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Briefing on Bosnia by Region

February 5, 1998

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Briefing on Bosnia by Region

Thursday, February 5, 1998

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

Washington, DC

The briefing convened at 10:00 a.m. in room 2200, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. Robert Hand, Helsinki Commission staff advisor, presiding.

Mr. **Hand.** Good morning, everybody. I'd like to welcome you to this briefing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, better known as the Helsinki Commission, which is focusing on Bosnia.

We've had many briefings on Bosnia in the past. Normally they focus on the entire country as a whole, problems that the country as a whole has. Our topic today is Bosnia by region, looking at some of the particular regions of Bosnia that might be of interest to people here on the Hill or in Washington generally.

I think it is possible to make a few general remarks about the situation in Bosnia as a whole. Generally speaking, ethnically-based political parties are dominant, and they seem intent on remaining so through nationalism, corruption, or control of the media.

Generally speaking, economic conditions are poor. Generally speaking, towns and cities have a certain percentage of their original population now displaced and living elsewhere, while at the same time these cities and towns are home to new people who are displaced from other places.

Despite these similarities that you often hear reported about Bosnia, there is significant variation in the conditions in the country. Even if you go within the two entities, Republika Srpska and the Bosnian Federation, there is significant variation, so much so that one could even see there being, in fact, four entities in reality right at the moment. Indeed there are places, some brighter and some darker, in various parts of Bosnia that are exceptions to the generalities I've just mentioned.

Some areas have been devastated by the conflict. Others have been left relatively untouched. In some places, a certain ethnic group might be the victim. In another place, representatives of that group might be the culprits of some of the problems the country is facing.

There are also fewer tangible differences, such as traditional orientations. Some regions are more oriented toward Zagreb, others toward Belgrade, Montenegro, the Dalmatian Coast. On top of these geographic orientations, the war has imposed orientations based on ethnicities. Sometimes these two contradict each other. I would say that is the case with Banja Luka.

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So why should we care about variations within Bosnia? Does it really matter? I think there are two reasons why it does matter: first of all, a practical consideration. The international community is pumping a lot of money into Bosnia-Herzegovina right now. It inevitably goes to the local level.

In giving assistance to Bosnia, we don't want to reward or support those who resist implementation of Dayton. We do not want money to go to people who have been indicted for war crimes and in many cases are still politically active on the local level.

Elsewhere there are local leaders who espouse extreme nationalism and won't let the duly elected officials from last September's municipal election come to that municipality and assume their office.

On the other hand, as I said before, there are some bright spots where there is cooperation, a willingness to share power. Those places we would want to reward for their cooperation.

Second, if Bosnia is to survive and recover, it is my personal view that democracy must ultimately manifest itself at the local level. At the top, the best I think we can hope for is to keep the leaders committed somehow to keeping the country together and not trying to divide it again, in the meantime hoping that there's enough change at the local level in shedding nationalism and being more concerned about economic issues, infrastructure, et cetera, that ultimately there will be a political change in Bosnia. I think in some places we have seen that take place as well.

We are fortunate to have today a panel of six people who have spent a considerable amount of time out in the field in Bosnia. Some have spent part of their time in Sarajevo, but mostly they have been in places that very few people travel to. They've been there for a long period of time, from several months to in some cases a year and a half.

They have all been affiliated with the OSCE mission, which has numerous regional centers and field offices throughout Bosnia and has done considerable work in elections, which we all know about. There's also human rights monitoring, media development, et cetera. The panel not only has a good geographic range but also functional variation covering these different areas.

Our first panelist is Luke Zahner, who has spent most of his time up in Bihac, which is in the northwestern corner of the country.

We're followed by Candace Lekic, who has spent time in Jablanica, which is in central Bosnia, just south of Sarajevo, toward Mostar, and also has spent a considerable amount of time in Vares in the north.

Next we have Jessica White, who has spent a lot of time in Gorazde, which if you look at the map, you can see this green extension into the red part, which is Republika Srpska. That is Gorazde. It was a safe haven during the conflict and remained with the Federation, even though it's virtually surrounded by Republika Srpska. It's a very interesting place.

Next we have Roland de Rosiere, who has served in Mostar, in Jablanica, and most recently I believe in Brcko, which is one of the towns in Bosnia which has received a lot of attention. There may be a lot of questions regarding the current status of Brcko.

Next we have Kathryne Bomberger, who has spent a considerable amount of time in one of the more difficult towns in Bosnia, most commonly known as Foca. It has been renamed Srbinje. It's a place where a lot of atrocities had occurred during the conflict,

where persons indicted of war crimes are believed or known to still be present and where the situation is very difficult.

Finally we have Brian Marshall, who has spent time in both the Federation and Republika Srpska. For a while, he was in Orasje, which is—again, if you look at the map, you can see at the very far north, there are two little green areas, which are part of the Federation that are separated from the rest of the Federation. They're bordering Croatia.

He spent a considerable amount of time there, but he was also responsible for election activities very recently for the whole of eastern Republika Srpska and was based out of Sokolac, if I recall.

So at this point I will go down the line and let each of the panelists make a presentation on the region in which they were located. Even though they were based in one particular town, they may have covered a whole larger area, and will make some comments on other parts as well. After the presentation, we will open it up to questions from the audience.

I'll ask people to come to the floor mike because this is being transcribed and we need to hear your question. Then you'll be asked to identify yourselves and then to whomever you address the question. So, Luke, if you would like to begin?

Mr. **Zahner.** Thank you. I'd like to thank Bob for organizing this gathering today. I think it's quite important.

I was the press and public information officer in the regional center of the OSCE in Bihac from June 1996 until October 1997, after which I went to Sarajevo to become the deputy spokesman until December-January, this past January. I'll try to keep it as brief as possible.

Bihac is a unique area in many aspects. There were four very different problems that we were dealing within the Bihac area of responsibility. Let me just tell you the Bihac regional center covered Canton 1 of the Federation, which is the yellow canton in the northwest corner of Bosnia, and then, directly south of that, Canton 10, which is a predominantly Croat-populated region, the northern part of which was predominantly Serb before the war.

