

Serbs Defy Belgrade to Join the Fighting in Bosnia

By ROGER COHEN
Special to The New York Times

ZVORNIK, Bosnia and Herzegovina — When the morning bus from Belgrade to the Bosnian front paused at the border here, Brano Tadic leaped off and started running. A few minutes later he returned with a big grin on his unshaven face, a Zastava machine gun clasped in his right hand and a couple of grenades strapped to his belt.

Mr. Tadic, a 25-year-old Serb who was a waiter in Sarajevo before the Bosnian war started in April, said he had been in Belgrade for a week visiting family. But immediately after crossing from Serbia into Bosnia and Herzegovina, he was transformed from a civilian into a warrior for the Bosnian Serbs, flaunting his weapons and proclaiming war without end on the Muslims of Bosnia.

His sudden switch illustrates why the war in Bosnia has remained so intractable to those seeking a peaceful solution. Although the Serbian Government in Belgrade has insisted for some time that no fighters or weapons cross the border between Serbia and Bosnia, visits to Bosnia suggested that the frontier remains so open as to have little significance as a barrier.

Diversity Handicaps Leader
A few days ago, for example, a medical evacuation helicopter in the Bosnian town of Sokolac could be seen taking wounded Bosnian Serb soldiers to the Yugoslav Army hospital in Belgrade.

Moreover, the ability of Radovan Karadzic, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, to deliver on any promises he makes in peace negotiations appears to be limited because of the extreme diversity of the Serbian forces in Bosnia, which range from former Yugoslav Army officers with sophisticated training to former waiters like Mr. Tadic



Serbian forces remain splintered in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

with none.

Although the force that calls itself the army of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina seems to be making progress in imposing discipline, Serbian forces in Bosnia remain splintered. Machine guns and other weapons are now carried mainly by officers and soldiers in uniform, but also by bearded youths wearing leather jackets, jeans and Reeboks.

"When the war started we got all our weapons from the various barracks of the Yugoslav Army in Bosnia, and now there's no way of controlling all the weaponry," Mr. Tadic said with evident pride.

Asked which military unit he fights in, he pointed to a skull and crossbones badge on his fatigues and said "Chetniks" — a reference to the Chetnik guerrillas who fought for Serbia in World War II. There is no official Chetnik unit in the army of Serbs in Bosnia.

Officers of this army, commanded by a former Yugoslav Army general, Ratko Mladic, appear increasingly embarrassed and irked by the mention of such irregulars, who flip back and forth between Serbia and Bosnia. The leaders say they are well on their way to eliminating the irregulars.

"The Serbian Army in Bosnia is in a period of formation and all these paramilitary groups which sprang up spontaneously are now coming under our control," said Col. Ljuba Kosovac, who commands the Lukavica Barracks near Sarajevo. "The orders are: either disarm these people or recruit them."

Colonel Kosovac is a Bosnian who was previously a Yugoslav Army officer. He said that when the country and army splintered, he was offered the choice of going to Serbia as an officer in the army of the rump Yugoslav state or joining the emerging Serbian Army in Bosnia. He chose the latter, and now works from a barracks that once belonged to the Yugoslav Army.

"All the officers here are former Yugoslav Army officers," he declared, adding that there are close to 100,000 soldiers in the Serbian Bosnian Army. This figure is higher than estimates of United States analysts in Belgrade, who say there are about 70,000 Serbs fighting in Bosnia, equally split between army soldiers and militiamen with varying degrees of independence from the army.

Militia Leader Arrested

There is evidence that a drive to eliminate the Serbian irregulars or recruit them is indeed taking place. For example, on Sept. 22 a prominent Serbian militia leader widely known as "Major Ceko," who had been operating at the Gorazde front in Bosnia from a base in Pijevlja in Yugoslavia, was arrested. Major Ceko, whose real name is Misko Dacevic, claimed to control about 3,000 men.

Throughout Serbian-held Bosnia, as this process continues, it seems that a degree of military discipline is beginning to take hold. Roadblocks are now all manned by soldiers in uniform, and robberies, which were commonplace, have declined. Nonetheless, many militia commanders continue to operate independently.

For the Government in Belgrade, it is important that the warlords and irregulars — especially those using Serbia as a base — be eliminated. In arguing for the removal of United Nations sanctions, it is essential to the Yugoslav authorities to be able to portray events in Bosnia as outside their control.

"We withdrew our entire armed forces from Bosnia last May, and the only people from Serbia still fighting there are outlaws and criminals who will be arrested," said Oskar Kovac, the Deputy Prime Minister of what remains of Yugoslavia.

