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National Intelligence Council

SPECIAL ESTIMATE

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Strict Enforcement of the Exclusion Zones: Military and Political Implications

The maintenance of a credible NATO military threat will continue to restrain the Bosnian Serbs, who want to avoid direct military engagement with the West. Strict enforcement of the exclusion zones using air power alone, however, would not force the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Contact Group plan. Proportionate airstrikes may be enough to improve UNPROFOR's ability to fulfill its mandate in Bosnia by improving its long-term security, but a concerted air campaign would lead the Bosnian Serbs to respond with major military actions, including against UNPROFOR. In the absence of a credible NATO military threat, the Bosnian Serbs would test the limits of the Allies' determination and would increase their violations of the exclusion zones if NATO's resolve for military action appeared uncertain.

Any airstrikes would give a major boost to the Bosnian Government, making it less inclined to compromise. Belgrade probably would tolerate proportionate airstrikes against the Bosnian Serbs, but it would not allow them to suffer a major military defeat. Moscow would also support proportionate airstrikes if it were involved in the decisionmaking process. US leadership would be essential in obtaining NATO support for a policy of strict enforcement of the exclusion zones. Prospects for gaining support would be enhanced by a US pledge not to unilaterally lift the arms embargo and a US willingness to commit ground forces in Bosnia.

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SPECIAL ESTIMATE

Sarajevo and Gorazde: The Security Situation

The overall security situation in Sarajevo and the eastern enclaves is substantially better than it was last February when UN and NATO declarations led to a cessation of the shelling of Sarajevo. The security situation in Sarajevo, however, has deteriorated since Bosnian Serb rejection of the Contact Group plan in late July as both sides have increased military operations.

The Bosnian Serbs have been unwilling to press their military advantage against the enclaves partly out of concern over the possibility of a major NATO military response. Moreover, the Bosnian Serbs probably believe their de facto control over the enclaves will eventually cause them to fall without further military action. Nevertheless, living conditions in Gorazde and the other eastern enclaves of Zepa and Srebrenica are determined by the Bosnian Serbs.

Bosnian Serb Strategic Calculus

The Bosnian Serbs judge that they now enjoy a strategic advantage on the battlefield and are likely to avoid actions that they feel would provoke a NATO response or lead to the imposition of new sanctions. They will continue to test the limits of the Allies' resolve, however, with actions designed to maintain their superiority over government forces, consolidate and make permanent gains already achieved, and wear down the international community.

Bosnian Serbs' control over access to Sarajevo is crucial to maintaining pressure on both the Bosnian Government and the international community. By interdicting humanitarian aid and essential services, and by threatening renewed casualties to both residents and peacekeepers, the Bosnian Serbs seek to demonstrate that they can control events on the ground and ensure that no policy can be imposed without their acquiescence.

The Bosnian Serbs cannot completely strangle Sarajevo or capture the city, but they can substantially increase the suffering there by cutting off humanitarian relief supplies and utilities and resuming their shelling of the city. UNPROFOR's presence in Sarajevo and NATO's use of military force have restrained the Bosnian Serbs.

The Impact of Airstrikes on the Bosnian Serbs

In the absence of a credible NATO military threat, the Bosnian Serbs would increase violations of the exclusion zones around Sarajevo and Gorazde. If NATO conducted proportionate airstrikes keyed to specific violations, the Bosnian Serbs would move, as they have in the past, to alter their behavior within the exclusion zones. They also would refocus military efforts in areas not covered by the UN or NATO.

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Derived from multiple sources

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The threat of a wide-ranging air campaign could compel the Bosnian Serbs to call for a return to negotiations and make minor concessions. They would still seek to retain fundamental control over humanitarian relief and UN operations through civilian protests and military actions short of those restricted by the UN. The Bosnian Serbs would almost certainly respond to a major air campaign with direct military action against UNPROFOR.

