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B-US

# At the Bosnia Crossroads

## NO: The Senator, Wary of The Perils of Failure

By Lloyd Grove  
Washington Post Staff Writer

John McCain wants this clearly understood: His dire warnings against getting mixed up in Bosnia are not some symptom of post-Vietnam stress disorder.

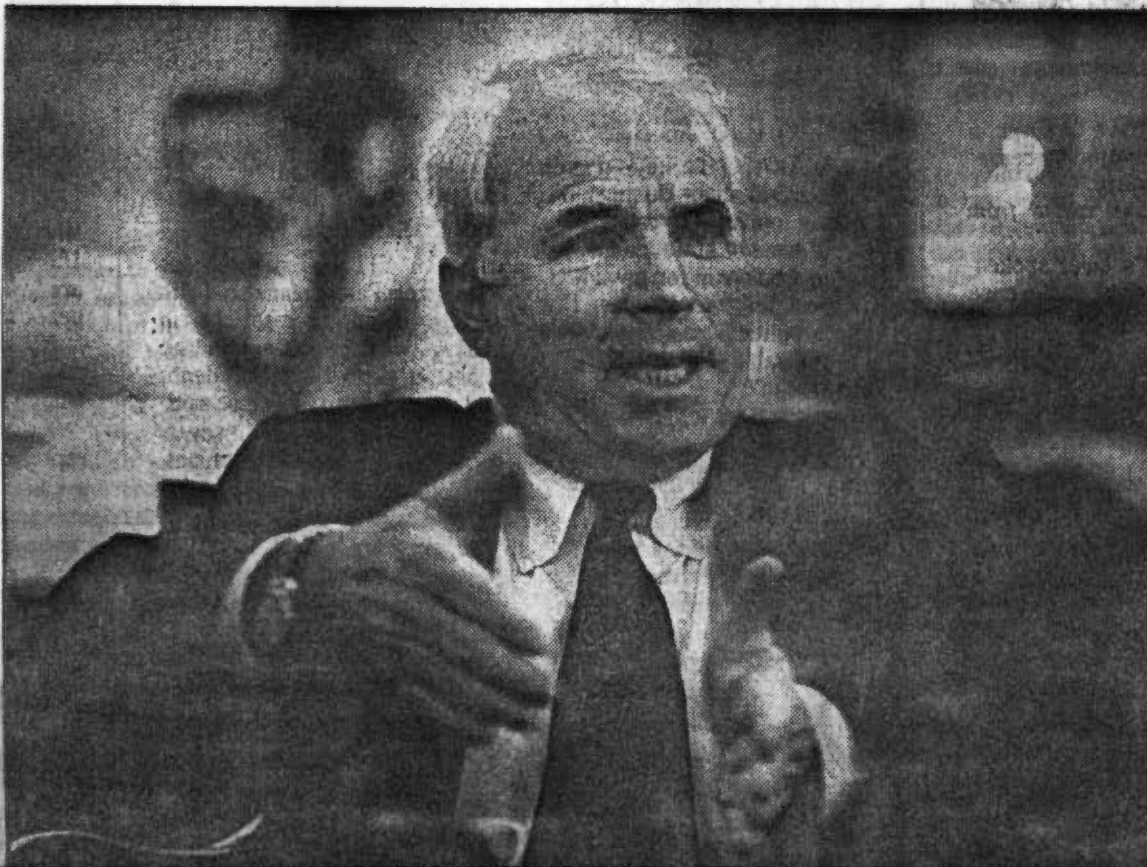
"I know people who are defined by the Vietnam experience. They never left, and everything they've done since somehow gets back to it," says the Republican senator from Arizona, who as a Navy pilot in 1967 was shot down during a bombing run over Hanoi, and spent 5½ years in a North Vietnamese prison. "That's not true in my case. I think you will find that I very seldom, if ever, talk about it. . . . I don't have headaches. I don't have nightmares. I don't have flashbacks."

Yet were it not for McCain's grim Vietnam experience—a credential shared by very few others in official Washington—the white-haired 56-year-old, his limbs still stiff from prison camp torture, would hardly be

Congress's most visible critic of Bill Clinton's reported plan to bomb Serbian artillery. He's the loudest voice among a bipartisan cohort skeptical of Clinton's emerging policy to stop the atrocities in the former Yugoslavia. Some of them are former military pilots such as Sen. John Glenn (D-Ohio) and Rep. Duke Cunningham (R-Calif.), but they also include such noncombatants as Sen. Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.).

"I've been worried about it a long time, but obviously in the last few weeks it's been ratcheted up considerably as the decision-making process goes on," McCain said yesterday, continuing his crusade as a self-styled Paul Revere, a role he has assumed in practically wall-to-wall television appearances in the last couple of weeks—occasionally opposite Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.), who has likened the "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia to the Holocaust. "All of us feel the same disgust and motivation to do

See McCain, B4, Col. 1



BY RAY LISTRO—THE WASHINGTON POST

Sen. McCain: "All of us feel the same disgust and motivation to do something. . . . The question is, what can you do?"

## YES: For the Foreign Minister, 200,000 Reasons to Help

By Phil McCombs  
Washington Post Staff Writer

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BY RAY LEBETH—THE WASHINGTON POST

# YES: For the Foreign Minister, 200,000 Reasons to Help

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In his exhaustion, in his pain, this man seems to have developed permanently watery eyes. He carries himself loosely in the nondescript gray suit, his body almost floppy with atigue. His high-cheekboned face—its expression now distracted, now unreservedly grim—has the soulful allor of a hero in an old European black-and-white film. A young diplomat, perhaps, traveling from one capital to the next begging for help as his population is being slaughtered.