In the eastern part of Canton 1, we had a field office in Sanski Most. Sanski Most is where most of the DPs, the displaced persons, from the Banja Luka and Prijedor regions had returned to, Muslims who wanted to return to their homes, mostly in the western Republika Srpska.

So that was one issue that we had to deal with, the increasing population of DPs in Sanski Most, which was basically a pressure cooker that is still developing. It's still growing. Hopefully with the developments in the Republika Srpska and this new attitude of returns, which I hope will develop, this will be relieved a bit.

In Bihac itself, I think it was most well-known during the war because it was surrounded by the Serb forces. There was an internal Muslim civil war between basically two factions: one supporting a member of the presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina elected in 1990, Fikret Abdic, who controlled the agriculture conglomerate Agrokomerc, who was based in Velika Kladusa.

He was a member of the presidency along with President Izetbegovic and the seven-member presidency before the war broke out. In about 19931994, fighting broke out between people loyal to him in the Bihac Pocket, mostly centered in Velika Kladusa, and loyalists to the Sarajevo-based government and President Izetbegovic, which was basically

based in Bihac, the support, the core of their support, being the Fifth Corps of the Bosnian army, which was based in Bihac.

This led to some of the bloodiest fighting in Bihac, the civil war. It is important to note that more people were killed fighting—Muslim-on-Muslim violence—in the Bihac pocket than were killed defending the entire Bihac pocket from the Serbs during the course of the war. This is something that the people in Bihac—who are still very angry about Fikret Abdic and what they call his betraya—will remind you of all the time. The attempts we were making were to reconcile the Muslim population of Bihac with those who had been loyal to Abdic.

The attempts we were making to reconcile the Muslim population that had been loyal to Abdic and the population loyal to Isabegavic, which ultimately had prevailed in the conflict, really were the focus of our efforts in Bihac.

What happened in the end of the Croat offensive in 1995 was that the forces loyal to Fikret Abdic and the majority of the population of Velika Kladusa who supported him were driven out of Velika Kladusa and basically were lodged in the Kuplensko refugee camp in Croatia.

Though Fikret Abdic now resides in Rijeka, he does have a political party that is active in Bosnia, the DNZ. That actually won the municipal elections in Velika Kladusa, even though most of its supporters are in exile. So this is an entirely unique problem in Bosnia apart from the interethnic problems. I don't want to dwell too much on that. I want to get into the problems in Canton 10.

In northern Canton 10, the Serbs that made up 99 percent of the population in the municipalities of Drvar and Grahovo, basically they fled in the Operation Storm offensive in 1995 and reside now in either Banja Luka or Prijedor or other municipalities in the western Republika Srpska.

Since 1995, many thousands of Croat DPs from central Bosnia as well as other regions of Bosnia but primarily central Bosnia, Vares, Kakanj, have now moved to Drvar and are now living in the apartment buildings and houses and homes that were once occupied by Serb families. So that's a third problem that we were dealing with.

It is important to note that in the municipal elections in 1997 the Serb parties won in Grahovo, overwhelmingly in Grahovo. In Drvar, they won a majority, though a slim one. It was, I believe, 18 or 19 seats went to the main Serb party, which actually is a relatively moderate party advocating returns, led by a man named Mile Marceta, who was a truck driver before the war. Then the HDZ, which is, of course, the main Croat party, won 11 seats.

So that's the current breakdown. It has been very difficult implementing the elections in Drvar as a result of the conflict between the people that want to return and the people that want to live in Drvar now who do not want to leave their homes and return to central Bosnia..

Then, of course, the fourth area is Livno. That was an area, Livno, Tomislavgrad, which was not as affected by the war in the sense that there wasn't too much fighting in the actual cities. The front line for most of the war ran outside of Livno between the Serbs and the Croats.

The main problem in Livno now is essentially a problem of a lack of political diversity and an extremely authoritarian approach to democracy in that area. There are very few opposition parties, very little access to the media for opposition candidates. In general the

problem is a simple lack of diversity in that area. So we were dealing with these four problems, which related to each other in some ways but not in others.

I'll just very briefly go over the three problems that I think are the most important in general. One is the media, which we, of course, have seen over the past 6 months or so come to the fore when SFOR took over the transmitters in the eastern Republika Srpska.

The media in Canton 1 is tightly controlled by the SDA, and they do not want to let go of their control of the media. This was something I was personally involved in as the press officer in Bihac, trying to get opposition candidates access to the local media and trying to get the local media not to focus so much on the SDA but also on the general problems in the region.

VOA, BBC, and some other international radio programs that had local language programs wanted to start broadcasting the Bihac area. We had a deal lined up where VOA would donate satellite equipment to a radio in Bihac.

The director was quite willing to make these contacts and to start rebroadcasting a couple of hours a day. He wanted the equipment. He wanted the information. He and his family were threatened by a local deputy in the SDA. Basically he was told, "You cannot do this. This is not the way to go, and we won't tolerate it."

So the SDA in Bihac had really no reluctance to exercise its authority in terms of hiring and firing and whatnot in order to make sure that they maintained a tight control of the media.

If Canton 1 was bad in this respect, Canton 10 was worse because in Canton 10, the terrain was quite difficult to get outside signals into the way the terrain was unless you had a very strong signal.

So the basic source of information for the entire region was municipal radio stations that were controlled by the municipal authorities, which, of course, in Canton 10 were the HDZ. They were equally unwilling to cooperate most of the time, though I have to say some were worse than others. Radio Livno during the campaign actually behaved relatively well in giving some access to the media.

Nevertheless, the local authorities realized that the way they could maintain power was by controlling the air waves, and they have absolutely no reluctance to do this.

As I said, this is for Cantons 1 and 10. It's not much different elsewhere. The larger and more densely populated areas have more of a diversity of media, which maybe tones this problem down a bit, but in the more sparsely populated areas in western Bosnia that we covered, this was a very big problem and certainly had an influence on the results of the elections.

That's all I'm going to say about this region right now. I suspect that the corruption issue, though, which is prevalent throughout the country, will come up in other statements as well.

