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PC Meeting 1

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Implementing a Peace Agreement in Eastern Slavonia

Background. The Erdut peace agreement signed by Serbian and Croatian officials on November 12, 1995, asks the UNSC to authorize international supervision of the region's reintegration into Croatia. It calls for a Transitional Administration that would govern the area for one year (possibly two years at the request of either party) and an international force to maintain peace and security in the region and otherwise assist in the implementation of the Agreement.

Current Situation. Eastern Slavonia has about 900 square miles of territory which has been under Krajina Serb control since late 1991. The terrain is mostly flat (favoring large unit operations and employment of artillery and airpower). Many Croats who lived in Eastern Slavonia were forced to move out and were replaced by Serb refugees from the Krajina, western Bosnia, and other areas. Under the terms of the agreement, conditions are to be created to promote the return of Croat and other minority refugees and displaced persons. An estimated 70,000 Croats want to return. The Serbian population of around 150,000 -- including refugees from recent Croat military offensives -- can be expected to resist reintegration of the territory into Croatia. The potential for inter-ethnic conflict therefore remains high. Approximately 15,000 Krajina Serb troops currently occupy Eastern Slavonia. In addition, major elements of the Croatian Army (including some 35,000 HV troops with some 45 tanks, 29 APCs, and 260 pieces of heavy artillery) and Serbian army (20-35,000 VJ troops, with some 200 tanks, 150 APCs, and 150 heavy artillery pieces) are deployed to the west and east of Eastern Slavonia, respectively. Despite the peace accord, these forces remain in close proximity and could trigger renewed conflict in the area.

Other Security Threats. Another potentially significant threat to any international force deployed to the region are Serbian paramilitary groups, such as the Arkan Tigers based in Erdut. These ultra nationalist groups have little to gain from a peace agreement concluded over their objections, and are likely to view attacks on international force troops as a means of hastening their withdrawal and returning to the status quo ante. Radical terrorist groups such as the Egyptian Islamic Group are also known to operate in the vicinity.

Existing Mandate under UNCRO. The current UN Peacekeeping Force in Sector East, part of UNCRO, consists of one Belgian battalion (700 troops) and one Russian battalion (800). UNSCR 983, passed on March 31, 1995, renewed and modified the mandate for UNCRO. It expires November 30, 1995. Intended as an interim arrangement, UNSCR

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983 was meant to create the necessary conditions for a negotiated settlement that would maintain the territorial integrity of the Republic of Croatia and guarantee the security and rights of all ethnic communities living in a particular area. While the UNCRO force in Sector East has not completely fulfilled its mandate under UNSCR 983, it has been fairly effective in carrying out its responsibility to monitor and report on troop movements and other military activities. However, the Russian UNCRO contingent has come been sharply criticized by both Croats and UN authorities for graft, corruption and its cozy relationship with Serb forces.

Mission of an International Force. The peace agreement provides only general guidance for the mission of an international force. The UNSC "is requested to authorize an international force to deploy during the transitional period (one year, possibly extended to two years) to maintain peace and security in the Region and otherwise to assist in implementation of the agreement." The international force is also charged with establishing "the schedule and procedures" for demilitarization of the region, which is to be completed within 30 days of deployment of the force and to include "all military forces, weapons and police. . ."

Without rapid and successful demilitarization, it is unlikely that the peace accord can be implemented. Even then, without the support of a highly visible and robust international force in Eastern Slavonia, any Transitional Administration is likely to founder under the difficulties it will inevitably confront.

Potential Tasks of an International Force.

These tasks and the size of the force needed to carry them out will depend upon the degree of actual (as opposed to promised) cooperation received from both the Zagreb and Belgrade Governments and an embittered Serbian population in Eastern Slavonia. Prior confidence in voluntary and prompt disarmament by the Serbs, for example, would allow consideration of a modestly sized force. On the other hand, a small, nondeterrent force might encourage Serbian noncompliance which, in turn, would give Tadjman the opportunity (and justification) to seek a final military solution through invasion and ethnic cleansing. Anything short of a robust force able to meet all contingencies would be a calculated gamble.

Tasks for an international force might include:

- securing the Croatian-Serbian border;
- establishing the schedule and procedure for demilitarization of the region;
- monitoring compliance with these requirements;

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- conducting patrols throughout Sector East to monitor compliance with the agreement;
- facilitating the opening of transportation networks, energy facilities, and water supplies;
- providing security for and assist in the repatriation of refugees, distribution of humanitarian aid in conjunction with UNHCR and NGOs, monitoring elections and human rights, and return of property unlawfully seized;
- supervising mine clearing;
- supervising maintenance of law and order by a new ethnically mixed police force.

Furthermore, the requirement for the Parties to begin demilitarization, a key element of the agreement, is tied to the deployment of the international force, which creates an imperative to deploy the force as quickly as possible.

Options for the International Force.

Three distinct options capture the range of likely choices for a force to implement a peace agreement in Eastern Slavonia. Which option is deemed most acceptable depends in part on whether it is felt that a robust, highly combat-capable force is needed to implement the agreement and prevent the renewal of conflict between the Serbs and the Croats, or whether a smaller, less robust force is sufficient. A recent intelligence community assessment states that, "If the agreement is to stay on track and satisfy Zagreb, the [international] force must demilitarize the Krajina Serbs within 30 days or future steps toward implementation will fail and Croatia will use military force to achieve its goals." This assessment, if accepted by the Principals, suggests a requirement for a larger, more capable international force with robust ROE and significant combat capability to enforce its mandate and the agreement.

