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SPOT COMMENTARY

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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10/3

02 October 2000
1500 EDT
Spot Comm 17

CIADI SPOTCOMM 061042-1500

Milosevic Vows To Win Runoff Election [redacted]

During a rare state television appearance today, FRY President Milosevic lashed out against the opposition and vowed to secure an election victory in the second round. Milosevic accused the West of trying to use the opposition to establish a "puppet government" in the Balkans and warned that those who take part in the opposition's "subversion" are taking on the responsibility for "the abolition of their country's right to exist" and for "losing control of their own lives." Meanwhile, the regime is moving forward on plans to hold a second-round runoff with or without the participation of the opposition.

- *The FRY President almost certainly intended to use the television appearance to demonstrate that he remains in control and to reestablish his credibility within the regime in the lead-up to Sunday's ballot.* The opposition charged that Milosevic's speech was meant to threaten the Serbian people. [redacted]

Opposition strikes and smaller rallies were staged today throughout Serbia. Press reports indicate that several thousand demonstrators in Nis, Novi Sad, Bor, Cacak, and Zrenjanin took to the streets, while several hundred to a few thousand workers and students from cities including Leskovac, Krusevac, and Mladenovac vowed to boycott their jobs and schools until Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) presidential candidate Kostunica is accepted as the legitimate president. The DOS plans a five-hour general strike tomorrow, with a 24-hour strike to follow if Belgrade still refuses to recognize Kostunica's first round victory.

- Most roads and bridges were paralyzed this morning in Belgrade until police broke up protesters' roadblocks using minimal force, according to press reports. Around 30,000 demonstrators marched through the capital city at the peak of today's opposition protest. Belgrade university students broke into the School of Electrical Engineering today to hand over an announcement of the general strike to their dean.
- The miners strike in Kolubara continues and today expanded to the Kostolac mines. Press reports indicate that Kostunica was expected to show up at the picket line in Kolubara. Twelve thousand people demonstrated in Milosevic's home town of Pozaravec and 20,000 demonstrators in Novi Sad surrounded the local state-run Serbian Radio and Television (RTS) building and have broken into the premises, according to press reports. [redacted]

Djindjic announced today the "climax" of the opposition activity would occur on Wednesday or Thursday, according to press reporting and called on the Serbian people to obstruct the

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE [] DATE:
06-23-2010

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balloting for the second round on 8 October.

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Kostunica Critical of US and Moscow's Position on FRY Elections [redacted]

Kostunica today publicly reaffirmed his commitment to boycott a runoff against Milosevic and criticized Russia for being "too cautious" in helping the opposition resolve the stalemate over the election results. Kostunica accused Moscow of being "indecisive" and repeated his charges that Washington is "indirectly helping Milosevic stay in power" by supporting his indictment at the Hague for war crimes.

- *Kostunica is likely frustrated at Moscow's public decision to accept Belgrade's election results and its insistence that a second round is necessary.* Kostunica said that the Russians "take one step forward and one step back" and "do not have a specific position on the situation in the FRY."
- Despite Kostunica's public statements, the opposition today accepted Russian President Putin's offer to host talks on resolving the impasse, but the regime has yet to respond. The FRY Ambassador to Russia, Milosevic's brother, today said he is not aware of the regime's reaction to Putin's offer to mediate, according to press reporting. [redacted]

Seselj Rethinks Plans to Bring Down Serbian Government [redacted]

Serbian Radical Party (SRS) leader Seselj over the weekend said that the FRY elections were basically "irregular," but stepped back somewhat from his earlier claims that he would bring down the Serbian Government, according to press reporting.

- Meanwhile, president of the pro-Belgrade Montenegrin Socialist Nationalist Party (SNP) Momir Bulatovic today said that the SNP supports Milosevic for FRY President in the second round, but stated that his party is ready to accept the "will of the people," even if it is not the SNP's desired choice, according to press reporting. [redacted]

RDB Chief Markovic Resignation Still Unconfirmed [redacted]

We still have seen no information to confirm recent press reports claiming that Milosevic has replaced Serbian State Security Chief Rade Markovic with FRY Ambassador to Macedonia Zoran Janackovic. Indeed, a FRY Embassy official in Macedonia today stated that Janackovic remains in Skopje, where he continues to perform his duties, according to press reporting. [redacted]

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