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YUGOSLAVIA: Army Resists Serb Strategy

The Army's refusal to step into the leadership vacuum created by federal President Jovic's resignation has set back, but probably not ended, Serbia's campaign to provoke military intervention. [redacted]

The Serbian legislature yesterday rejected Jovic's resignation from the eight-man Presidency, only two days after it forced the resignation of the Kosovo representative in an effort to paralyze federal authority. The rejection followed the Army High Command statement Tuesday that the military will not meddle in political discourse but also will not allow any changes in the country's borders before negotiations to determine Yugoslavia's political future are completed. [redacted]

Key republic presidents have agreed in principle to meet today to discuss the constitutional crisis, but Croatian President Tudjman has refused to go to Belgrade, where Serbian leader Milosevic wants the session to convene. The Kosovars have not recognized the Serbian ouster of their representative, so the question of who will represent Kosovo Province may arise. [redacted]

[redacted] Milosevic, already damaged by the demonstrations last week, may be further discredited by his failure to obtain federal military backing. He and Jovic apparently miscalculated the reaction of the other republics to Jovic's resignation from the Presidency last week. The decision by Bosnia and Hercegovina and Macedonia to join Slovenia and Croatia in staying with the Presidency may have convinced senior military leaders that a military coup could not be justified unless major violence occurs. [redacted]

The military's position reduces but does not eliminate the immediate danger the Army will intervene. [redacted] Ethnic violence, for example, would give the Army an excuse to intervene in Croatia to "protect" the Serbian minority. It is highly unlikely that Milosevic will give up his quest for secure military support; he may believe his chances are better if Serbia is seen as participating in, rather than undermining, Yugoslavia's federal institutions. [redacted]

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