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**SECURITY CHALLENGES IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE**

*by Jane Sharp*

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## SECURITY CHALLENGES IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

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### **A. Trouble from Milosevic in Kosovo and /or Montenegro**

1. NATO's bombing campaign shattered the economy of Serbia but western policy makers should not assume they inflicted an unambiguous defeat on Slobodan Milosevic. He obviously sees himself only in tactical retreat.<sup>1</sup> Theories abound as to why he agreed on 3 June to withdraw forces from Kosovo and accept an international military presence, but the most plausible reason seems to be that the Russians promised military assistance to partition the northern part of the province. This plan, apparently promoted by Russian military intelligence (GRU) and supported by President Yeltsin, was only thwarted by the refusal of Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria to allow Russian over-flights to reinforce the 200 Russian SFOR troops who dashed to Pristina on 11 June.<sup>2</sup>

2. NATO bomb damage assessments show little damage to the Serb Army (Vojska Jugoslavie-VJ) in Kosovo by NATO's March - June bombing campaign, nor is there any evidence that the Serb special police (MUP) and para-militaries, together responsible for most of the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, suffered any loss of power in the aftermath of the war. During the summer KFOR officers reported a co-ordinated effort by Serb police and para-militaries to infiltrate and destabilise Kosovo, especially in the region of Mitrovica. As for the army, in Belgrade several VJ generals have declared an interest in retaking Kosovo by force, for example General Radoan Lazarevic, commander of the Pristina Corps, and General Nebojsa Pavkovic of the 3rd Army Corps.<sup>3</sup> Military analysts dismiss these claims as unrealistic, but manifestly there is a faction in the army that would support further attempts by Milosevic to make mischief in Kosovo.

3. The past decade has shown that Milosevic thrives on crises. The most likely place for Milosevic to foment a new crisis is in Montenegro, where President Djukanovic makes no secret of his desire for autonomy within, if not outright independence from, the FRY.<sup>4</sup> The VJ has been reinforced in the Sandzak region since the June agreements to the point where in a total population of (largely Muslim) of 150,000, the Serb military presence in the region is about 15,000. Should Milosevic start a conflict there he could also call on the VJ 2nd Army currently stationed in Montenegro headed by the openly pro-Milosevic General Milorad Obradovic. President Djukanovic wants to move further away from Belgrade, but cannot go all the way without more firm support from west, which so far has not been forthcoming.

4. Some analysts believe that western governments might even want Djukanovic to

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<sup>1</sup>William Drodziak, "Serbs fear Milosevic will again turn adversity to his advantage", International Herald Tribune, 25 October 1999

<sup>2</sup>Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Why Milosevic cracked?" Prospect November 1999, page 10-11

<sup>3</sup>Milenko Vasovic, "Belgrade generals threaten a battle with an empty rifle", Balkan Crisis Report # 77, 21 September 1999; Srđan Staletović, "Is the Army going back to Kosovo?" Balkan Crisis Report #78, 24 September 1999.

<sup>4</sup>Zoran Kusovac, "Milosevic prepares to play out Montenegro", Jane's Intelligence Review, September 1999, pp 14-17.

replace Milosevic as new leader of the FRY. That way western governments could bolster their case to keep Montenegro and Kosovo in the FRY, perhaps as three co-equal republics in the federation.

## **B. Other dangers in Kosovo**

1. Revenge killings of Serbs by Albanians have diminished, but remain a serious problem in the province though, it is not clear to what extent the Albanian culprits are Kosovo Albanians or Albanian gangsters from Albania. Thaci and the KLA have lost support to Rugova recently, probably because most of the Albanian population blames the KLA for at least some of the murders.

