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National Intelligence Council

## SPECIAL ESTIMATE

## Prospects for UNPROFOR Withdrawal From Bosnia

### Summary

We judge the probability of a complete withdrawal of UNPROFOR forces from Bosnia in the next three to six months to be less than 1 in 4. These odds would increase significantly if there were a major deterioration in the security situation. Withdrawal is a virtual certainty if the arms embargo on the Bosnian Government is lifted.

UNPROFOR European contributors believe that withdrawal would worsen the bloodshed, further discredit the United Nations and regional organizations, and cause a backlash at home. These governments, moreover, fear that their withdrawal would prompt attempts to establish a predominantly Islamic peacekeeping force in Bosnia.

If the arms embargo is lifted, most European countries and Russia will not only withdraw their forces but will also press for terminating the UN effort. They will blame those supporting "lift" for the consequences. Although Islamic countries have expressed willingness to replace departing European forces if the UN mandate continued, the United Nations is unlikely to sanction an Islamic force. Some Islamic states may then attempt to form an alternative peacekeeping presence, possibly under the aegis of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

UNPROFOR's withdrawal could not be accomplished without casualties. Both warring parties would "worst case" the situation: the Serbs, fearing NATO intervention, and the Bosnians, fearing abandonment, would obstruct withdrawal. Local units and civilians also would attempt to prevent a UN departure.

~~Secret~~SE 94-5  
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SPECIAL ESTIMATE







The United States would be expected to provide multiple ground combat brigades, logistic units, and air assets to assist in extraction. The risk of a prolonged and more extensive operation would be substantial. As NATO forces secure lines of communications and UN protected areas to cover an UNPROFOR departure, the situation may improve to the point that the Bosnian Government presses for their retention.

A unified, successful extraction operation would mute, at least temporarily, the effects of Allied differences over Bosnia. The Allies nevertheless would identify their frustrating experience as a setback to NATO.

#### **Withdrawal Unlikely in Next Few Months**

In the next three to six months, the odds are less than 1 in 4 that the United Nations will end its mandate for UNPROFOR or that major contributors will withdraw their contingents. Though exasperated by hostage taking and other harassment, contributors agree that the war and human suffering would become much worse without UNPROFOR's presence.

Recent events may prompt some European contributors to UNPROFOR to implement further restrictions on their forces' participation:

- Several governments probably will press for redeployment of their forces to reduce the risk of exposure to hostage taking and, if it becomes necessary, to ease their withdrawal.
- Some of these countries also could take advantage of scheduled troop rotations to reduce the number and exposure of their forces.

These governments fear that escalating fighting in the aftermath of a withdrawal would produce a domestic backlash and further damage the

#### **Working Premises**

- *No political solution will be reached in the next six months.*
- *The Contact Group remains intact and continues to operate.*
- *The political leadership of the warring parties remains unchanged.*
- *All contributing parties accept the need for NATO command and control of an UNPROFOR withdrawal.*

credibility of NATO and the European Union. Moreover, pledges from Islamic governments to replace forces that would be withdrawn add to European incentives to stay. The Europeans fear a residual Islamic force in Bosnia would create an explosive situation.

France, which assumes the EU presidency in January and faces a presidential election next year, does not want Bosnia to become a major political issue. Britain's Conservatives similarly do not want to be implicated in a major foreign policy failure. Other European contributors will follow the lead of France and Britain.

The warring parties themselves see more advantages than disadvantages to a continued UNPROFOR presence. For the Bosnian Serbs, UNPROFOR provides political leverage with European countries and deters major NATO airstrikes. The Bosnian Government sees UNPROFOR as a small, but important, barrier to Bosnian Serb aggression and a sign of Western support. Leaders of both sides will try to prevent harassment from escalating to major attacks that would induce members of UNPROFOR to withdraw their troops.



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### What Would Precipitate Withdrawal?

The most likely event that would trigger UNPROFOR's withdrawal is lifting of the arms embargo on the Bosnian Government. If this occurred, most contributing European countries would withdraw their contingents and seek to end the UN mandate, as would Russia and Ukraine. European governments would blame renewed fighting and the failure of the humanitarian effort on those who sponsored the lift.

Although less likely, a dramatic surge in calculated attacks, a prolonged blockade against UNPROFOR units or a spectacular event that resulted in numerous casualties would convince governments and UN officials that UNPROFOR's position was untenable. Some contingents, especially if they sustain major casualties, may be withdrawn unilaterally. The United Nations would try to negotiate a peaceful withdrawal, but success would be unlikely.

### An Islamic Force?

OIC countries indicated at their summit in December 1994 that member states would be willing to replace departing Western peacekeeping forces. Participating countries would initially seek a continuing UN sanction. France, Britain, and Russia, however, almost certainly would oppose a continued mandate in the Security Council—resulting in a major split within the United Nations. OIC states would then attempt to find other means of remaining; the Malaysians have publicly stated they would do so even without a UN mandate. Their continuing presence in Bosnia, meanwhile, would fuel the conflict.

Even in the very unlikely event that some type of mandate could be arranged, the Islamic units would require logistic support from the OIC and

### *The Future of UNPROFOR in Croatia*

*UNPROFOR's future is also clouded by events concerning Croatia—especially the 20 January 1995 deadline for a review of the UN mandate and the threat of renewed hostilities in the Krajina. Withdrawing UN forces from Croatia probably would complicate operations in Bosnia. UNPROFOR/Croatia is even more diverse than UNPROFOR/Bosnia. In addition, lines of communication for UNPROFOR/Bosnia all run through Croatia.*

the West to stay the course. Furthermore, these forces would not compensate for the loss of better trained and equipped French, British and other units.

