

HATRED

Ten Times Over

The U.N.'s outgoing man in Sarajevo, General Lewis MacKenzie, is not optimistic

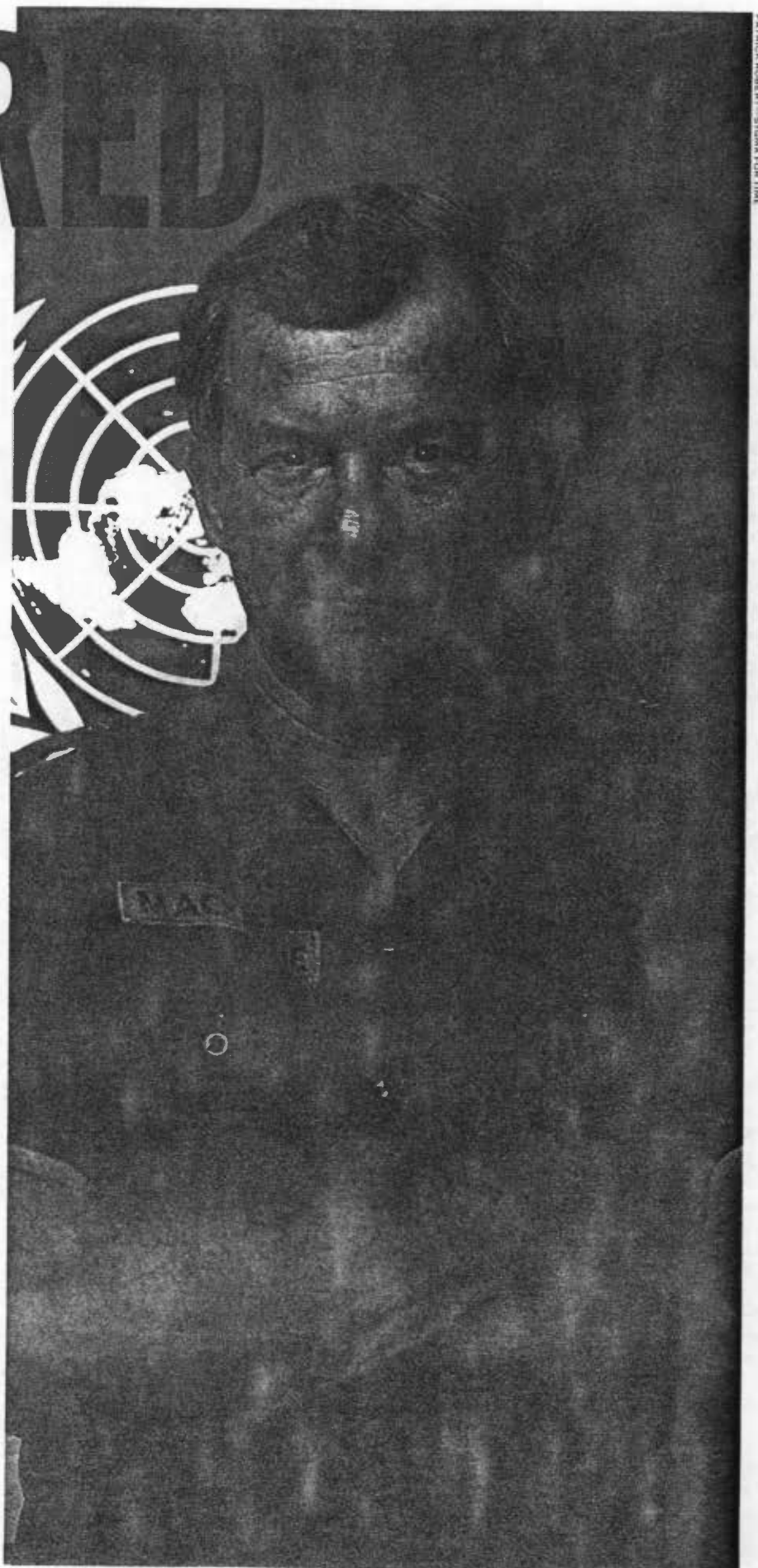
By **DANIEL BENJAMIN** NEW YORK

Q. Sarajevo airport was shut down again this week. Has the U.N.'s authority in Sarajevo been exhausted?

A. I've always said the agreement to protect the airport from ground attack was hanging by a very fine thread. When you start taking mortar fire on the bunkers our people are living in and on the tarmac, that is a serious escalation. Before, we were able to justify putting our finger in the flame despite fighting going on close to the airport. The odd round dropping short can be rationalized, but not when the airport is being directly targeted.

Q. What do you think it would take to impose peace on Sarajevo itself?

A. Well, from the tactical point of view, having to control and occupy and dominate all the features around Sarajevo and the city itself. Cities are famous for gobbling up soldiers. I haven't done the detailed analysis, but a figure of 75,000 would probably be modest, if there is resistance. And the resistance has to be handled 24 hours a day by people on the ground. Air power can assist, but it can't



stop people from reoccupying positions.

Q. *That's assuming that the act of bringing in a large military force itself wouldn't have a powerful psychological impact.*

A. Yes. It's also presupposing that the peacemakers can stay for a long time. Because what happens when they leave? Everything goes back to the way it was because so much hate has been generated. And then you have a force that is isolated. You don't have secure communications. You're sitting in the middle of a very, very hilly country.

Q. *What would be the difference between an operation in Bosnia and the Gulf War?*

A. The same characteristic that dominates every military operation: the ground. In Desert Storm there was a relatively sophisticated infrastructure on which to develop your force. There were tremendous areas of land on which to put it together and to train and sort out problems—and that took four months. Where are you going to do that in Bosnia?