- Neither strict enforcement of the exclusion zones through proportionate airstrikes nor a wide-ranging air campaign would be sufficient to defend the eastern enclaves from a concerted Bosnian Serb offensive or force the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Contact Group plan.

Bosnian Serb restraint would evaporate rapidly if the international community's resolve for further action appeared uncertain. They would quickly take actions around Sarajevo such as impeding relief operations that were unlikely to provoke an international military response.

Effect on the Bosnian Government

Limited airstrikes, and especially an air campaign, would embolden the Bosnian Government and make it unwilling to accept further changes in the Contact Group plan. Government forces would seek to increase military operations against the Bosnian Serbs, and the Bosnian Government would almost certainly publicly and privately push for even greater NATO military action.

Belgrade's Reaction

Belgrade would continue to press the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Contact Group plan even if NATO undertook proportionate airstrikes to ensure compliance in the exclusion zones. While not abandoning its public support for the Contact Group plan, Serbia would almost certainly condemn the West for sabotaging chances for peace by resorting to military action. Belgrade would also call for an even-handed approach to implementing strict enforcement of the exclusion zones.

- Belgrade would not allow the Bosnian Serbs to suffer a major military defeat. A prolonged series of airstrikes or other military actions against the Bosnian Serbs would probably undercut Belgrade's willingness to strictly enforce its current embargo.

Moscow's Reaction

Russia would seek to minimize NATO military and political actions in a region many Russians still consider of historic interest. Moreover, Moscow would continue to seek a major role in any decisions on using force in Bosnia and would expect to be consulted before any airstrikes. If it believed it was not a full partner in the decisionmaking process, Moscow would be unlikely to support strict enforcement.

The Yel'tsin government would not support a sustained wide-ranging air campaign against the Bosnian Serbs and would accept only proportionate airstrikes in response to specific violations. Moscow would also continue to lobby

for easing sanctions against Belgrade as a reward for Milosevic's support for the Contact Group plan and would oppose any punitive acts against Serbia.

Effects on UNPROFOR

Strict enforcement through proportionate airstrikes would lead to increased harassment of UN personnel and relief workers by the Bosnian Serbs, such as that seen after the April airstrikes near Gorazde. Should NATO initiate an air campaign, the Bosnian Serbs would take some peacekeepers hostage and increase interference with relief convoys and flights. UN personnel in the isolated eastern enclaves would be especially vulnerable.

- Strict enforcement through proportionate airstrikes may be enough to improve UNPROFOR's ability to fulfill its mandate and would improve its long-term security, but airpower alone is unlikely to overcome the Allies' desire to withdraw their forces from Bosnia.

Allied Attitudes

US leadership will be essential for moving forward with a policy of strict enforcement. The Allies' concern over the safety of their UNPROFOR contingents and their desire to minimize involvement in the conflict will make it difficult to reach consensus on strict enforcement. The British and Canadians are likely to be most wary because of concern for their troops and their desire to avoid further military involvement in the Balkans conflict. The Turks will strongly support the initiative because of Ankara's concern over the welfare of Bosnia's Muslims.

What Could Affect the Prospects?