Mr. **Hand.** Thank you, Luke.

Candace?

Ms. **Lekic.** I'm going to be talking mostly about the Vares region. The first time I was in Bosnia post-war, I was in the Jablanica region, but Mr. de Rosiere was the elections officer there. So he will be covering that. I was there as an elections observer at that time.

I went back to the Vares region last January, and I worked as a human rights officer. So I will be speaking predominantly from that perspective, the issue of human rights.

For the region that I covered, the office was in Vares, the OSCE office. I covered Breza, Visoko, Kakanj, and Olovo as well. This region geographically is in sort of an umbrella arch to the north of Sarajevo.

There were certain specific issues that I would like to bring up, and I will talk more issues than specifics, which I think are problems which existed for all of the human rights officers in the region.

One was this essential problem of displaced populations. I'll comment on it directly because Mr. Zahner mentioned Drvar and the problem of displaced persons taking up residences in Drvar and preventing the Serbs from returning there. Many of those people were Croats from my regions. So I had some contact with that.

I think it's significant to note that there is sort of a domino effect of problems all over the country. Often when we are able to get information from other regions, we realize how tied these problems are.

I will be talking mostly about Vares because it was a very specific situation and there were more problems there than in other areas, which are I think some of the major problems of Bosnia.

As I said, this problem of return and displaced populations was very significant. Breza and Visoko, which are closer to Sarajevo as you come directly north from Sarajevo, were two regions where there are displaced populations that are actually returning without much ethnic tension, which is very significant, not that I want to ignore them, but things are very healthy.

Serbs, Croats, and Muslims are all residing there, although in the elections, both the previous and this elections, the Bosnia party, SDA, was victorious.

But I will say that in discussions with these that are now ethnic minorities, the Serbs and the Croats in these regions, they are not having major problems. They have been able to live, function, and even work without a lot of complications. They are still in the minority, and some of their populations are displaced. But that's why I won't spend too much time discussing them.

Vares and Kakanj are two of these classic situations of population flip-flop. They were both something like 90 to 95 percent Croat before the war, Bosnian Croat. They are now 90 to 95 percent Bosniac or Muslim.

So you have large numbers of displaced populations: from Vares, about 8,000; and from Kakanj, it is something like 8 to 10 thousand. So it's a very significant number.

In Kakanj, there is a small group, a small community, actually Croat community, Croats who primarily remained through the war. I think this is something that's significant. There are populations of these minorities within the Federation which remained during the entire war where the populations were not essentially—though the armies were at war with each other, the local populations were not always.

Croats who remained in Kakanj did not predominantly fight with the Croatian army, nor did they align themselves necessarily with HDZ, which is significant.

The same is true in Vares. The displaced Croats are now in regions that are under HDZ control, but the local populations who stayed and even some of those who departed did not necessarily align themselves with the Nationalist movement.

Now, I think the reason that is significant is it makes the possibility of return much more positive. But what I would like to touch upon is some of the elements that are preventing the population from returning. The reason that I cover that, though I think we think of return as a United Nations mandate and not within OSCE's, is because the primary human rights violation in my region was the inability of these minorities to return to their homes.

There were two problems. In Vares (as it is all over Bosnia Herzegovina), the problem was this issue of housing. About 40 to 60 percent, I guess, depending on the region, of housing was destroyed. About 50 percent of housing that existed in cities and towns was socially owned housing. I bring this up because I think it's something that hopefully OSCE and other international organizations will be involved in resolving.

This socially owned housing was essentially nationalized or taken over by local governments. This was housing where people had permanent residence rights before the war. It was not strictly, as we know it, privately owned, but this was housing where people under the former Communist system had life residency rights. So it was a very significant thing in the eyes of most Bosnians. It was almost like private ownership.

These are the apartments that have not been made re-available in most cases to original populations. In many situations in the Federation, private housing was returned. The socially owned housing was not returned.

In Vares, what happened was the local government, which was SDA at the time I was there, was not elected. In the previous election, the SDP, which was essentially the former Communists, had won the election. So there was a period of time where the Croatian army took the city and set up HDZ government. Then the BH army retook the city, and they set up SDA government.

So these were not elected officials, but they were there and functioning, nonetheless. They took hold of all of these apartments. In Vares, that was the reason that Croat return was prevented, because they could not get back into these apartments.

We had no real powers of enforcement to do anything about that, although these international institutions were set up to resolve these problems. It was very significant. It was something we battled continuously but which because of legislation not being passed, which is true to this day—I checked on it before I came to the panel because I was quite interested to see if this legislation which had been drafted to resolve this issue has been ratified, and it has not yet. So it remains a very big problem.

So these socially owned flats are still a question mark. It has not been resolved whether or not these will revert to pre-war owners, which is the spirit of the General Framework Agreement for Peace under Dayton, which means that this issue of ethnic purity in these regions is being perpetuated by this one big problem in addition to other political problems.

In Kakanj, it was quite interesting. We have also a very large displaced Croatian population, but the problems were specifically that in regions like Drvar and other areas of this region, which were formerly called Herceg-Bosna, and which the Croatian HDZ controls. They are preventing the Croatian population from returning to regions of central Bosnia.

We did a lot of investigation of this in my region and also in the regions where these people are displaced, in coordination with my other colleagues, human rights officers.

The HDZ governments in these places were really harassing the displaced Croats. I hate to use the word "terrorizing" because I don't think there was real violence, but there was great pressure for them not to return; in other words, to keep their votes in those regions presently under Croat control. This is happening in areas of SDA and SDS control. I know as well it's a question of votes. So these populations were really being frightened to stay.

So there were two different problems in the area that I worked with but both preventing this issue of pre-war populations being able to return to their pre-war homes.

As I said, there is not always a problem with the population as it exists. Those who did return, some three to four thousand Croats who returned to Vares, were living quite comfortably. If they had private homes, they got back into them. If they had the socially owned housing, they sort of made do. But they did not have problems with the local population.

So return is possible from a very grass-roots level in some regions. Other regions are much more hard-lined, and someone will probably be discussing those.