Q. *You would not be able to wage tank warfare, as in the Middle East?*

A. No, you're talking infantry battles. You're talking about classic, classic guerrilla country.

Q. *Do you think the Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims would fight in the face of a huge force?*

A. If I put myself in their shoes, there is no option. You are talking about backing the Serbs into a corner. And if you read history, it's not a very good idea. You're talking about an organization with a significant capacity to fight and with a significant amount of equipment. Serbia/Montenegro must be one of the most densely militarized areas of the world now.

Q. *To "pacify" all of Bosnia-Herzegovina, what size military operation would be needed?*

A. Well, the Germans gave it a try with 30 divisions, and they weren't successful. A lot of people were killed. If there were resistance throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina and you had to occupy it, you could be talking up to 1 million troops.

Q. *Why not bomb artillery positions and send in helicopter gunships?*

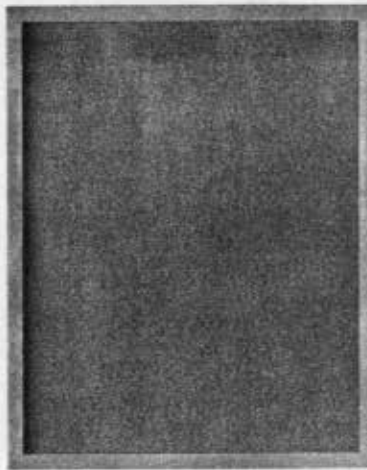
A. You wouldn't be able to find all the weapons systems that are doing the damage. Mortars are the favored weapon in Bosnia, and they're hidden very easily and carried around in everything from school buses to cars. What's much more important is that if you do that, then the U.N. peacekeeping force is, whether it likes it or not, affiliated with the side not being attacked. Therefore you have sitting there 1,600 [U.N. soldier] hostages.

Q. *Can't you remove those troops in advance of any action?*

A. If you do, that's an indication something big is going to happen. So you've got yourself a very nice cul-de-sac, unless you're prepared to sacrifice 1,600 people. I wouldn't think that would be a particularly good idea.

Q. *Is there anything that would rapidly improve the situation in Bosnia?*

A. Yes—and the presidency [of Bosnia] will hate to hear me say this: negotiations with the Serbian side within Bosnia. The presidency will not talk to the other side because they say this is a war of aggression controlled by Belgrade. They feel that if they start to talk, the status quo will be frozen, and they don't have a lot of territory. If you don't want to talk, then there's only one solution: one side wins, one side loses



and a lot of people get killed in between. So my feeling is that pressure has to be brought to bear to get them to the table. The Serbs will talk any time, any place, at any level because they probably have what they want. It seems to me talking could get the Bosnian Muslims territory.

Q. *Is anyone in the different leaderships really calling the shots? Or is much of the fighting being driven at the grass roots by units that decide they just want to fire their mortars?*

A. You're absolutely right, there are large numbers of individuals and units that are out of control. But they are out of control within a defined chain of command. There's ample evidence of units operating on their own agenda—today. Maybe tomorrow they'll operate on a common agenda. There are some individuals and small organizations in Sarajevo who are paid to kill. They get a bonus. Journalists are favorite targets in Sarajevo. There are no video games in Sarajevo, so the next best thing is to fire at a TV car going by.

Q. *Is the word genocide appropriate for Yugoslavia?*

A. I can't comment in detail on that be-

cause my mandate was limited to Sarajevo. However, let me assure you that I have a pound of paper for each hand of protests from one side accusing the other of running detention camps, concentration camps, prisoner-of-war camps.

Q. *You don't entirely blame the Serbs?*

A. When people ask me whom do you blame, I say, "Give me the day and the month, and I'll tell you." What the Serbs did three months ago was totally unacceptable: the city was bombarded, civilians were targeted. Today it is more complex. What we now see from the Bosnian presidency's side is that it's in their interest to keep the thing going and get the Serbs to retaliate in order to convince the international community that intervention is a good idea. So I blame both sides.

Q. *You have had nine peacekeeping tours in places like Gaza, Nicaragua and Cyprus. How does this compare?*

A. You can take the hate from all those previous tours and multiply by 10. I've never seen anything close to that. Even if only 10% of what each side accuses the other of doing is true, in the minds of the people it has grown to horrendous proportions. If the leadership said, "O.K., let's sit down and sort this thing out," I'm not sure whether people would accept that because there is so much hate for the other side. Really deep, gut-wrenching hate. Once you start calling them baby killers, pregnant-women killers, and talk about cooking babies, those are not good grounds for negotiations.

Q. *What difference did that make for your work?*

A. On any of those previous tours, when you brokered a deal, it was followed through. And if somebody along the line didn't follow through, they were put in their place. It's relatively easy to broker a deal in Bosnia. It's the execution that is impossible.

Q. *After your experience in Sarajevo, do you think there is still a clear line between peacekeeping and peacemaking?*

A. Yes, there is a clear line. It became cloudy in Sarajevo only because we went there with good intentions and then the war started, and that put us in an absolutely unique position.

Peace imposition is war fighting. It's going in, taking on somebody and beating them. In order to use a peacekeeping force, you have to have a cease-fire. But we got ourselves into this bind by having a war start around us.

Q. *So you're a pessimist?*

A. I used to use the term guarded optimism, but I've dropped even that from my vocabulary. I still have hope. But I won't be optimistic until they start to talk. ■