bosnia is very different.

**Tuzla** comes as a shock. It is not besieged, not destroyed and Croats still fight side-by-side with the Bosnian army. A delegation from Tuzla to the peace talks was expelled from the conference because they objected to Lord Owen's lumping them together as the "Muslim side."

The atmosphere in **Zenica** is very different. Serbs and Croats live in fear of the Muslim Armed Forces, a militia group they say has harassed, robbed, evicted and kidnapped them. They want to leave, but local authorities will not let Serbs and Croats out. *(There are no virgins in this war.)*

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## 8 September 93

The U.N. reported that thousands of Muslims have been detained in "brutal and degrading" camps by Croats near Mostar.

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## 9 September 93

Clinton refused a Bosnian request to set a deadline for U.S. air strikes if the Serbs don't withdraw their artillery overlooking Sarajevo. He did promise, however, to send U.S. troops as part of a NATO-led peacekeeping force.

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## Deterrence

What kind of tyranny are we supposed to be deterring? Who is it, exactly, that must be stopped to spare the West? If the former Soviet Union experiences counter-counter-revolution, its leader will be the one we must impress with our fortitude, and he will be no more cowed by our military actions in Bosnia than by the moral authority of the pope. He will instead ask how many divisions we have.

Until the become war protesters, humanitarians usually find it difficult to grasp that internationalization and escalation of limited war drive up the number of casualties. Intervention based purely on humanitarian concerns can be justified only if no risk exists that the intervention itself will not make things worse. Unintended consequences can dwarf the human tragedy that stimulated action in the first place. It is heartbreaking, but it is true, that fewer people may suffer if the war in the Balkans is contained rather than if the rest of the world joins in.

This kind of war finds its own equilibrium and comes to a halt if none of the sides imagines that it will be saved by intervention and holds out for more territory than it itself can secure without paying a terrible price in blood. The hope we have extended to Bosnian Muslims has killed as many of them as have the Serbs and Croats.

Just as the Muslims have fought on against all odds in the hope that America will enter the war, it would be in the Serbs' practiced interest to throw themselves against whoever opposed them, at whatever cost, to awaken the sympathy of Russia.

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## Who's Who



**Izetbegovic**  
President of  
Bosnia



**Karadzic**  
Leader of  
Bosnian-Serbs



**Tudjman**  
President of  
Croatia



**Milosevic**  
President of  
Serbia

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## Quote

"I am not one of those who believes that a few well-chosen bombs will take care of a thousand years of history. They won't."  
(Gen. Colin Powell (Ret.))

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## Sources

Wall Street Journal, The Economist, The Army Times, FBIS Daily Reports, The Fayetteville Observer-Times, USA Today, Langenscheidt Serbo-Croatian Dictionary