One of the other things that I think in—one of my other regions was Olovo. This was front line. So it was a very, very badly destroyed area. This was the scene of fighting between Serb and BH army. You have now a section of Olovo which is in the Republika Srpska. It is right on the IEBL.

So you have a displaced Serb population which is not returning to Olovo. Olovo is now almost ethnically cleaned, almost purely Bosniac, if not purely Bosniac. I never met any minorities there at all.

So, again as well, you have regions like this where there are a lot of displaced Bosniacs out of eastern Bosnia. In all areas of central Bosnia, that's true, of course. But part of their territory is still in the Republika Srpska.

There was not at the time I was there very comfortable freedom of movement. That was a problem along the IEBL everywhere. So there was not any return of population there at the time I was there.

One thing I would just like to say on the elections, though—I was not working elections specifically.

I think I would like to say on the elections that, first of all, in many areas, certainly in areas where I worked, there would never have been an ability to come to agreements about either rules, regulations, or laws without the presence of the international community. I think the elections really would not have taken place.

Now, I would also like to say that I know implementation has been very difficult. OSCE has sometimes been seen as chaotic, although I think on the ground it was an extremely impressive operation from the standpoint of creating legislative law which didn't exist, creating the machinery of campaigning, political parties, et cetera, et cetera, which didn't exist in pre-war former Yugoslavia. It was a massive task and very complicated. I think it was significant progress.

The other thing I would like to say from the standpoint of human rights, which I saw as significant, in terms of this involvement in elections was the ability for the population in general to do something they had never done before. That was to be involved, personally involved, in a massive operation of democracy, which is elections are; in other words, having some sort of a feeling that you have control, influence, and power over your future, which, again, did not exist in the former Yugoslavia.

I found it very significant that suddenly people were involved in something this large that gave them the opportunity to cast a vote, to be involved in democracy; in other words, together as a collective body having some say over their future. I found it really significant.

Even if implementation is very difficult and very complicated and doesn't always work, I found that very significant in that people came from a standpoint of feeling that they had previously—you know, this fatalistic view, having had absolutely no control over their lives or futures and in being involved in this enormous operation of a movement toward democracy. So I found that very significant.

Mr. **Hand.** OK. Thank you, Candace.

Jessica?

Ms. **White.** Unfortunately, all of the good maps showing Gorazde are a bit far away from me. If you don't mind, I will show you where Gorazde is. Gorazde is a Muslim Federation territory that sticks out here in eastern Republika Srpska.

You can see by its geographical position that Gorazde will experience obvious and severe problems. There is no freedom of movement from Gorazde through the Republika Srpska. For Bosniacs, Gorazde is only accessible via the Corridor Road, a three and a half hour journey from Sarajevo to Gorazde.

The main offensive against the town was in April 1994, when the Serbs bombarded the town continuously for 3 weeks. NATO air strikes were called in, which saved the town. However, it was under siege the entire duration of the war.

Every area around Gorazde was a front line. The whole town is a front line. If you look at a map of land mines, in Bosnia, the whole town is surrounded by a big pink circle depicting the location of land mines.

The pre-war population of Gorazde was approximately 30,000 inhabitants. Twenty-two thousand or so were Muslim, and the remaining population was Serb. However, now there are 30,000 people again, but there are maybe 150 Serbs and 50 Croats. Essentially, Gorazde is 99.9 percent Muslim due to the fact that the Serb population left Gorazde before or early in the war and they were replaced by Muslims from other areas.

The new Muslims came from the surrounding Republika Srpska areas from the towns of Visegrad; Rogatica; and Foca, now called Serbinia. They fled to the town during the war when they were ethnically cleansed from their original places.

The Dayton agreement gave one-third of the pre-war Municipality of Gorazde to the Bosnian Serbs. This area is now called Srpsko-Gorazde but was known as Kopacibe for the war.

This is a major problem for Gorazde, in addition to expefiencing the larger problems that the whole country experiences with freedom of movement, rightt of return, and whatnot.

It's particularly sensitive that one-third of the territory was given to the Bosnian Serbs because Kopaci/Srpsko Gorazde is just two kilometers from town. You can walk from the main heart of Gorazde to this area now called Serb-Gorazde in about 20 minutes. That makes it very volatile because the Muslims in Gorazde want to return, and they can walk home. They have repeatedly said that they would be happy to walk home one night and either blow up or move into their old houses. Obviously this is not how the international community envisions refugee return or the return of internally displaced persons.

Unemployment now in Gorazde is about 90 percent. It is a pretty desolate situation. But people in Gorazde are full of hope for a multi-ethnic future in Bosnia. They embrace that future. They do not have the hatred that people so often claim exists everywhere in Bosnia. They not only need a multi-ethnic future to survive there, but they truly and honestly desire that future.

For example, Gorazde was recently declared an open city. They're receiving funds from the international community to bring Bosnian Serbs back to their town. The main political parties are calling for Serb return to the town and are looking to actually integrate Serb returnees into their local police force.

I would like to share two crucial observations from my experience in Gorazde on a higher level. First is that U.S. foreign policy can work toward Bosnia. Second, unfortunately, U.S. foreign policy as it was being implemented actually worked counter to and undermined our stated policies, particularly as specified in Dayton.

On the ground, all of the internationals were questioning whether or not this policy failure was an intentional part of U.S. or international strategy accepting a defeat of our stated goals for Bosnia and working toward the partition of the country or if these failures were an unintentional consequence of a combination of factors.

Of course, the thrust of my observations was based upon the policies and implementation of the election. Most importantly for Gorazde, there were allegations of fraud in the surrounding Republika Srpska areas that were not investigated by the OSCE or EASC in Sarajevo.

By certifying elections without investigating the fraud, the international community undermined and hindered the larger goals that we claim to support; such as freedom of movement; the right of return; cooperation across the IEBL on economic development; and, most importantly, the creation of a multi-ethnic Bosnia. All of these things are interrelated. If you have some kind of negative impact on one area, it will be felt in all other areas of development in Bosnia.

