

YUGOSLAV FORCES ENTER THE BUFFER ZONE

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the agreement concluded this week under which NATO is allowing limited, selected units of the armed forces of Yugoslavia to reenter a part of the so-called Ground Safety Zone in extreme southern Serbia, opposite the southeastern tip of Kosovo.

This decision, which I consider to be a wise one, was prompted by the escalating violence of three loosely organized ethnic Albanian guerilla groups, which collectively call themselves the "Liberation Army of Preševo, Medvedja, and Bujanovac", or UCPMB.

These insurgents have taken advantage of the unintended military vacuum in the GSZ to operate with virtual impunity and take control of much of the small border area.

In this context, it is important to note that NATO's decision was quickly followed by a one-week cease-fire agreement between the rebels and the Yugoslav Government.

The Ground Safety Zone was created in the Preševo Valley as part of the Military-Technical Agreement concluded in June 1999 at the end of Operation Allied Force, the Kosovo Air War. It is a five-kilometer-wide strip, which was intended to separate the NATO-led troops occupying Kosovo from the Yugoslav Army and Serbian police in Serbia proper.

In the last half-year the situation has changed fundamentally. Slobodan Milošević, the authoritarian war-criminal who was responsible for starting four bloody wars in eight years, was deposed last October after he tried to thwart the will of the Yugoslav electorate.

Although some of his successors have extreme nationalist backgrounds of their own and, in the case of Yugoslav President Koštunica, often voice rather other-worldly anti-American pronouncements, they are democrats and represent a significant break with Milošević.

Therefore, NATO believes that the troops under its command in Kosovo no longer must fear attacks from Yugoslav units across the border in Serbia proper. In short, NATO, through this week's agreement, has given an important, if limited, vote of confidence in the new administration in Belgrade.

Again, this ground security zone, which coincidentally, as I know the Presiding Officer knows, is an area of southern Serbia bordering Kosovo which is predominantly Albanian. We did not put that ground security zone there because we were worried about the Albanian extremists, although we worry about them. We put it there so you wouldn't have the Serbian Army under Milošević's command facing off border to border with NATO forces. That is why it was put there.

In the meantime, there is no evidence that the KLA, the Kosovo Liberation Army, and its former leaders, Mr. Hashim Thaci and Mr. Ramush

Haradinaj, are involved in these raids going on in that area of the Preševo Valley.

In light of that, when I spoke to Major General George W. Casey, who is in charge of Camp Bondsteel and the KFOR forces in that sector, about a month ago, he proposed two things: One, that the Serbs have to come up with a political solution to deal with the plight of the Albanians living in Serbia who are denied political representation. In the meantime, we had to think about working out an agreement whereby in at least part of the Ground Safety Zone, we would allow patrols by the Serbian military to stop the infiltration of these renegade Albanian guerrilla forces who are seemingly not united, but who could cause the spark for a new war in the region.

Meanwhile, the UCPMB attacks have grown bolder, and small groups of ethnic Albanian gunmen have begun attacks in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, just across from southern Kosovo.

This latter outbreak of violence stems from local conditions, not the least of which is common criminality. Although the two insurgencies are fundamentally different—the ethnic Albanians in Macedonia have full rights and are represented in the highest levels of the national government—there has been a steady stream of smuggling of arms between the two areas. Moreover, this smuggling route goes directly through the sector of the GSZ that is to be re-occupied. NATO obviously hopes that one beneficial aspect of this week's agreement will be the interdiction of this smuggling route.

Incidentally, I believe that the Bush Administration made a mistake by refusing to go along with the proposal by our British allies for entry of KFOR troops into the Ground Safety Zone to help pacify the area.

Here I must underscore that the overall plan for the Preševo Valley is not a purely military one. It has an important civilian component, worked out by Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Čović. I will return to that aspect in a few minutes.

Several articles in today's press have given sketchy outlines of what has been agreed upon. I believe, however, that since American troops are directly involved in this new situation, it would be wise to go into greater detail for the benefit of the Members of this chamber and for American citizens.

First of all, the GSZ, Ground Safety Zone, has not been narrowed or otherwise reduced. The Commander of KFOR intends to permit certain forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, popularly known as the FRY, to enter the small Sector C, East, of the GSZ on specified dates and times.

The presence of FRY forces is subject to the authorization of the KFOR Commander, who retains the right to revoke his authorization in the event of a violation of the specified terms and conditions. Now to the most important

specific military conditions in the agreement.

First, no FRY forces or authorities will be permitted to enter Kosovo. The agreement applies only to the GSZ in Serbia proper.

Second, no FRY or Serbian irregular or paramilitary forces are to enter the GSZ. Only regular forces are involved.

I will not take the time, but there is a gigantic difference between the regular FRY forces and the paramilitary forces that were responsible for the horrible damage and the horrible atrocities in Kosovo and other places.

Third, several categories of equipment and weapons systems are prohibited from the sector to be re-occupied by FRY units, and are not to be used to fire into Kosovo.

They include: tanks, helicopters, towed and self-propelled artillery, multiple launch rocket systems, mortars greater than eighty-two millimeters, anti-tank guns and guided missiles, and cannon greater than thirty millimeter caliber, anti-aircraft and air defense weapons systems, and mines and booby-traps of all types.

