

Bosnian President Appeals To U.N. Security Council

Allies' Lack of Response Angers American Envoy

By Julia Preston
Special to The Washington Post

UNITED NATIONS, Sept. 7—The beleaguered Muslim president of Bosnia, Alija Izetbegovic, came to the Security Council today to make an emotion-laden plea for support in peace talks. He was met with a cool silence from the European powers that provoked U.S. Ambassador Madeleine Albright into an unusual public show of outrage.

The mute reaction of 14 of the 15 Council nations to Izetbegovic's appeal brought into sharp focus the plight of Bosnia's Muslim-led government, which has had to rely on the United Nations for help throughout 17 months of fighting against Serb and Croat separatists but has yet to see the world body deliver on its pledges of forceful action. It also provided a new glimpse of the deep uneasiness and underlying differences over Bosnia between the United States and its European allies and Russia.

Addressing the 15 Council nations in a closed meeting, Izetbegovic made no ambitious new requests but asked the Council to enforce its own resolutions threatening to use force to ensure delivery of humanitarian aid and to lift the siege of Sarajevo, diplomats said. He colored his plea with stories about Sarajevo children who have to attend school in bomb shelters because of the continuing siege by Serb forces.

After Izetbegovic, Albright gave a speech reiterating the U.S. call for Bosnia's Serb and Croat factions to yield more territory to the Muslims in the negotiations over partitioning the republic that were suspended last week in Geneva.

Then the Council chamber lapsed into a rare, heavy silence. With no further speakers, the meeting abruptly adjourned.

Albright emerged visibly shaken. In a hallway, she walked up to Britain's Ambassador David Hannay and said, "I'm stunned, stunned. Why didn't you say anything?" Then she approached French Ambassador Jean-Bernard Merimee and the other envoys from Council powers to demand an explanation.

"Given the endless amount of verbiage that goes on around here all the time," Albright said later, "I was surprised that people didn't say anything to him. . . . He spoke eloquently to say that the international community had let him down. Then the fact that nobody spoke . . . it was just sad."

Izetbegovic, who said he will meet with President Clinton at the White House on Wednesday, asked in veiled language for the United States and its allies to use air power to lift the siege of Sarajevo before the Muslims return to the negotiating table. His vice president, Ejup Ganic, was more explicit. "If you want to speed up the talks, one should take a few airstrikes," Ganic told reporters.

Hannay said he made no comments because Izetbegovic's presentation seemed unspecific. "I'm puzzled. It was rather difficult to discern his line of argument," Hannay said. European diplomats said they believe the real purpose of Izetbegovic's visit to the United States is to see Clinton, so they were not called upon to respond.

But Jose Luis Jesus, the ambassador from Cape Verde, a Security Council member, said the smaller nations on the Council remained silent out of recognition that the United Nations is unlikely to take any more aggressive action in Bosnia.

"The Council should honor its own decisions. But if the nations that have the military strength are not willing to take the decision, there is not much that any delegate here can do at this stage," Jesus said.