Thus, by holding elections without aggressively pursuing the necessary conditions prior to the election for free and fair elections and then by certifying elections where there is strong proof of fraud, you are moving farther and farther from your goals.

What did we learn from our experiences? What can we do to make it better? First, although I was an elections officer for 14 months, in Gorazde and I worked on other elections in other countries, I do not think that elections in and of themselves are necessarily good.

If the free and fair standard cannot be met, I do not think we should go ahead and have elections simply as part of the larger exit strategy. I also think it's very hard to achieve a free and fair standard so shortly after a war in a post-Communist country.

Bosnia proved again that we can hold technically proper elections while losing sight of the larger picture. Essentially we registered fraud better than anyone else, but that was not what America or the international community claimed it wanted to do.

Second, I think that to have an honestly free and fair election, we need to have a new population census. The last census of the population was taken in 1991. Currently we don't know how many people really live where. There is no census from after the war. The best we can do is use voter registration figures. during the registration period, which was flawed in my opinion, there was some speculation that the voter registration process was to be used in lieu of a census.

But if there's no census, the voter registration process is open to manipulation. So I think that to have a free and fair election a nationwide census should be done. If that cannot be achieved, then a limited census in certain sensitive areas could be more feasible.

I'm also strongly against a recent sentence that I read in a *New York Times* article stating that for the current elections that are being planned for September 1997, people who voted via absentee ballot will only be able to vote where they live now. That would completely undermine all the work that has been accomplished so far toward establishing a multi-ethnic Bosnia.

Having DPs, having displaced people, only be able to vote where they live now prevents their voting in their original 1991 pre-war municipality and solidifies ethnic divide.

In terms of the OSCE, I think it needs to completely reorganize its entire administrative structure. Currently it is the only international organization that treats the IEBL as an administrative boundary line.

If the IEBL is truly just a temporary cease-fire boundary within one state, it should not be treated as a permanent border between nations. All other international organizations freely cross the IEBL and ignore the IEBL in terms of their administration.

I think that just having the OSCE, which is involved so closely in the politics of the country and the election, be able to freely move across the IEBL for its implementation of the elections and other components, such as human rights and democratization, that would help reconciliation in and of itself. Additionally, I believe it would send Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Muslims a strong signal that the international community will not treat Bosnia as two different entities or republics.

I also think that for the elections to be free and fair, there has to be thorough across-ABEL political party participation in all aspects of the election, especially in areas of campaigning, of monitoring the voter registration process.

If political parties are not active on both sides of the IEBL, political parties will continue as they are now, catering to their ethnic populous because they only campaign where their population currently resides. For example, the SDA does not campaign in Republika Srpska. Likewise SDS and SRS do not come campaigning in Federation. Cross-IEBL political party activity has to happen if we're going to have a multi-ethnic state.

Lastly, in terms of OSCE, they should recognize where the mandates of the different branches of their organization, democratization, human rights, and elections, run parallel to each other and enhance each other and where they, in fact, work at odds with each other and how their policies in one branch of the organization can negatively impact upon the other branches of the organization.

With respect to Gorazde itself, I would say that their desire again for a multi-ethnic state is sincere. Moreover, I think that our policies can work, but we have to more aggressively pursue the implementation of our foreign policies so that a positive change can occur across Bosnia.

Mr. **Hand.** Thank you, Jessica.

Mr. **De Rosiere.** Thank you.

I served with the OSCE mission for 20 months, from April of '96 to the very beginning of this year. I was first an elections officer in the Mostar regional center, then head of a field office near Mostar, halfway between Sarajevo and Mostar, in Jablonica. Starting

in October, I transferred to Brcko. So I have an experience in the Federation and in the Republika Srpska.

I was last in Brcko on January 8th. There was a lot of gunfire going on and even more the day before. That was Serbian Orthodox Christmas. Celebrating with gunfire seems to be a Balkan specialty.

On January 8th, I saw 25 brand new Volkswagens sitting in front of police headquarters. These had been, strangely enough, donated by Japan as part of a way to encourage the new integrated police that came about through the supervisory order of Ambassador Ferrand.

I also saw something else that was interesting. It was youngsters crossing the bridge over the Sava River from Croatia into Brcko. The time I was there, I never saw that. I had seen older people walking across to visit the few Croats and Bosniacs who still live in Brcko town itself or to go into the market, which is plentiful and much cheaper than in Croatia, which now has a 23 percent value-added tax.

However, there is no reciprocity. BH passport holders who have a Republika Srpska address in their passport just don't make it through the Croatian border.

The second topic I'd like to look at quickly is the open city, which Jessica has mentioned. That's a program of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, which is funded by USAID. The idea is to provide funds to municipalities that agree to facilitate the returns of minorities.

Konjic, where I lived for 10 months, 1 hour south of Sarajevo on the way to Mostar, was one such municipality selected in July, when Ambassador Richardson came personally to announce this with some fanfare.

Let me tell you a bit about the background. Well, first of all, the minorities concerned for Konjic are Croats and Serbs. They have been trickling back and coming to visit without any particular hassle, but let me just give you a case.

Mr. Mrs. Mitatovic, born in Konjic, where they had spent their whole life, left in 1995, not so much because of the conflict but because of health reasons. They went to live with a relative in Belgrade. Before leaving, they signed contracts with local Bosniac families who occupied the three apartments in the house they had built with all of their savings. They said they would return. The contractual agreement was that when they returned, they would get the house back.

In May 1997, they came back, but they couldn't move back in. Families had decided they liked it. They wanted to stay. One of them said: Well, we couldn't possibly live under the same roof as Serbs. You know, we don't mind you personally, but no one else would understand this.

Well, we got wind of this and decided that it was worth pursuing because it was private property. The people were noncontroversial, and the people living in the housing were not refugees.

Since Konjic was being considered for a the open city program, it was important to see if this could be solved. Well, it was, but it wasn't solved by the court system, which dragged its feet. It wasn't solved by the mayor because he said that the court had to solve it. It was solved by the Federation Vice President, Mr. Ganic, who the day before Bill Richardson visited Konjic sent an instruction saying,"Solve this case," because we had brought it up to the attention of the embassy and the USAID and had said: If this cannot be solved, the open city for Konjic is just a ploy to get money.