2. Another danger to the Kosovars (and to KFOR, UNMIK and NGO personnel) comes from Serb mines and unexploded NATO ordnance. Several soldiers and children have been injured, some killed, from explosions.<sup>5</sup>

## **C. Trouble from the Russians**

1. Russia options debated during the NATO bombing ran the gamut from full scale war against NATO to full co-operation with NATO in a Kosovo peace keeping operation.<sup>6</sup> After the Russian dash to Pristina in June, NATO officers cannot be certain that Russian troops will remain co-operative in the current KFOR arrangements. Much depends on the balance of power between the military and the civilian authorities in Moscow and within the different military factions. The impact of the Russian war in Chechnya could also influence how the Russian military behave in Kosovo, as well as how they are regarded by their KFOR partners.

2. The Russian military feel a deep sense of humiliation from their loss of empire in central and eastern Europe, from the subsequent enlargement of NATO, and from having little influence in the Balkans. This humiliation is exacerbated by a United States with no clear sense of priority in foreign affairs and apparently little interest in nuclear arms control beyond cutting the risk to the continental United States of loose Russian nukes.

3. Senior Russian officers were especially unhappy to be thwarted (in their plans to partition Kosovo) by NATO and its SEE partners Romania and Hungary in June, and might welcome an operation in which they supported Serb military action against NATO. If they so choose, Russian and Serb forces could make life very difficult for the Alliance this coming winter.

## **D. Trouble in Albania**

1. The poor state of Albania's economy makes it vulnerable. Resentment is growing there and in other front line states that western promises of financial support for cooperation

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, ChrisBird, "Children injured by NATO bomb", Guardian, 23 October 1999

<sup>6</sup> refs from JIR in office

during the war have not been forthcoming.

2. Organised crime is still a huge problem and much of its spills over into Kosovo and further afield.

### **E. Trouble in Macedonia**

1. Macedonian Slavs are not happy to have 7000 NATO troops in Macedonia, even though the NATO strength is only about 1/4 to 1/5 its strength before KFOR moved into Kosovo.

One problem exacerbating relations with NATO has been a fatal road accident blamed on a Norwegian captain, Vesli Adun Kristijan.

2. Macedonia wants to join western institutions like NATO and the EU, but feels the current NATO Presence is more like an occupation force than a friendly presence. All six registered candidates in the current election campaign complain about the NATO presence.<sup>7</sup> Should the election results be unacceptable to the Albanian minority and violence ensue, there is some question whether the reduced NATO presence could serve a preventive mission.

### **F. Trouble in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

1. Tensions are on the rise in Republika Srpka where hard line Serbs recently car-bombed Zeljko Kopanja, editor of the independent newspaper Nezavisne Novine, which since August has run a series of reports on Serb atrocities in Bosnia during 1992.<sup>8</sup> These articles have been generally supportive of the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the Hague and the bringing to trial of all those indicted for war crimes.<sup>9</sup>

2. Dayton implementation is deeply unsatisfactory, especially acceptance by local communities of returning minority refugees. Yet, because of overstretched NATO forces, SFOR is being cut by about 1/3, and will thus be less able to provide for public safety and freedom of movement for returnees.

3. The three different B-H armies are still far apart: Bosnians and Croats remain separate in the Federation and the Serb army in RS. No-one doubts that if SFOR pulled out altogether conflict would erupt between the still unreformed national armies.

### **G. Trouble in NATO**

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<sup>7</sup>Iso Rusi, "Election campaigners ask if NATO has overstayed its welcome", Balkan Crisis Report # 76, 17 September 1999

<sup>8</sup>Jadranka Slatina, "An editor pays the price in Republika Srpka", Balkan Crisis Report # 86, 23 October 1999

<sup>9</sup>Jadranka Slatina, "Boanian Serb daily breaks taboos", Balkan Crisis Report # 74, 10 September 1999.

1. Alliance cohesion was fragile during the NATO bombing, Will alliance cohesion hold if things heat up in Kosovo?
2. Will Europeans be able to act without the US if necessary?
3. Is there enough political will to upgrade military capabilities as called for in the Blair defence initiative?

**H. Problems in the wider region:**

1. Disappointed expectations (especially in Romania) after Stability Pact fanfare in late July.
2. Status of relations between Greece and Turkey still a cause of concern?