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BOSNIA: STRATEGIC CHOICES
DISCUSSION PAPER

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Introduction:

We are in a critical period for U.S. policy toward Bosnia that could see the withdrawal of UNPROFOR and the introduction of NATO/U.S. ground forces for a mission whose outcome is uncertain. Now is the time to review the fundamental principles guiding our policy and to determine the steps necessary to shape events before strategic choices are dictated by the situation on the ground.

Fundamental U.S. policy objectives for Bosnia:

- Obtain a political settlement that satisfies basic Bosnian government requirements and rolls back some Serb aggression
- End or reduce the fighting
- Prevent spread of conflict to other parts of region
- Maintain relief supplies
- Maintain cohesion with Allies
- Avoid American entanglement in fighting on the ground in the Balkans

Key Strategic Choices:

I. Whither UNPROFOR: U.S. support for continued UNPROFOR presence has been based upon an assessment that this course remains the avenue best suited to the majority of our fundamental objectives.

- In the current environment, the viability of UNPROFOR is increasingly being called into question.
 - ◆ UNPROFOR is unable to ensure that humanitarian assistance is delivered to UN-protected areas/safe areas;
 - ◆ Fighting among the warring parties is no longer deterred by UNPROFOR presence;
 - ◆ UNPROFOR itself is frequently the subject of attack, and UNPROFOR forces are neither in a position to defend themselves effectively nor to withstand the possible consequences of calling in NATO airpower.
 - ◆ UNPROFOR credibility is thereby undermined with all parties, and NATO credibility in turn eroded as well.

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- Under these circumstances, we must ask ^{whether} linking U.S. objectives to continued UNPROFOR presence remains valid in the current environment.
 - ◆ There still do not appear to be any alternatives to UNPROFOR that provide better support for U.S. objectives.
 - ◆ Withdrawal followed by unilateral or predominantly U.S. lift (and strike) risks "Americanizing" the Balkan conflict; even multilateral lift risks widening the scope of the conflict as more external parties move to support regional clients.
 - ◆ Replacement of UNPROFOR with another international presence (NATO? WEU? Coalition of the willing?) would either require U.S. participation on the ground or prove equally ineffective -- and require additional political and financial capital to initiate.
 - ◆ U.S. interests are thus best served by finding a way to restore credibility to the UNPROFOR mission in a manner that permits existing troop contributors to sustain their ~~continued presence and the Bosnian government to agree to~~ retain that presence.
- Options other than withdrawal available for UNPROFOR under the present circumstances:
 - ◆ Muddle through with the status quo: French have already indicated likely pullout if current conditions remain unchanged -- may be the thread that unravels the whole fabric of UNPROFOR.
 - ◆ "Restabilization" of existing UNPROFOR mission with more robust enforcement of existing mandate: UK avoidance of a confrontational approach in B-H must be overcome if this option is to become viable; additional resources needed to enhance military capabilities of existing UNPROFOR forces not likely to be forthcoming.
 - ◆ "Retrench and reinvigorate" UNPROFOR mission by withdrawing from untenable positions/missions while pursuing more robust enforcement of remaining mandates: could be seen as a trade of the eastern enclaves for more effective mission performance around Sarajevo; this could satisfy both the French and UK; by retrenching, could also alleviate some of the problems associated with resources to enhance capabilities.
 - ◆ "Retrench and retreat" by withdrawing and pursuing an even less vigorous approach to mandate enforcement: the least costly approach, this might be used as a bargaining chip to get the Bosnian Serbs to accede to the conditions for French forces remaining in UNPROFOR; UK likely to support; however,

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potentially as damaging to UNPROFOR credibility as the status quo, with the additional public image/moral costs of not only "abandoning" the eastern enclaves, but also "capitulating" in cases where UNPROFOR remains; least likely to be acceptable to Bosnians, who could then refuse to allow continued UNPROFOR presence.

Comment: Only realistic choice may be to seek Allied support to "retrench and reinvigorate". Trade U.S. support for retrenchment for allied and UN pledge to pursue more robust enforcement of remaining mandate, including NATO airstrikes. Fall back to "retrench and retreat" only if no other way to prevent withdrawal.

II. Whither OPLAN 40104, given U.S. objective of sustaining UNPROFOR and commitment to assist withdrawal if required?

- There are no guarantees that a viable solution to retaining UNPROFOR in theater can be agreed.
- Withdrawal remains a real, and increasingly likely, option if there is no agreement on a more viable UNPROFOR role.
- Nevertheless, several key issues remain to be resolved before a decision to proceed with withdrawal implementation could be taken with confidence:
 - ◆ What is the end state we want to leave behind following UNPROFOR withdrawal? What to avoid may be clearer than what to achieve: avoid merely replacing UN with NATO forces and being unable to leave; avoid debacle of U.S./NATO-led withdrawal being depicted as precursor to brutal ethnic cleansing; avoid loss of NATO credibility to the same extent there has been a loss of UN credibility.
 - ◆ How does NATO deal with unintended consequences of withdrawal operations? Massive refugee flow; use of NATO forces as shields by civilians or by warring factions; hostage-taking by warring factions; withdrawal of humanitarian aid providers as a result of UNPROFOR withdrawal.
 - ◆ Under what conditions could withdrawal or partial withdrawal take place without requiring implementation of OPLAN 40104? If nations determine that they will accomplish *de facto* withdrawal by merely failing to replace units during normal rotation, no NATO assistance may be necessary. If this resulted in enclaves being left unprotected, would the last forces out require NATO assistance, or could the UN accomplish this on its own?
- The way ahead for OPLAN 40104 is also complicated by a dilemma: we must ensure that our actions in preparation for

possible UNPROFOR withdrawal do not precipitate the withdrawal itself.

- ◆ Key is not allowing the existence of a "NATO withdrawal force" to prompt either UN troop contributors to seek early withdrawal or Bosnians to act to cause UNPROFOR withdrawal in the hopes that NATO will replace the UN. A clear "firebreak" is required between completion of NATO preparation for OPLAN 40104 and initiation of OPLAN implementation. We must be confident that we understand exactly what steps will be required to get from the present state of NATO planning to this firebreak, and what steps take us beyond it.
- ◆ NATO credibility requires that forces must be trained sufficiently to ensure mission success. ACTREQ requested by SACEUR this week will facilitate identification of forces and training shortfalls, and allow SACEUR to initiate action to rectify those shortfalls. Training in place to NATO standards should be an acceptable alternative to assembling in Europe for training, and send a more restrained signal.
- ◆ Training in place would also permit completion of Congressional consultations prior to movement of any US forces. We may need to lay down marker in NATO that assembly of forces in Europe will require a further political decision.