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PC MeetingBOSNIA: FORMULATING A POST-UNPROFOR WITHDRAWAL STRATEGY

In carrying out planning for UNPROFOR withdrawal, NATO has worked on the very narrow assumption that it will enter Bosnia, extract UNPROFOR, and leave. Even if this turns out to be the case, we cannot state with any degree of certainty what Bosnia will look like after UNPROFOR departs. Will the UN retain a residual presence, continuing to provide assistance to the eastern enclaves and Sarajevo? If not, who will? Will we push NATO to be ready to take a more assertive role in the conflict, particularly in and around a strangled Sarajevo? If multilateralism fails, will the U.S. be ready to provide air support, humanitarian supplies and arms? These are the questions that must be examined in formulating a post-withdrawal strategy.

Humanitarian Assistance

If UNPROFOR withdrawal is carried out in a relatively permissive environment, UNHCR and other NGO's may be able to stay on the ground, continuing to provide relief supplies to the five most vulnerable areas of the country: the three eastern enclaves, Bihac and Sarajevo. Many areas of the Federation, however, would have to begin the process of distributing relief on their own.

At the moment, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the UN's coordinating agency for the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the former Yugoslavia. The World Food program (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) operate in conjunction with UNHCR in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia; the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and United Nations Volunteers operate in Bosnia-Herzegovina. UNHCR's position -- and thus that of its implementing partners -- remains what it has always been: It will continue operations as long as the security situation permits.

One of the most important NGOs, the International Committee of the Red Cross, has said it will remain in Bosnia as long as possible. In addition, there are over 100 NGOs in the former Yugoslavia, many of them implementing partners of the UN or of bilateral donors such as the U.S., or operating on their own. The EC has several projects, among them the EU Administration of Mostar project, as well as its monitors, and these functions would presumably continue after UNPROFOR withdrawal.

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NATO's Role

OPLAN 40104 makes no provision for a NATO mission in Bosnia, such as support for humanitarian relief efforts, after UNPROFOR withdraws. Any determination of NATO's post-UNPROFOR role would therefore require a policy decision and would need to take into account several factors:

-- Conditions of withdrawal. Bosnian Serb opposition to withdrawal could lead to direct military confrontation with U.S. and NATO forces. Under such a scenario, international support might be more forthcoming for lifting the arms embargo and taking broader military actions. Such support would be less likely if the withdrawal is not contested.

-- Allied support of lift and strike. In the face of Russian opposition to lift, but possible support from key Allies, we could press for a unilateral NATO commitment to the Bosnian government to assist it obtain arms and to provide air power. If key Allies are not prepared to support us, we would have to consider building a coalition of the willing.

-- Continuation of legal mandates. Without new UN resolutions, the authorization for NATO close air support and the protection of safe areas and exclusion zones may lapse with UNPROFOR's withdrawal. The legal framework for enforcement of the No-fly zone and Sharp Guard, in contrast, would probably continue, although for the former, NATO would need new technical arrangements.

The U.S. Role

UNPROFOR's withdrawal from Bosnia will increase pressure on the U.S. to become more involved in Bosnia, diplomatically and militarily. If withdrawal is precipitated by passage in the U.S. Congress of a unilateral lift bill, the U.S. will be under great pressure to help arm and train Bosnian troops. While Congress wants to lift the arms embargo, it might try to tie our hands in using military force, seriously complicating our ability to help. If the withdrawal is the result of British and/or French exhaustion, we will still be under great pressure to support the Bosnian Government by lifting the arms embargo.

In the event of withdrawal, the U.S. will in short order be faced with the following decisions:

-- Whether to Lift the Embargo: The U.S. will be under great pressure after withdrawal to revisit the lift issue in the Security Council (assuming the withdrawal is not precipitated by unilateral lift). Since the Russians are

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unlikely to go along with multilateral lift, we might consider the alternative of "great power lift", i.e., lift by the U.S., France and Britain (while this option would be preferable to unilateral action, it is not clear that Allies would go along, even after withdrawal). Our remaining options would be unilateral lift or doing nothing.

-- Whether to Plan for and Provide Humanitarian Aid: If U.N. relief agencies retreat with UNPROFOR, we will have to make quick decisions on humanitarian issues, i.e., opening a relief corridor to Sarajevo or the enclaves, perhaps using air power to break the strangulation of the city.

-- Whether to Strike: Once the UN is removed, the U.S., as the strongest advocate of air action, will be under great pressure to retaliate for Serb violations, either through NATO or unilaterally.

-- Whether to Arm and Train: If the arms embargo is lifted, unilaterally or multilaterally, we will have to decide how to arm the Bosnians and train them in the use of weapons. This might include training in weapons left behind by departing UNPROFOR troops.

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