You may view this as a good argument against return. This first case was well-publicized and I think has heartened lawyers, for example, who are representing people trying to get back their property. A few cases have been solved. It is very difficult. It can work, but it needs a lot of attention.

When we got the comment from this family that they couldn't possibly live under the same roof as Serbs, we talked about it to the Islamic community. They said that they didn't want people to think that way. They said so publicly at Friday prayers.

We had one meeting between the Islamic community and the resident Franciscan priest, and a second meeting with a visiting Orthodox priest. That was a very interesting meeting, not an easy one. But the conclusion was that they all three agreed and said to the press that they didn't believe there was collective guilt for the war.

The Iman said publicly that he hoped that the Orthodox priest who was visiting from Serbia but had been born in Konjic would return to live in Konjic.

The legal community in Konjic is quite independent and realizes they have to fight against the court system. Otherwise they won't have any clients. They're very disenheartened by the way the court system is subject to—well, you can call it corruption or political interference. They are working hard to represent their clients, but it's very difficult.

I was last in Konjic just visiting 10 days ago. I heard that there was a plan for privatization of their socially owned housing that Candace referred to. This may be a ploy to prevent returns and to allow people who are illegally occupying socially owned housing to buy it on the cheap before the people who have the occupancy rights can return.

I know cases of municipal officers who are living in socially owned housing to which they're not entitled. And, in fact, one of them is involved in the return process.

Maybe I've been too negative about the open city and the return process in Konjic. I think it can work. It is beginning to work. But it needs to be supported and monitored. It's not going to just happen by itself.

Bob, you've asked me to consider regional differences. I think the most striking one I experienced—and I'm trying to tell you things I experienced myself and let you form your own opinions, but this one is very clear.

HDZ in Herzegovina, the Croatian Democratic Union, is—let's put it this way—very hesitantly supporting the Dayton process. But in the Posavina Canton near Brcko, they are clearly much more interested in implementation of Dayton. The Croatian farmers' party, HSS, is even more so. It was very refreshing to deal with them after dealing with HDZ in Herzegovina.

Another difference that is probably known to everybody, Croat and Serb DPs travel with some relative ease from wherever they are to Konjic, for example, to visit their houses. But Bosniac DPs living in Konjic are still scared to visit the places they used to live in western Herzegovina, not to mention the eastern Republika Srpska, obviously.

A Serb DP sitting in Brcko, probably, originally from Sarajevo, doesn't have to pay for his electricity. But if he returns to Sarajevo, he will have to pay for his electricity. The days of the Federation when people didn't pay their electricity bills are over. I have seen streetlights shut off because a municipality hadn't paid. The electrical company just shut it off.

Another difference is the media. In 1996, it was very difficult to get media to allow opposition candidates access, even for a debate. In 1997, it was easier. There was some progress there.

I'd like to deal briefly with elections. The OSCE also had the work to aid and abet implementation of these municipal elections that were held in September. Now, that means power-sharing. That's what it was basically.

In Mostar, the most recent information is that only the city council is ready for certification by the OSCE. The six municipalities that make up Mostar are not. That will require arbitration, which means someone from up high will have to tell them what to do. That's actually something they're quite used to.

In Brcko, it's a special situation because of the powers given to the supervisor. However, in two municipalities in the Brcko area, Bosanski Samac and Pelagicevo, there has been a very meaningful breakthrough in power-sharing between the SDA-led coalition, HDZ, and SDS, and in the second case, the other municipality, between the Croat farmers' party and SDS. This did not require high-level intervention, and I think it's very significant and encouraging.

I think looking ahead for 1998, we have to consider more training for Bosnian party political monitors. I've seen that work very well in Croatia last April. I was a monitor in the local election held there, and I think it could work very well in Bosnia.

My last comment on elections is there's a new election law being drafted which is going to enfranchise the Serb displaced population living predominantly in Banja Luka who used to live in Croatia, the Krajina Serbs.

At the same time, there's an OSCE mission in Croatia whose mandate is the two-way returns of refugees, "two-way" meaning Croats to Vukovar and Serbs living, for example, in the Republika Srpska to whether it's the Krajina, Zadar, Zagreb, wherever. So something seems to me to be a bit strange there if you enfranchise refugees in Bosnia-Herzegovina and at the same time we're supposed to facilitate their return to Croatia.

One last thing about elections. I found the Election Appeals Subcommission to be a very useful tool. It provided implementation of the rules and regulations, had sanctions to encourage that, and I think it was one of the best tools of the mission when I was there.

Quickly, about the economy, factories in Bosnia traditionally don't fire people if business is bad. It has been bad recently. They put them on waiting lists. If production picks up, well, they just take people from the waiting list.

Now, the old makeup was along multi-ethnic lines. So if by miracle we can get production up at some of the factories, well, we'll have a multi-ethnic workforce, which I think is what we're trying to do. We'll get people to return from wherever they are if they have a job.

They did in the past. They left Serbia in 1960 to go and work at the Igman Factory, which is a state-of-the-art munitions factory in Konjic that exported before the war. If some export markets can be found again, maybe we can have a multi-ethnic workforce. That economy can be flourishing again, as it was.

General Boyd in his excellent article in the current Foreign Affairs magazine talks about the Arizona market near Brcko. It's a place where people from all ethnic groups travel to, buy and sell goods. It was started basically with help from NATO's IFOR as it was in those days.

It's unregulated. There's no tax revenue from it. Maybe the next stage is to get some sort of regulation and tax revenue and maybe move it to Brcko, whatever the status of Brcko will be. We'll know that quite soon.

I'd just like to make a quick comment about the banking system. It barely works in the Federation, and it really doesn't work in the Republika Srpska. I've seen that.

People who expect retirement pensions to come through, they don't get them. They have to travel to Vienna or to Germany in order to get their pensions. These pensions make five or six other people live. I don't know how we, the OSCE, can make a banking system function, but we've got to consider that.