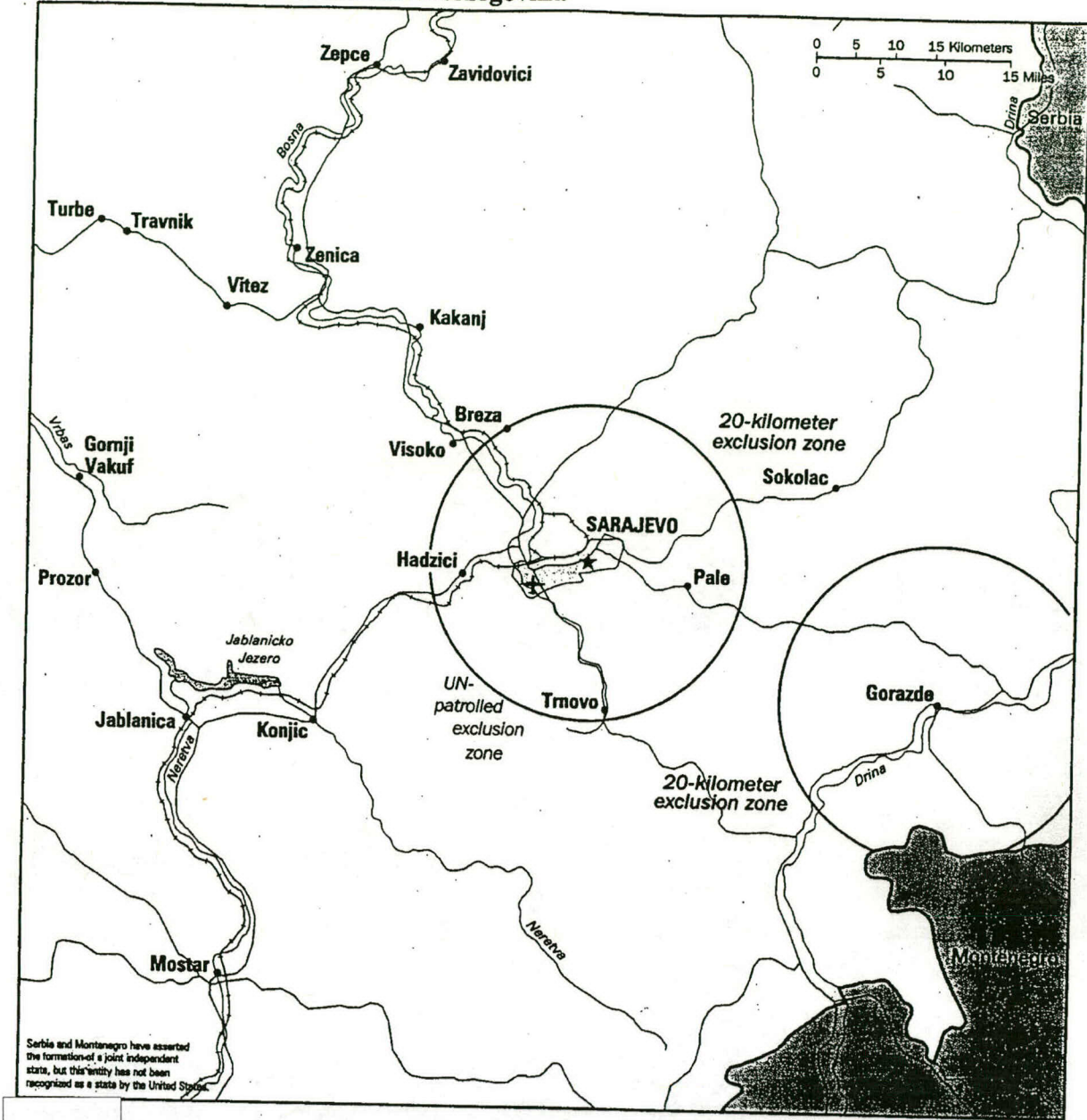
The prospects for getting Allied consensus for strict enforcement would be enhanced if the United States were prepared to deploy ground troops to Bosnia. NATO Allies would press for just such a commitment as a condition for greater military action. The Allies also would seek an assurance that the United States would not unilaterally lift the arms embargo as their price for supporting strict enforcement.

The Allies are concerned that a wider retaliatory policy would increase the chances for escalation of the conflict. A policy of proportionately striking only specific targets in violation of the exclusion zones would improve chances for obtaining their consensus on strict enforcement.

A US willingness to ease sanctions on Serbia—a move increasingly favored in Europe—could be used to gain support from the West Europeans and Russia for strict enforcement. Many states oppose targeting solely the Bosnian Serbs and would be more willing to support an evenhanded application of strict enforcement, which punished Muslims and Croats as well. A major incident involving the Bosnian Serbs, however, would galvanize the international community to support strict enforcement against them, including airstrikes against weapons in the exclusion zone.