He lights a Regal.  
"I understand now," says Haris Silajdzic (Sil-EYE-jish), the foreign minister of Bosnia-Herzegovina, "that his world is ruled by tired people. They just change planes and hotels. I practically live in the air. There's no time to reflect, no time to touch base. That's the way it is. Once you are here, you can't help it."  
He's there.

"I was in Karachi, London, Athens and now Washington in a few days' time," he says. In Athens, the peace plan was signed. In London, where the British, of all people, have been holding out against lifting the weapons embargo that would allow Silajdzic's people to arm themselves against the Serbs, "I told [British Foreign Minister Douglas] Hurd, 'You actually tie our hands while children are being killed and slaughtered.'"

He mentions Neville Chamberlain. "I believe," he says, "in the principles of deterrence. If this extremism wins in Bosnia, then it will feed many different extremisms all over the world."

Now, Silajdzic is here.  
Washington, where the new president has said we will bomb the Serbs if necessary and will get the arms embargo lifted, and has sent the secretary of state to European capitals to drum up cooperation.

"Yes, of course we are happy," says  
See SILAJDZIC, B3, Col. 1



BY DAYNA SMITH—THE WASHINGTON POST

Haris Silajdzic "It seems the world is becoming ashamed of emotions. So what are we to become—machines?"

# Fighting to Keep Out

McCain, From B1

something about it. The question is, what can you do?"

McCain said that while he was suffering no flashbacks, he did have a strong sense of *déjà vu*. He recalled that as a freshman member of the House in September 1983, he made a floor speech vehemently opposing the stationing of a Marine "peace-keeping" force in Lebanon—an operation that was nevertheless undertaken, with disastrous results.

Of the Clinton administration approach to the Balkans, he said, "I believe it's a 'feel-good' policy—you know, we'll just bomb, and if it doesn't work then we'll think of something else. That just smacks of sophistry. It smacks of total irresponsibility to say, 'Just go ahead and bomb and if that fails . . . we'll have to escalate, or, as the other argument goes, if it fails, we're no worse off than we were before. But the U.S. cannot afford to fail. We're the world's superpower. The situation would be worse if we failed—in my view, considerably worse.'"

As the senator held forth in his office yesterday, he sipped coffee from a mug bearing the legend "DDG 56 John S. McCain"—a guided-missile destroyer christened in honor of his father and grandfather, both distinguished Navy admirals who instilled in John McCain III the values and culture of military duty and discipline. It's a blood legacy that the president, for one, famously lacks, even as he contemplates sending bombers into the Balkans or—if a peace accord among Bosnia's Serbs, Croats and Muslims is ratified today—thousands of American soldiers to help enforce it.

"I think there's potential trouble [for Clinton] if the casualties start to mount," McCain said, referring to Clinton's personal history as a vocal opponent of the Vietnam War who, while a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, avoided military service. "I think he has less leeway than another commander-in-chief would have"—due, in part,



Sen. John McCain: "I believe it's a 'feel-good' policy—you know, we'll just bomb, and if it doesn't work then we'll think of something else."

McCain said, to a "poisoned atmosphere between the president and the military."

"I'm one who believes that this relationship with the military is not healthy, and I have more than once volunteered to be of assistance to help him repair that," McCain said, referring to tensions over Clinton's vow to lift the Pentagon's ban on homosexuals, his proposals for deep cuts in the defense budget and other sticky issues. "I would travel with him to military bases or events associated with the military," McCain added, enumerating the ways in which he might be of help. "I would talk to veterans organizations and others. I would try to advise him as to how to become more visible with military people around him. One of his problems is that today, as I see it, there is not a military presence in the White House on a regular basis. I would advise him in that respect. I would do anything in my power to try to repair this rift."

McCain, a member of the Senate Armed Ser-

VICES Committee whose Pentagon contacts are deep and wide, asserted that Clinton has "got to be more pro-active in trying to repair the rift. . . . For example, I would have strongly recommended that he speak to one of the service academies for their graduation ceremonies next week. I don't think he is."

Predictably, White House Communications Director George Stephanopoulos differed with the senator's assessment yesterday.

"Of course the atmosphere isn't poisonous," Stephanopoulos said in an interview. "The president has a close relationship with the military."

As for McCain's assertion that Clinton was somehow neglecting the service academies, Stephanopoulos pointed out, "He's speaking at West Point."

McCain, meanwhile, had this to say about former representative Les Aspin, Clinton's defense secretary, who was one of Robert McNamara's whiz-kid theorists during Vietnam: "I worry a lot about Les sort of over-intellectualizing some issues. I would not like to see a repeat of this scenario where [as chairman of the House Armed Services Committee] he listed all the countries in the world and said, 'This is 1½ Iraq; this is 1.6 Iraq. This is 1.8 Iraq.' That may be a fun intellectual exercise at Harvard, but it's not real."

What is real, however, is the Clintonites' determination that McCain's opinions don't poison the wells in the Senate or House. Howard Paster, Clinton's chief congressional lobbyist, expressed surprise, surprise, at the senator's attitude.

"Today we received a really lovely letter from Senator McCain in response to the article [in the Washington Post] about some people not wanting the president to celebrate Memorial Day," Paster said. "And Senator McCain sent a very nice letter, which was much appreciated, saying that he thinks these people's objections are simply unjust, because the president is the commander-in-chief. It was a very thoughtful letter, and I immediately sent it in to the president, because I thought it was so special."

But Paster would probably be well advised not to take McCain's missive as a ringing endorsement.

"I'm willing to give him the benefit of the doubt and put my confidence in his leadership ability," McCain said, when asked if Clinton will make a good commander-in-chief. "Until he proves other-