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Statement by John C. Gannon to the SSCI on
Bosnia - July 23, 1996
Situation Seven Months After Signing

Progress has been better than expected since the signing of the Dayton Accords in Paris last December 14th, but many hurdles remain.

IFOR's operations have gone surprisingly smoothly. The military deadlines stipulated by the agreement have generally been met. The cease-fire held through the winter and into the spring and summer, ending the bloodiest fighting in Europe since World War II. The warring parties withdrew from the territory they lost at Dayton, the armies have demobilized, and the weapons have been moved to cantonment sites. The de-mining of the country has proceeded too slowly, partly because of inclement weather and the luke-warm attitude of the former warring parties to clearing areas from which they were withdrawing. In June, the arms-control agreement mandated by Dayton was signed in

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Florence after protracted negotiations.

With the apparent end of fighting, people are beginning to rebuild their lives, thanks to the combined effort of 32 nations in IFOR.

New shops and cafes are springing up, goods are becoming widely available, people are repairing their homes, children will soon be returning to school. Tens of thousands of people, albeit temporarily, have crossed the line separating the Serbs from the Federation.

The first round of elections were held in Mostar in June without violence, and preparations for the wider September elections are in full swing. Forty-eight parties have registered to participate in elections, as well as numerous independent candidates for local elections. Over 30,000 candidates will be running for local, regional, and national elections. Polling also shows that a sizable majority of people across Bosnia believe the elections are important and intend to vote.

Even on the troubling issue of foreign forces, there has been substantial progress. After receiving assurances from the Bosnian government that the foreign forces have departed, President Clinton recently certified the Bosnian government in compliance. The Administration has worked closely with the Bosnian government on this issue.

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Many Hurdles Remain

Freedom of Movement. There has been gradual improvement in freedom of movement as the various parties have become more willing to allow other nationalities to cross the inter-entity boundary line to visit former homes or grave sites. Problems arise when people attempt to stay permanently. All of the formerly warring parties have been guilty of this, have destroyed homes of the other ethnic groups, and otherwise harassed each other's nationals to discourage permanent returns.

War Criminals The failure of the Croat and Serb ethnic groups to cooperate with the War Crimes Tribunal continues. The US Intelligence Community continues to provide information through the Department of State to the War Crimes Tribunal to assist in identifying and bringing to justice the perpetrators of war crimes and atrocities in Bosnia. As of now, there are indictments against 75 people (18 Croats, 3 Muslims, and 54 Serbs), but The Hague only holds six of them. A particular problem is that some of them persist in trying to remain politically active in contradiction of Dayton, which clearly states that anyone indicted by the War Crimes Tribunal cannot hold public office.

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Karadzic and Mladic. They are the most dramatic illustrations of the problem. After Dick Holbrooke's mission last week, Karadzic on July 19 announced he would relinquish the Presidency of both the government and the party and would end his public appearances. As of 22 July, none of the media monitored by FBIS had carried any reports on Karadzic after 19 July.

Still, Karadzic and the nationalist SDS party he headed have clouded the prospects for free and fair elections and the long-term development of a democratic Bosnia. The party leadership intimidated opposition, such as the leaders of the Bosnian Serb Socialist Party, who have been purged from local government and state-run enterprises and whose homes and businesses have been vandalized. Predrag Radic, the Banja Luka mayor, was kicked out of the local party after he spoke out against Karadzic and announced that he would head the Democratic Patriotic Bloc.

Elections. Even if Karadzic stays off the political stage, and it is too soon to tell if he will, that would be only the beginning of free and fair elections. New SDS party chief Buha in an interview published 22 July in Der Spiegel noted that an unseated Karadzic would still retain influence in his country's politics. In all of the camps, moreover, nationalism is still ascendant. No matter what happens to Karadzic and Mladic, even the more moderate Bosnian Serbs would still prefer to be

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In the short term, the threat of war is low. Recent polling (USIA) reveals that the Bosnian people--Serbs, Muslims and Croats--are tired of war and want to rebuild their lives. Violence has become the exception rather than the rule in resolving inter-community disputes--as evidenced by the recent election in Mostar.

Nonetheless, the Bosnian people face enormous challenges in devising ways to live with each other in peace, especially after IFOR departs the scene.

The destructive influence of hatred and the still-fresh memories of the horrors of the war will be hard to overcome. The trend toward separation among the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats remains strong and will be difficult to reverse in the near future. As in the case of West European recovery after World War II, economic reconstruction and outside assistance that promotes economic integration will be key to long-term peace and regional stability.

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