There is lack of interagency consensus on signs emerging from Dayton that Tudjman would prefer simply to extend the UNCRO mandate beyond November 30, retain the current Belgian-Russian contingents, and place control over the Transition Administration in the hands of a U.S. civilian.

Option 1. *UN-mandated international force w/o U.S. participation.* Such a force could consist of NATO and non-NATO elements. There are two variations on this concept.

Option 1a: *Extend UNCRO* beyond November 30, 1995. UNCRO currently has a Chapter VII mandate and two battalions in Sector East. This mandate could be extended for a brief period (e.g., 30-60 days) while other options are developed or for a longer period, and modified to bring it into line with the new peace agreement on Eastern

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Slavonia. This option is attractive because it offers the easiest means to establish the international force quickly and maintain the continuity of the international military presence during the critical early stages of the agreement's entry into force. Second, the existing force mix represents a balance between forces acceptable to the Croatians (Belgians -- who have indicated a willingness to remain) and those acceptable to the Serbs (Russians) and has, through its lengthy deployment in Sector East, gained considerable knowledge of the region and its people. This knowledge will be critical as the Transitional Administration moves to reestablish key Croatian government and other institutions. Third, extension of UNCRO eliminates the need for an extensive recruiting effort to find forces to fill the gap created if the Belgian and Russian forces depart. Fourth, and perhaps most important, this option avoids the need for any U.S. ground troops in East Slavonia, the deployment of which would severely complicate efforts to build Congressional support for U.S. troops in IFOR.

There are several disadvantages associated with this option. First, it may not be acceptable to the Croatians (Tudjman has indicated in the past that he would insist upon a U.S. presence in any international force deployed to Sector East under a peace settlement.) Second, it would have a command structure separate from IFOR and thus create potential complications if IFOR has to interact with UNCRO or come to its assistance. (This means a third, separate command structure, if one also counts the U.S.-Russian arrangement agreed to by Secretary Perry and Minister Grachev.) Third, if demilitarization of Sector East is key to a successful agreement, as the IC believes, this force is probably unwilling and unable to enforce such a requirement. Fourth, a puny force and Serb noncompliance could provide Zagreb with an excuse to launch a full-scale military offensive to retake Eastern Slavonia and drive out the Serbs. Finally, the Russians, with their previous history of graft, corruption and a cozy relationship with the Serbs, would retain their prominence in a highly volatile area.

Option 1b. Pass a New UNSCR. For symbolic reasons and in order to gain the support of the Croats, it may be important to establish the international force as separate and distinct from UNCRO through an entirely new UNSCR. Nevertheless, this option could be very similar to 1a, with similar advantages and drawbacks. It could include the current UNCRO Sector East force under a new name and mandate, the same force augmented with additional combat power, or units from new countries, NATO and/or non-NATO.

Option 2: Extension of IFOR. The extension of IFOR to Eastern Slavonia has several advantages--namely, unity of command; and no dual key. In addition, other countries that: 1) are acceptable to both the Croatians and Serbs (e.g., Belgium, Ukraine, Bangladesh, etc.); 2) have not already been given a sector under IFOR's plan and; 3)

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have volunteered well-trained, combat forces for IFOR could probably take over this area. This would alleviate the need to deploy additional U.S. or Russian forces.

One problem with extending the IFOR mission to Eastern Slavonia is that it would severely complicate IFOR planning, which is focused on implementing a completely different agreement. This would require a significant reworking of the current draft OPLAN and, given the broad nature of the international force's mandate, would draw IFOR into tasks that are above and beyond its currently planned mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moscow, moreover, would strenuously oppose any extension of NATO's mandate.

Option 3: Coalition of the Willing (U.S. and Russia plus). This is a concept that the Principals have discussed in the past and remains an option only if the recently agreed Perry-Grachev plan for Russian participation in IFOR under the OPCON of General Joulwan unravels over the issue of political control. While militarily feasible and almost certainly acceptable to Moscow, this course of action retains a number of disadvantages, including command and control arrangements, likely Congressional opposition, and the potential for drawing U.S. and Russian troops into a renewed Croatian-Serbian conflict on opposite sides if the peace agreement in Eastern Slavonia comes apart. In addition, any U.S. forces committed in Eastern Slavonia (EUCOM's preliminary assessment is that at least two brigades would be required) would likely count against the 20K limit imposed on IFOR in Bosnia and significantly complicate SACEUR's planning.

(Prepared by T. Longstreth, Director, OSD Bosnia Task Force, 15 NOV 95.)

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Key Assumptions for the International Force

1. The international force must be able to demilitarize the Serbs, and do so reasonably quickly, to forestall Croatian military action.

- Substantial force, robust ROE;
- Credible/Acceptable to Croatians
- Able to deploy rapidly/in force

2. The international force must be able to guarantee the safety of Serbs who want to stay.

- Capable of deterring Croatian non-compliance;
- Capable of reassuring Serbs

3. It will be difficult to attain political support for U.S. troops..

- Mission is less acceptable than IFOR's;
- If IFOR deploys, additional requirement may reduce IFOR contribution

4. Deployment of the international force cannot inadvertently change IFOR mission.

- Must be capable of implementing mission on its own, without reliance on IFOR even in an emergency

5. The international force should not violate unity of command or introduce "dual keys" into the theater.

- Force must be either completely separate from the IFOR or come under NATO command.
- UN force acceptable only if capable of implementing mission on its own

6. U.S. combat forces will not participate in a Chapter VII UN operation in the former Yugoslavia.

- Congress will deny support for U.S. participation in UN operation;
- If UN force, U.S. troops will not participate;
- Given past history, UN force unlikely to be credible to Croats or Serbs;
- Congress unlikely to fund U.S. share of UN assessment.