

Major defends support of Bosnian embargo

BY NICHOLAS WOOD

JOHN Major has renewed his argument with President Clinton over Britain's refusal to bow to American pressure for an end to the arms embargo on Bosnia.

The prime minister was asked by Sir David Frost in a BBC television interview recorded in Cyprus at the Commonwealth Conference about President Clinton's interview with *The Washington Post*.

In the interview, Mr Clinton said Mr Major had told him that he was "not sure he could sustain his government if he agreed to lift the embargo". The prime minister denied making such a remark, but strongly defended his refusal to arm the Bosnian Muslims in their struggle

against the Bosnian Serbs and their intermittent clashes with the Croats.

Mr Major said: "What is perfectly clear is that the policy of lifting the arms embargo had no support — very little support in the House of Commons and no support whatever in the cabinet, and for very good reason.

"It is a curious way to stop a war by flooding the area with arms. How would the arms have got there? They would have almost certainly have got there via the Croats. Who is fighting whom at the moment? The Croats and Muslims. How would that have helped the Muslims or indeed anyone else? Flooding more arms in an area will add to the

bloodshed, not add to the solution."

The prime minister also said that lifting the arms embargo would mean an end to the humanitarian relief operation in which British troops were playing a leading role. He also said that he never used the phrase "the special relationship" to describe the links between Britain and the United States.

□ Dabravine, Bosnia: A Muslim village captured by Croat forces in central Bosnia was set on fire yesterday, a United Nations officer from the Norwegian battalion based in Vares, near the village of Stupni Do, said. Peacekeepers had to turn back. (Reuter)

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JOHN MAJOR yesterday denied a claim by Bill Clinton that he had told the United States president the government could fall if Britain agreed to lift the arms embargo on Bosnia.

Mr Major also dismissed as "silly" reports of the US downgrading its links with Britain as a result of the disagreement over Bosnia. But the Prime Minister said he did not refer to the alliance as a "special relationship" and insisted Britain was right to reject the US call to lift the arms embargo.

The President said Mr Major "told me he wasn't sure he could sustain his government if he lifted the arms embargo". Mr Major, in Cyprus for the Commonwealth conference, was asked by BBC television's *Breakfast with Frost* whether he had said that.

Major rejects US claims on Bosnia arms embargo

"No, of course not. What is perfectly clear is the policy of lifting the arms embargo had no support, very little support in the Commons and no support whatever in the Cabinet, and that of course the United States know," he said.

Mr Major said it was "curious way to stop a war by flooding the area with arms". This would add to the bloodshed, not provide a solution, he said.

"I believe lifting the arms embargo would have added to the difficulties, not provided a solution.

COLIN BROWN
Political Correspondent
and agencies

He described remarks by Warren Christopher, the US Secretary of State, that Western Europe was no longer the dominant area of the world as a "cry of frustration" over US foreign-policy difficulties. "I have never referred to it as a special relationship," Mr Major said. It was a relationship of "shared instincts and shared interests". For

people to say the whole relationship was changing because of disagreement on the arms embargo on Bosnia was "frankly, rather silly".

Meanwhile, in central Bosnia the Muslim village of Stupni Do, captured by Croat forces, was set aflame yesterday a UN officer told Reuters. "The village is burned down entirely. Some places are still burning. We have seen the village from about 1,000 metres (yards)," said the officer from the Norwegian UN battalion based near the village.

In Britain, the National Union of

Journalists criticised a group of actors, including Vanessa Redgrave, Daniel Day-Lewis and Jeremy Irons for allegedly posing as journalists in an attempt to travel on a relief flight to Sarajevo.

The group obtained press accreditation from the UN Protection Forces in order to fly on aid flights as journalists. But they were turned away from two UN flights from Italy in 24 hours. The actors want to attend a 10-day film festival in the besieged Bosnian capital.

"Over the last two years, 37 media workers have been killed in the wars in former Yugoslavia. It is an insult to these people for Vanessa Redgrave and her troupe of hurrives to use press credentials as a means of furthering what appears to be little more than a stunt for their own publicity."

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