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*National Intelligence Council***SPECIAL ESTIMATE****A Multilateral Lifting of the
Arms Embargo on Bosnia:
Political and Military
Implications**

The Intelligence Community has differing views on whether the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) would approve a resolution to lift the arms embargo against Bosnia. Most Agencies believe that conditions demanded by UNSC members would be too far reaching and mutually incompatible to obtain agreement. Other Agencies judge that the UNSC would approve the action if the United States were willing to pay a substantial political, military, and economic price to obtain members' acquiescence.

Britain and France would want US military assistance to withdraw their forces from Bosnia, and once withdrawn, would place the onus on the United States for settling the conflict. Russia's many demands would include lifting economic sanctions against Serbia.

Multilateral lifting of the arms embargo would lead both sides to escalate the fighting. Sarajevo's war aims would escalate, and it would show correspondingly less interest in a diplomatic solution to the conflict. The Bosnian Serbs would go on the offensive to seize the eastern enclaves and other areas and would seek Krajina Serb cooperation for joint operations. Serbia would loosen its own embargo against the Bosnian Serbs unless granted substantial economic and political concessions and subjected to heavy pressure by Moscow.

Withdrawing UNPROFOR units would require US transport, air cover, and probably ground troops to cover their evacuation. Remaining UNPROFOR forces, consisting primarily of Muslim contingents, could not survive without continuing US military assistance.

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SPECIAL ESTIMATE

Gaining UNSC Approval

The Intelligence Community has differing views on whether the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) would approve a multilateral lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia.¹

The Director, Defense Intelligence Agency; the Director, National Security Agency; the Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Director of Naval Intelligence; Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force; and the National Intelligence Officers for Europe and for General Purpose Forces, National Intelligence Council, believe that conditions demanded by UNSC members to approve a resolution to lift the arms embargo against Bosnia would be so far reaching (relaxation of sanctions against Serbia) and incompatible (calls for the US military presence in Bosnia to be both expanded and minimized), that obtaining such an agreement is impossible.

The Deputy Director for Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency; and the Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, Marine Corps, judge that the UNSC would approve a multilateral lifting of the arms embargo against Bosnia if

¹ Previous NIC assessments on lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia include NIC 2765/94, "Lifting the Arms Embargo: Impact on the War in Bosnia" (13 May 1994); and SE 94-1, "Ending US Compliance with the Bosnian Arms Embargo: Military and Political Implications," (August 1994).

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Scope Note

This Special Estimate assesses the following questions: (1) Under what conditions would the UNSC be willing to lift the multilateral arms embargo against the Bosnian Government? (2) What are the political and military implications of such a move on the situation in Bosnia? This paper was requested at a National Security Council Principals Committee meeting held on 7 November.

the United States were willing to pay a substantial political, military, and economic price to obtain members' acquiescence.²

Britain and France do not believe that lifting the embargo would help end the war, but probably would want to avoid the open split with the United States that would follow their veto of a Security Council decision to do so:

- British and French acquiescence would depend on US agreement to support the withdrawal of their UNPROFOR units with transport, air cover, and ground forces for escort protection.
- Withdrawing UNPROFOR units would be obstructed by forces on both sides seeking to delay their departure and seize weapons.

² The UNSC would require nine positive votes to lift the arms embargo and no veto of the resolution by any of the five permanent members.

London and Paris also would seek to avoid specifying a fixed date for lifting the arms embargo until their UNPROFOR contingents had been safely extracted from Bosnia. Once their forces were out, Western Europe would put the onus on the United States for settling the conflict. Over the longer term, Europeans would increasingly question the US role in Europe, thereby affecting overall Alliance relations:

- If UK and French forces are withdrawn from Bosnia, other European UNPROFOR units also would pull out—they have said so and have been planning for such a withdrawal.

Russia and Ukraine probably would withdraw their troops as well. Moscow would demand that all sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro be lifted as its price for acquiescence, but it probably would settle for lifting the economic embargo.³ Yelt'sin would also seek other concessions as his price for support, including assurances that the US military role in the Balkans would not increase and probably Western accommodation to a greater Russian peace-keeping role in the Caucasus.