I am sorry to go into such detail, but it is important that this be in the RECORD.

Fourth and finally, FRY forces and authorities will at all times respect and ensure fundamental human rights and will abide by the provisions of all international humanitarian law conventions and covenants and the Geneva Convention. Monitoring of FRY forces will be conducted by the European Union.

NATO has insisted that the commanding officers of the FRY forces going back into the GSZ must not have been involved in any of the atrocities committed in Kosovo in 1998 and 1999.

Nonetheless, today's New York Times reported that the returning forces included General Pavković, the Chief of the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army, and General Lazarević, the head of the national paramilitary police, both of whom compiled a record of brutality in Kosovo two years ago.

Upon hearing this, my staff contacted U.S. Ambassador William Montgomery, who was on the scene in the Preševo Valley, to ascertain what had happened.

His report illustrates both the progress in democratization that Serbia and Yugoslavia have made, and also how much more there is to do in that regard.

Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Čović—as I said, who I met with for hours and is a democrat and a decent man—had been given authority to set up a special military unit to conduct the reentry of Yugoslav forces into the small southernmost area of the Ground Safety Zone.

He placed in charge a general, with loyal subordinates, all of whom were not associated with the brutality in Kosovo 2 years ago.

And, in fact, as of this morning there has not been any real violations of the cease-fire by either side.

Now comes the intrigue that illustrates the split in the Belgrade Government. Without informing anyone in advance, General Pavkovic went down to the Presevo Valley and went into the Ground Safety Zone in a white jeep—in a white jeep, like some tinhorn dictator—stayed about an hour to assert his authority as Chief of the General Staff of the Army, and then left.

Deputy Prime Minister Covic, a decent man about whom I will shortly speak, was apparently livid. In a press interview he snapped: “The dogs of war must go, no matter how important the positions they occupy”—obviously referring to the Chief of the General Staff of the Army who rode around in his white jeep like some tinhorn dictator.

We should not kid ourselves. Milosevic is gone from power, but many of his most important henchmen in the military and the police are trying to hang on to their posts.

I hope, and expect, that President Kostunica—who personally emphasized his commitment to constitutional government to me 2 months ago in Belgrade—will shortly dismiss General Pavkovic, and General Lazarevic, and other military leaders who have Kosovar blood on their hands. President Kostunica must realize that this is a litmus test for Yugoslav democracy.

Mr. President, earlier I mentioned the so-called Covic Plan, drawn up by the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia.

In January, I had a lengthy meeting with Mr. Covic and his senior advisors. I judge him to be a genuine democrat who can be trusted.

In fact, he already has won the grudging confidence of most ethnic Albanians in the Presevo Valley with whom he has been in negotiations.

The Covic Plan has six fundamental elements, which are intended to create long-term stability, but keep the Presevo Valley as part of Serbia.

First, Serbia and the FRY commit to solving the crisis by political and diplomatic means.

Second, there will be no special status or border changes for Presevo, Medvedja, and Bujanovac. I am getting good at these names, but not good enough, Mr. President.

Third, there will be no constitutional changes. Ethnic Albanians in the area will be integrated into the existing system.

Fourth, representatives of human rights organizations and the media will have free access to the area.

Fifth, both the Serbian and ethnic Albanian sides in the area will demilitarize.

And sixth, and most important, the ethnic Albanians will be integrated into the political, economic, and social systems of the Presevo Valley—in other words, the new government in Belgrade pledges to reverse the shameful discrimination and persecution of ethnic Albanians in the area carried out by Milosevic and his thugs.

Mr. President, NATO’s move this week was calculated, and it was a two-part gamble. First, we are betting that the new government in Belgrade has made a clean break with the ruthless, racist, and exploitative policies of Milosevic.

Second—and this is probably more of a stretch—we are hoping that the majority of ethnic Albanian guerillas will permanently lay down their weapons if they see that Covic and his plan are being implemented in good faith and is producing tangible results.

I should add that if the Serbian and Yugoslav authorities meet their part of the bargain, we should be ready to provide economic and humanitarian assistance to the Presevo Valley.

Mr. President, one, or even both of these gambles may not pan out. If that happens, we, in concert with our allies, will have to recalibrate our policies.

But in the highly complex and emotionally charged current situation, this agreement is, I believe, a risk necessary to take.

As I have said innumerable times on this floor and elsewhere, the stakes for the United States in creating stability in the Balkans are too high for us to walk away from this problem.

Either we remain intimately engaged politically, militarily, and economically or, I am firmly convinced, at some future date we will have to go back into a newly devastated Balkan area with a much higher cost.

I thank the Chair, and I thank the pages. I thank the staff. I thank everybody for indulging me until 7:20 at night. But, Mr. President, I think it is vitally important that we all know what we are undertaking in the Presevo Valley and what we are undertaking in Kosovo. I am convinced we have no choice but to proceed as we have.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. I thank the Senator from Delaware.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY,
MARCH 19, 2001

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands in adjournment until Monday, March 19, 2001, at 12 noon.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:26 p.m., adjourned until Monday, March 19, 2001, at 12 noon.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate March 15, 2001:

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

KENNETH I. JUSTER, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF COMMERCE FOR EXPORT ADMINISTRATION, VICE WILLIAM ALAN REINSCH, RESIGNED.