Gen. Zivota Panic, the Chief of Staff of the Yugoslav Army, added that every Yugoslav soldier was out of Bosnia on May 19 and "we now look at Bosnia like another country." He

On the ground, however, it is clear that while much effort is going into building formal divisions between Serbs in Bosnia and the truncated Serbian-dominated Yugoslav state, contacts remain strong. Indeed, the bus route between Belgrade and the Bosnian Serb capital of Pale, near Sarajevo, is regularly packed with fighters going back and forth.

As for the Muslims loyal to President Alija Izetbegovic, they are heavily outgunned and their military prospects appear slight in the absence of a Western military intervention.

"Serbs own 65 percent of the property in Bosnia and we are fighting to liberate and protect this land," said Colonel Kosovac, the Bosnian Serb officer.



Gen. Colin L. Powell said in a recent interview.

U.S. Use of Force in Bosnia, Powell Delivers a Resounding No

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toward the Balkans. When Administration officials prepared a diplomatic protest to the Serbs asking them to shadow relief flights with combat planes, military and civilian officials at the Pentagon softened language to remove any implicit threat to take military action to stop attacks.

Pentagon officials say that General Powell was the first to suggest that a ban be made and that the episode that the State Department was reluctant to threaten force because of negotiations with the diplomatic protest some Administration officials at the Pentagon is too reluctant to support military options that would threaten the West's diplomacy.

General Powell's philosophy on the use of force is widely shared by other officials, who recall the Vietnam war, he is the most prominent proponent. Defining the conditions when the use of force is appropriate, the general said: "It is not such a doctrine as an approach to a crisis or situation that comes to you. It does not say you have to apply military force in every situation. It says that you must begin with a clear understanding of what the objective is being achieved, and that the political objective is clear."

As soon as they tell me 'surgical,' I'm ready for the tank.'

General Powell said, the next step is to define the proper military means for the objective "is to win or do nothing else."

Two Actions Are Cited
Military analysts say that General Powell's approach served the United States well in the invasion of Panama and the Persian Gulf war, but that the overwhelming military force used to achieve a quick victory in Panama resulted in minimal American casualties. But analysts say that the Pentagon's doctrine designed to fight the last war, a no-fly zone and land war, rather than the next war, where force is used selectively, not to vanquish an enemy, but to slow aggression and bring about ethnic conflicts and diplomacy to end the fighting.

Aspin, the Wisconsin Democrat who leads the House Armed Services Committee, said "If we say it is all or nothing and then walk away from the force in the Balkans, we are sending a signal to other places that there is no downside to ethnic cleansing and we are not deterring anybody." In Bosnia, he said, the United States has been accused of widespread "ethnic cleansing — killing or expelling members of groups to create 'ethnically pure' areas."

Richard Schifter, the senior Department official for human rights in the Reagan Administration and an early part of the Bush Administration, asserted that the American military was haunted by a "Vietnam syndrome" that had paralyzed its response to the killing in Bosnia. "The Vietnam syndrome — the idea that you don't get involved in any kind of military force unless it is clearly defined and the purpose is clearly defined," Mr. Schifter said. "In Bosnia, we and our allies have to be clear about the use of force, such as establishing a no-fly zone or engaging in air strikes against military targets."

General Powell said, the next step is to define the proper military means for the objective "is to win or do nothing else."

"These are the same folks who have stuck us into problems before that we don't know really what they were doing there. It was a lesson we have to learn," General Powell said. "I have some memories of us being put into situations like that which did not turn out quite the way that the people who put us in thought — i.e., Lebanon, if you want a more recent real experience, where a bunch of marines were put in there as a symbol, as a sign. Except those poor young folks did not know exactly what their mission was, very confusing. Two hundred and forty-one of them died as a result."

In the debate over using military force in the Balkans, the most pressing issue is an air-exclusion zone in Bosnia. The United States and its allies have already said that they are prepared to use force to insure the delivery of relief supplies. But threatening force to clear the skies of Serbian planes would cross a new threshold.

Proponents of an air-exclusion zone say it would insure that Serbian planes do not resume shadowing relief flights and would also be the first commitment of Western combat power to protect the Bosnians from Serbian air attack. Only the Serbian side has committed aircraft, and it is using them to attack Muslim and Croat areas beyond the reach of artillery.

White House and State Department officials have been supportive of the concept, but the Pentagon has been wary, Administration officials say, fearing that it could be the first step toward deeper involvement and could lead to Serbian retaliation against the United Nations relief effort.

'Serious Threat' to Flights

In the interview, General Powell questioned the immediate need to threaten force to impose a ban on the flight of Serbian aircraft. He said that the Serbian practice of shadowing relief flights with their planes rarely put the relief flights in danger. In contrast, the State Department spokesman, Richard A. Boucher, has said that the Serbian shadowing has been a "serious threat to the safety of United Nations flights."