It is unclear what Islamic contributors who choose to remain envision their troops doing. Some may hope to continue a humanitarian/peacekeeping role. Others may foresee a role in support of government forces. Islamic forces, in our judgment, would be denied access to Serb-controlled routes and areas and would lack the staying power to perform the humanitarian mission and in some cases even to defend themselves. Should Islamic forces become involved in the conflict in support of the Bosnian Government, their military contribution probably would be marginal. In view of all these complications, we suspect few Islamic states would actually remain in Bosnia if a UN mandate or substantial Western backing were unavailable.

### No Easy Withdrawal

Withdrawal probably could not be accomplished without casualties and violence. While both sides will seek to avoid major battles, the

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intensity of the warring parties' reactions would depend on whether the withdrawal is seen as a prelude to major Western military involvement. All parties are likely to expect the worst case from their perspective: the Bosnian Serbs that intervention is imminent, the Bosnian Government that it is not:

- If the Bosnian Serbs conclude that "lift" will be followed by NATO intervention, they are likely to take more hostages, as they have threatened, to delay UNPROFOR withdrawal and protect themselves against potential air-strikes. This will increase chances of isolated fighting and significant casualties. For its part, the Bosnian Government will probably obstruct UN withdrawal if it believes no NATO intervention is likely.
- Even in a best case, local units and civilians on both sides probably would try to obstruct the departure of the withdrawing forces using all means available, including civil disobedience, seizing equipment, and detaining UNPROFOR personnel.

### US Role Crucial

The inadequacies of UN command and control and the desire of contributing parties to minimize casualties will increase demands for NATO, a force to extract UNPROFOR from Bosnia. The Allies believe that only the United States can lead such a force and would expect Washington to provide significant ground forces at the outset.

The United States would be asked to provide multiple ground combat brigades, logistic units, and air assets. US transportation, engineer, and other logistic support, together with command and control leadership, would be essential to the task. Britain, France, and

### *Implications for Humanitarian Relief*

*Although conditions in many areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina are improving, the need for large-scale humanitarian assistance remains high for isolated safe areas and displaced and vulnerable populations. Approximately 1.4 million people are at risk. If fighting continues but access to central Bosnia is maintained, current aid requirements will continue in order to keep the threat of large-scale deaths due to starvation and exposure low. If UNPROFOR withdraws, resulting in heavier fighting and decreased access for aid delivery, the humanitarian situation will significantly worsen:*

- *Most UN-affiliated organizations and other government-sponsored programs would be terminated or severely constrained in Bosnia. Organizations such as the UN High Commission for Refugees would have difficulty operating throughout the former Yugoslavia.*
- *A few nongovernmental groups, such as the Red Cross, probably would attempt to continue their operations, where permitted by warring parties.*
- *Limited additional Islamic-sponsored aid probably would be provided, but restricted access to contested areas would hamper its distribution.*

other European countries could contribute four to six brigades:

- Major European contributors believe that their forces now in Bosnia would be unable to contribute significantly to the extraction

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operation because they are ill-deployed and ill-equipped for such a mission.

- Including forces from other UNPROFOR contributors as participants in a NATO-led extraction program—for example, Russia and the Islamic countries—would complicate military operations and raise serious political questions.

### Implications of UNPROFOR Withdrawal

The most likely outcome of a UNPROFOR withdrawal would be *continued stalemate at a higher level of violence and humanitarian suffering*. Demands on the United States to provide humanitarian assistance and undertake military action would increase.

We think the fighting between the warring parties would escalate but without a resolution of the conflict. As we previously assessed, the Bosnian Serbs would grab territory but are too overextended to capture all Bosnian Government core areas.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the Eastern enclaves probably would collapse. The Serbs would not be able to capture Sarajevo but would blockade and slowly strangle it. We believe that, in the absence of UNPROFOR, the relief of Sarajevo would become a test of the Bosnian Federation and of Bosnia's relationship with Croatia:

- Bosnian Croat cooperation with the Bosnian Government would be seriously weakened if withdrawal of European contingents leaves in its place a large Islamic-led force in Bosnia.

<sup>1</sup> National Intelligence Council Memorandum 0009/94, 14 February 1994, *The Future of UNPROFOR?*

Differences over policy on Bosnia have weakened NATO cohesion, but a unified NATO operation to extract UNPROFOR would mute Allied differences, at least temporarily. The intensity of stresses in the Alliance in the aftermath of a withdrawal would depend on the degree to which the Allies believed US actions were responsible for the departure. Many Allies would conclude that NATO's frustrating effort to support the UN's unsuccessful peacekeeping mission in Bosnia was a setback in NATO's search for a post-Cold War mission.

Despite insistence by all NATO participants that the operation be limited to the extraction of UNPROFOR, there would be substantial risk of more extensive demands. As NATO troops are deployed to secure lines of communications and population centers, civilians would seek protection and humanitarian relief; success of that mission would generate demands for continuing such activity. The Bosnian Government would claim that their continued presence was vital to its survival, and the duration of the mission would be prolonged because no NATO state would withdraw until all UN personnel had been extracted.

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, Defence 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; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force; and the Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, Marine Corps.

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