This Special Estimate was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for General Purpose Forces and the National Intelligence Officer for Europe and was coordinated with the Deputy Director for Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency; the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency; the Director, National Security Agency; and the Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy; and the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force.

Exclusion Zones in Bosnia and Herzegovina

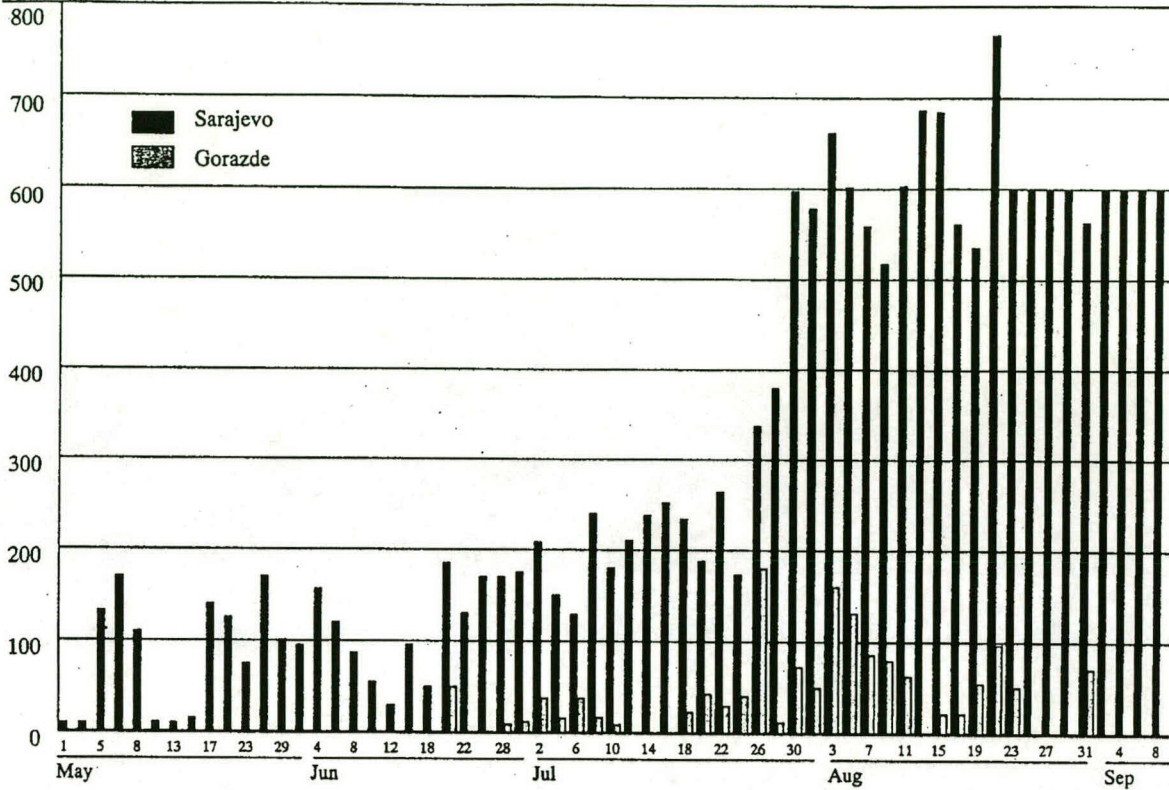


Serbia and Montenegro have asserted the formation of a joint independent state, but this entity has not been recognized as a state by the United States.

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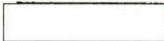
Ceasefire Violations

Number of violations



On 24 August 1994, the United Nations stopped reporting daily totals of cease-fire violations in the Sarajevo 20-kilometer exclusion zone.

On 7 September 1994, the United Nations reported cease-fire violations in the Sarajevo exclusion zone had been averaging 600 a day.



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