General Powell also noted that he pressed for the diplomatic protest, or demarche, which was delivered this month, asking the Serbs to stop the shadowing. "Before we start shooting up everybody just so everybody can have something to write about, let's see if the demarche works," he said.

He played down the significance of stopping Serbian combat attacks from the air. "With respect to dropping cluster bombs, that is reprehensible," he said. "But so is killing French soldiers with an AK-47. The question is: Are you intervening for the purpose of achieving a result or are you intervening because you do not like a particular weapon system that is being used? I think that is a legitimate question to ask before you apply the armed forces of the United States to the situation."

General Powell also rejected suggestions for limited bombing attacks against Serbian artillery and other military targets. "I do not know how limited bombing will stop the Serbs from doing what they are doing," he said.

Three Arguments Against

The general argued that it would be difficult to locate and destroy all of the Serbian artillery that intervention would mean that Washington was taking sides in the conflict, and that the warring parties might respond by retaliating against the United Nations relief effort.

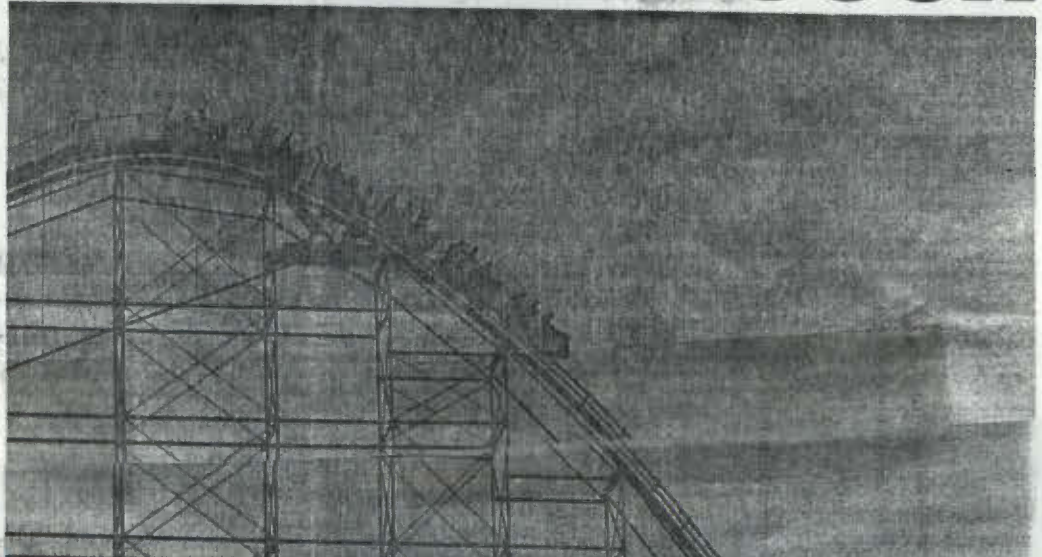
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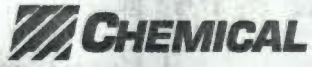
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Powell joins debate on use of force

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General explains reluctance to send troops to Bosnia

New York Times News Service

WASHINGTON — Reflecting a debate about the use of U.S. forces in regional conflicts, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is questioning even the most limited forms of military intervention to protect the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina or to try to stop the fighting.

In a lengthy and sometimes emotional interview, the chairman, Gen. Colin L. Powell, offered a strong defense of his philosophy that military force is best used to achieve a decisive victory and for the first time publicly explained his reluctance to intervene in Bosnia.

The remarks are the most recent and vivid example of a behind-the-scenes debate in the Bush administration over the use of force. The debate is being joined by lawmakers and former Bush administration officials who contend that the Pentagon has an "all or nothing" doctrine for using force that is increasingly irrelevant to a world in which violent nationalism and ethnic conflict have supplanted superpower hostilities.

The general questioned the need to establish an air-exclusion zone over Bosnia like those the United States has imposed over parts of Iraq, where the Pentagon sees less risk.

The United States and its allies are discussing setting up such a zone.

Meanwhile, peace envoys Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen were to arrive in Belgrade today to seek an end to



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Canadian Cpl. Michael Fournier is greeted by his wife, Kirsten, as he arrives in Germany after peacekeeping duty in former Yugoslavia.

atrocities against civilians in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Reuters reported.

[The co-chairmen of the Geneva-based international conference on

Yugoslavia believe Serbia-led Yugoslavia has the power to order Bosnian Serbs to halt the fighting of recent days.]