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Major shifts on more Bosnia troops



Muslims collecting water in east Mostar near the Stari Most, the destroyed bridge that once linked them with the city's Croatian-held west side Photograph: Kevin Weaver

Generals put pressure on Prime Minister to send reinforcements

JOHN MAJOR yesterday sought to avert a deep rift with the military Chiefs of Staff by promising the Government was ready to consider sending more troops to Bosnia if other countries did the same. The Prime Minister's statement came as the United Nations appealed for 10,650 more troops to hold together the precarious ceasefires in Bosnia — a request aimed pointedly at Britain, France and the United States. Mr Major modified earlier statements that Britain was bearing its fair share of the peace-keeping burden by telling the Commons it would consider increasing its force "proportionately as part of a wider international effort". His remarks followed what showed every sign of being a highly-placed leak of the Chiefs' mounting concern that Britain's 2,300 troops will be dangerously exposed if not reinforced.

DONALD MACINTYRE
ANNIKA SAVILL and
CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY

However, there are continuing signs that the deep opposition on the Tory backbenches to further British military entanglement extends well into the Cabinet. Several ministers, including Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, are understood to be strongly opposed to an open-ended commitment to increase the British contingent. Senior Whitehall officials were at pains to play down the difference between Mr Major's formulation yesterday and an *Evening Standard* article on Wednesday by Douglas Hurd. In that, the Foreign Secretary acknowledged the UN might need extra troops but added: "The extra should come from elsewhere."

General Jean Cot, the French commander-in-chief of the UN peace-keeping force, said the only countries in a position to despatch troops immediately were "first the United States, second Britain and third France". Speaking in Zagreb, General Cot criticised the US refusal to contribute ground troops until Serbs, Muslims and Croats signed a peace treaty. The US has worked hard to help to achieve a Muslim-Croat agreement, signed in Washington on Tuesday, but insists it will send troops only when all three factions have subscribed to a settlement. President Bill Clinton and other senior officials have reiterated that at that point the US will provide up to a third of the total UN peace-keeping force.

The UN's special envoy, Yasushi Akashi, said the UN had a force of nearly 14,000 in Bosnia and needed 4,600 more soldiers to enforce a Muslim-Serb truce around Sarajevo, 6,050 to keep apart Croats and Muslims in central and southern Bosnia, 150 more military observers and more than 500 civil police.

Mr Major's Commons statement came in reply to a demand from Winston Churchill, MP for Davyhulme, for Britain to meet three requests by General Rose. Government business managers believe Tory MPs in sympathy with Mr Churchill are far outnumbered by those opposing troop increases.

When Paddy Ashdown, Liberal Democrats' leader, accused him of being prepared to "let go to waste" the peace in Sarajevo, Mr Major called on him to acknowledge the British contribution already made "rather than carp, criticise and do so inaccurately".

THE TORIES are 23.5 points behind Labour in a Gallup poll in today's *Daily Telegraph*. Labour is at 48.5 per cent (45.5 last month); Conservative 25 (26); Liberal Democrats 21 (23); Others 5.5 (5.5). Only 30 per cent of voters believe Britain is coming out of recession.

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Front line tense but precarious peace holds in Sarajevo

BURSTS of gunfire on a tense frontline in central Sarajevo yesterday marred the city's ceasefire for a second consecutive day but United Nations officials maintained that the truce was holding throughout Bosnia, writes Robert Block. "The ceasefire is going well all over Bosnia-Herzegovina except for small-arms fire, which is insignificant," said Lieutenant Colonel Bill Aikman, spokesman for the UN

Protection Force (Unprofor). Earlier, Bosnian Serb forces besieging Sarajevo fired four mortar bombs towards positions held by the mainly Muslim Bosnian army in the southern part of the city. Small-arms fire could be heard for about five minutes. In central Bosnia, the ceasefire signed on Friday by Bosnian Croats and Muslims appears to have been generally respected.

But in the northern town of Maglaj, besieged by Serbs, UN officials were unable to comment on reports that 4,000 shells had fallen on the city and neighboring towns the previous day. A convoy for Maglaj was stranded in Zenica yesterday, and it may be two or three days before it is allowed to proceed through a kilometre of Serbian territory. Hopes of reaching Maglaj rose after Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian

Serb leader, agreed to let the UN reopen the nearby Tuzla airport for humanitarian flights. But those hopes were dashed yesterday when Yasushi Akashi, the UN special envoy, said the agreement which called for Russian troops to monitor the airport was not good enough for the airlift to start. A team of Russian military experts is due in Croatia today to prepare for 25 Russian observers to be

deployed in Tuzla. But Mr Akashi said he could not accept the Russian deployment without approval from the Bosnian government. "What was discussed in Moscow between Russian authorities and Mr Karadzic is a matter of interest to us, but that is not the total solution," Mr Akashi said. "The Bosnian government has not yet agreed to this, so not all the cards have been put in place."

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VIDEO SERVER
Video programs are compressed from information databases to allow super fast onward transmissions

BROADBAND NETWORK
Video segments are sent in bursts at accelerated rates over nationwide broadband network

BT BUILDING
houses transmission equipment and an asymmetric digital subscriber loop (ADSL) to transmit data

STANDARD PHONE LINES
existing copper wire lines to be used for passing on transmission. Fibre optics will also be tested

RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER
uses phone, TV to get entertainment and information services through set-top video decoder and interface

Allegations of hidden pay-offs in Pergau-style contracts shock Chalker

Overseas aid system open to corruption by firms

ONE OF the Government's special advisers raised the stakes in the Pergau dam affair last night with allegations that government aid for

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

she is fighting to hold on to the provision, which accounts for £90m a year of the £2.1bn ODA budget. She told the committee she wanted to

Fra 3 giorni, grazie a Top English Zanichelli in regalo con L'Espresso, imparerai a leggere questa pagina dalla prima all'ultima parola.

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