And, last, OSCE effectiveness. Well, when we were all there, of course, it was astoundingly efficient. In 1998, I'm not so sure. We had a strong mandate, and that helped. I've worked in other missions in difficult countries, where the mandate hasn't been strong. It makes a very big difference to have a strong one.

As mentioned, the Election Appeals Subcommission has been very efficient. I will say it seems there were a lot of implementing agencies and not very much synergy and maybe not enough contact between, for example, where you work, Candace, Vares and Drvar or when I worked in Jablanica, Konjic, and Trebinje, places where there is a connection. We had to do it ourselves. We weren't prevented from doing it, but we certainly weren't encouraged to do it.

There's a European Community monitoring mission many say has outlived its usefulness. It could be merged with OSCE and reinforce OSCE.

OSCE has a network of field offices. There are supposed to be three mission members in each. Maybe two would do. One graying or balding type and a younger enthusiast would be a good mix. That's not always the case.

The UNHCR has a similar but smaller network of field offices. They usually just have one field officer and local assistants who are given more responsibility and relatively well-paid.

OSCE works its local staff very hard. They're not very well-paid, which means usually they leave us because they find another agency that pays them better. Given the high turnover of international staff, it's important to have some continuity. I think we need to address that.

Last, but not least, the professional performance review at the mission basically doesn't exist. That said, I felt privileged to serve there, and I'd do it all over again.

Thank you.

Mr. **Hand.** Thank you, Roland.

Kathryne?

Ms. **Bomberger.** We're now moving on to the other side of the IEBL, into the Republika Srpska. Bob is in effect acting as the IEBL.

Mr. **Hand.** I don't like that job.

Ms. **Bomberger.** I'm going to discuss the municipality of Foca, which is located in the Bosian Serb entity, where I worked as a human rights officer for 4 months. I will then move on to a broader discussion of the Bosnian Serb enclave, also known as the Republika Srpska. After leaving Foca, I moved to mission headquarters in Sarajevo where my primary focus was this region.

I'll begin by providing you with a brief overview of Foca and the surrounding municipalities. I will refer to the area as Foca throughout this discussion, even though, as Bob mentioned earlier, the Republika Srpska Government changed the name from Foca to Srbinje 3 years ago for obvious, politically motivated reasons. Ironically, many of the local inhabitants continue to refer to their town as Foca.

Before the war, there were about 40,000 inhabitants in the municipality of Foca. There are now approximately 20,000. Prior to the war, the majority of the population was Muslim. The ratio of Muslims to Serbs was about 55 percent to 45 percent. There is now only one Muslim man left and he is apparently there because he is married to a Serb woman. There were 18 mosques in Foca prior to the war, one of which was the oldest in the Balkans. They have all been destroyed. Every other house in the town and many of the homes and farms in the surrounding area have also been destroyed. Presumably, the majority of the houses which were destroyed belonged to Muslims. There is nothing left except for the haunting specter of the decaying Muslim cemeteries which line the sides of the hills along the Drina River.

I should add here, before I move on, that Foca is located about two and a half hours southeast of Sarajevo, on the other side of the IEBL, along the Drina River. I hope that helps out geographically. It's in the eastern part of the Republika Srpska.

Mr. **Hand.** It's just south of Gorazde.

Ms. **Bomberger.** That's right, it's about 40 kilometers south of Gorazde. Jessica and I worked together on occasion.

I will take this opportunity to quickly discuss other municipalities in my area of responsibility. These included Trnovo, which is a split municipality just south of Sarajevo. One half is in the Federation and the other is in the Serb entity. There are currently about 2,000 inhabitants. During the war, this former resort town was the scene of much fighting and slaughter. It's now a pretty miserable place. Because it borders the IEBL, Trnovo has been the scene of numerous kidnapping and shooting incidents since the war. I also covered Gacko, a town south of Foca, which was a little more politically open then the other areas in my region, but was still an SDS stronghold. In addition, I worked in Kalinovik, a very backward region in the mountains north of Foca where Mladic was apparently born.

Returning to Foca, in 1995, NATO bombed three of the bridges leading into the town. As the only American living in the town, I was held personally responsible for bombing those bridges and was routinely asked by local officials when was I going to fix them. Unlike Gorazde or some other areas in the Federation, there were very few international organizations operating in the area I covered, these included the OSCE, an ECMM team and an occasional visit from the IPTF team located in Gorazde. My field office was comprised of myself and two colleagues. In addition, because Foca is located in the French zone, there were French battalions in the region as well. But, for the most part, we were pretty much on our own.

To continue, Foca was one of the first towns Serbian forces seized in 1992. This military maneuver was orchestrated by three top Karadzic associates in the town, Petko Cancar, who was the Mayor of Foca when I was there and who has recently been appointed as the Minister of Justice by the new, "moderate" government of the Republika Srpska; Vojislav Maksimovic, who had been a member of the previous national assembly

and whose wife ran the municipal library in Foca and, Velibor Ostojic, former Minister of Information and later Vice President of the Republika.

There are now over 5,000 Bosnian Serb displaced persons in the municipality, the majority of whom are from Sarajevo, and some of whom are quite prominent, such as Dr. Starovic. He was a well known Yugoslav surgeon, who was also the dean of the medical faculty in Sarajevo prior to the war. He now runs the medical school at the hospital in Foca. He once described himself as a "cosmopolitan man" and is now a bitter and hateful racist who, in addition to teaching medicine, teaches hate to the best and the brightest of Foca.

Foca, at least when I was there, was an SDS stronghold, as were the other municipalities in my area of responsibility. This was true of the towns from Bijeljina south to Trbinje. The SPRS party, which was relatively more moderate and had loose links to Milosevic, were unable to even register in the municipality, due to the hostile environment. There were allegations when I was there that the alleged SPRS candidate for mayor, who was kidnapped 2 days before the end of the political party registration period, may have been kidnapped by local thugs with ties to the SDS. He was found 5 months later, badly beaten in the Central Prison in Sarajevo. It was not clear when I left whether he had been kidnapped by SDS authorities in Foca, who wanted to prevent a popular, non-SDS candidate from running for office, or, whether he had been kidnapped by individuals in the federation, as part of a black market exchange of human beings, which was a common occurrence. I've highlighted this incident to illustrate how impossible it was for non-SDS supporters to operate in this area as well as to give you a feel for the intolerable conditions which exist in Bosnia with regard to basic human freedoms, including freedom of movement, political party affiliation, and arbitrary detention, among others, which I will discuss later.

