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Sept. 25

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BALKAN CRISIS: Situation Report

Bosnia's Prime Minister has proposed a new route to deliver UN relief supplies from the port of Split, involving rail and road transportation. Numerous problems of its own have not prevented Croatia from looking beyond the end of UN peacekeeping efforts there and mapping out a larger role for itself in the conflict in Bosnia and Hercegovina. (

New Winter Relief Route Proposed

Bosnia's Prime Minister has asked that the UN use a road and rail route from Split, via Mostar, to deliver humanitarian aid to central Bosnia, including Sarajevo. Bosnian transportation officials maintain that the year-round hard-surface road from Split to Mostar is open and that the railway from Mostar to Sarajevo is either operable or easily repairable. A recent assessment notes that two locomotives, each capable of pulling up to 600 tons, and more than enough railcars are available in Sarajevo for immediate use; only a small loading ramp reportedly needs to be constructed at Rastani, north of Mostar, for the route to be opened. The report also suggests that the line can be extended to Zenica, Doboij, and Tuzla in three weeks.

Comment: If repairs can be made to the rail line and bridges and tunnels can be kept open, the route could easily support the shipment of more than the 456 tons of aid per day that the UN estimates is needed in the area. Weather would have little impact, and turnaround times for the UN trucks currently supplying Sarajevo would be cut in half. Security could be a problem, however, at Mostar and along the rail portion of the route, where significant fighting has occurred in the past several months.

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Transportation Routes Vital to Winter Relief Efforts