In contrast, Turkey and Malaysia have said that their forces would remain—although it is unclear whether they would stay unilaterally or under UN aegis. We believe that Egyptian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi units also would opt

³ The Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research, Department of State, judges that domestic pressure in the Russian Parliament would force Yelt'sin to remove restrictions on arms for Serbia if the arms embargo on Bosnia were lifted and that no package of concessions could forestall a strong challenge to Yelt'sin from Russian nationalists if Moscow supported the UNSC resolution.

to remain. They would seek economic and logistic support for their units from other Islamic states and from the United States:

- The Turks, Egyptians, and Pakistanis also would seek US protection for their peacekeepers; the Saudis would press for just such a commitment.
- These Islamic military units would be incapable of performing UNPROFOR's missions without continuing UN and US support.

If the Islamic countries remain under the UNPROFOR flag, even if augmented by a token non-Muslim force, the United Nations would be seen to have lost its last shred of neutrality; UNPROFOR would be perceived by the Serbs as a Muslim army helping the Bosnian Muslims.

Regional Responses

The Bosnian Serbs. Bosnian Serb intentions—consolidation of Serb-held territory and confederation with Serbia—remain unchanged, and they will not accept the Contact Group's plan as tabled:

- The Bosnian Serbs cannot win the war outright but believe that they can do enough damage that the international community would pressure the Bosnian Government to end hostilities.

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However, offensives by Bosnian Government forces have stretched Bosnian Serb military capabilities, largely because of shortfalls in fuel and other logistic needs resulting from Serbia's embargo. Although Bosnian Serb military dominance is not as substantial as it was last May, enduring strategic advantages would permit the Bosnian Serb army to go on the offensive in weeks to months after a Security Council decision:

- The Bosnian Serb army would attempt to seize the eastern enclaves, pressure Sarajevo, and secure key lines of communications. Bosnian Serb leaders would also seek greater military cooperation with the Krajina Serbs for joint operations against the Bosnian Government.

The ultimate effectiveness of Bosnian Serb offensives would depend in large measure on Serbia's willingness to supply the fuel and munitions necessary for extensive, high-intensity combat operations:

- If Serbia tightens its embargo and the Bosnia-Croat federation holds, the strategic military balance will shift, compelling the Bosnian Serbs to make concessions.

Bosnia. Sarajevo remains committed to the reconstruction of Bosnia to its pre-civil war borders and would welcome a lifting of the arms embargo:

- Sarajevo's war aims would escalate if the arms embargo were lifted, and it would show correspondingly less interest in a diplomatic solution to the conflict. Instead, fighting

would escalate as the government sought a military victory that brought it substantially more territory than allocated in the Contact Group's plan.

Bosnian Government forces are more capable than they were earlier in the year, before outside arms began reaching them in large amounts. Bosnian Government gains are due to the infusion of light weapons and munitions and improved tactics and training.

The Bosnian Government also would seek heavy weapons—tanks and artillery—once the embargo were lifted. Obtaining these weapons—and the training essential to use them effectively—remains fundamental to ultimate Bosnian Government aims: rolling back Serb gains and seizing sufficient territory to block the linkage of Serb-held territory in eastern and western Bosnia via Brcko and the Posavina corridor:

- The Army would require less than the six months to one year of training and logistic support that we previously assessed was necessary to make effective use of tanks and large-caliber artillery in large-scale offensive operations.

Serbia. Belgrade would oppose any lifting of the arms embargo against the Bosnian Government. If the embargo were lifted and current economic sanctions against Belgrade remained in place, Serbia's enforcement of its embargo against the Bosnian Serbs would loosen. Milosevic probably would opt to do so covertly in order to maintain plausible denial. His price

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for maintaining the embargo would include significant reconstruction assistance, lifting of economic sanctions, support on resolving the Krajina dispute, and a general amnesty. Heavy Russian pressure on Belgrade also would be necessary. All agencies agree, however, that he would act to prevent the destruction of the Bosnian Serbs and could not stop small-scale violations of the embargo:

- Milosevic would walk a fine line—letting the Bosnian Serbs absorb considerable punishment—in order to get them to accept a deal.

Croatia. The Croats would argue for lifting the embargo against Croatia but would acquiesce in a resolution that lifts it against only the Bosnian Government. They would expect to take a cut, as they now do, on all equipment being transported to Bosnian Government forces. The Croatian Government still would attempt to

limit the amount and type of equipment supplied to Bosnia that could present a long-term threat to Bosnian Croats:

- Croatia might use the opportunity to attack the Krajina Serbs. A major incident would reopen the war in Croatia, possibly involving Serbia.

This Special Estimate was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for General Purpose Forces and the National Intelligence Officer for Europe and was coordinated with the Deputy Director for Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency; the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency; the Director, National Security Agency; the Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force; and the Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, Marine Corps.

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