With regard to determining how tight a grip Karadzic continues to have on the region, due to the fact that the National Assembly election results are not, to my knowledge broken down by municipality, I do not have a list of parties who received the majority of votes there. However, I would assume that SDS and SRS parties, respectively won the majority of votes, which I presume was the case in all of the southeastern Republika Srpska, although our government asserts that the SNS made significant in-roads into the area in the National Assembly election. One can perhaps make a case for this assertion, if one takes into account the recent defections of high-profile SDS party members to the SNS. Petko Cancar, who I mentioned earlier as being one of the leaders of the ethnic cleansing in Foca and its former mayor, defected to the SNS and is now the Minister of Justice in the new government.

Questioner. SNS?

Ms. **Bomberger.** Plavsic's party. Sorry.

With regard to the media situation, as with most municipalities in the eastern Republika Srpska, there was tight media control and censorship. There was only one TV station, the government-run Pale TV, or SRT. Occasionally TV Belgrade would suddenly appear and then just as suddenly, disappear. There was one radio station, also government-run, whose director, I was to find was one of the more decent government officials in town and one who I came to work with on democratization projects. There was no print journalism. As was mentioned earlier, in September 1997, NATO took over four of the TV transmitters in an attempt to block the vitriolic propaganda that was being issued by Serb TV.

With regard to the economic situation, as is the case with the rest of the RS, unemployment figures are high about 90 percent. Due to the sanctions, most people do not have dairy products and they mainly subsist on food they are able to grow in their backyards, if they are lucky enough to have one. The displaced persons live in horrible and crowded conditions, usually in abandoned former hotels and run-down resorts. Jahorina, a former Olympic site, is now one such place. It has a post apocalyptic feel to it. The displaced persons receive virtually no medical attention. Unlike in the Federation, Republika Srpska Government officials do not want the displaced population to return to their former homes. Because they want to create a separate state, it is not within their interest to have people return. However, according to the last municipal elections, I believe Serbs won a majority of council seats in about four Federation municipalities. Thus proving that although the government would not like to see people return, many Serb citizens obviously do want to return.

Due to the self-imposed isolation of the Republika Srpska, trade is relegated to the black market or, at least in the eastern half of the entity, with their neighbors in Montenegro and Serbia. For the most part, trade with Yugoslavia consists of lumber. One should keep in mind, however, that historically, southeast Bosnia was always a more depressed and backward region. One visible benefit of the elections is the effect they have had on the local economy. Local cars, translators, and drivers have been hired. Rooms in private houses or in hotels are rented. Local stores, cafes and restaurants have prospered. Of course in many cases, the owners of these hotels, cafes and restaurants, who stand to make a profit had dubious occupations during the war.

With regard to the issue of human rights in the Republika Srpska, I can think of one: women are allowed to vote. However, specifically, with regard to those rights called for in article one of annex three of Dayton, such as: the freedom of movement and residence; freedom of opinion, expression and the press; freedom of assembly and association; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of political participation, they do not exist in the Republika Srpska in my opinion. And we have to keep in mind, because it seems that we have forgotten, that three elections have been held in Bosnia since 1996 with virtually none of the criteria necessary for a free and fair election having been met. So should we really be surprised at the results? These elections have worked to solidify the power of the Nationalist parties on all sides.

To quote Chris Bennet of ICG, "All these nationalist parties care only for their ethnic constituencies. Elected officials do not see themselves as representing a community. This type of a political system, the foundation of which is fear of the other, cannot work." So, rather than the rule of law we have the rule of fear of the other, which is still promoted by national and local officials and plays itself out it in terms of restricting civil rights. This is of course, especially true in the Republika Srpska, where the inhabitant's freedom of moment is restricted both physically as well as psychologically. A citizen of the Republika Srpska is virtually confined to the parameters of the Serb entity with the occasional visit to Serbia or Montenegro. If he/she is a displaced person, the situation is even worse. Then he/she is confined to the ghetto of a collective center within the parameters of the entity and is subject to discrimination in all walks of life by his own ethnic group. Mentally, the citizen of the Republika Srpska is restricted to the vitriolic propaganda of a nationalist TV station, radio station or newspaper. Who can blame them for wanting to watch soap operas?

Ironically, who did the citizens of the Republika Srpska vote for overwhelmingly in the National Assembly elections, despite the fact that NATO took over four of the TV transmitters and started broadcasting all Plavsic TV, all the time? They voted for SDS and their extremist partner, the SRS. Together they won 39 of the 84 seats. A few seats short of a majority. However, the remaining parties, including Plavsic's party and an association of parties from the Federation, were successfully able to unite, thus allowing this new coalition to gain a majority and elect a prime minister over the objections of the SDS/SRS coalition. Although Milorad Dodik, who is a political moderate compared to his rivals and most of his colleagues, is now Prime Minister due to the shrewd political maneuvering of Banja Luka and the west, it is unfortunately clear from the election results that the rule of fear of the other persists and that the anti-Dayton parties, the SDS and the SRS, are still the most popular parties amongst the electorate in the Bosnian Serb entity.

This political rift between Banja Luka and Pale, or between the western and the eastern half of the entity is nothing new. It existed throughout the war. Banja Luka, now the largest city in the entity, was a provincial regional center before the war, and although it was always less important than Sarajevo or even Tuzla, it was and is still more cosmopolitan and sophisticated than any town in the eastern part half. But, ultimately, how ideologically different is the SNS from the SDS and the SRS? I do not need to go into the political background of Bilijana Plavsic, the Serb supremacist. Obrad Kesic of the International Research and Exchange Board, warned, when he spoke here almost 2 years ago at the invitation of the Helsinki Commission, that, "The international community should not waste its limited time in going through the military successes of IFOR's mission in trying to create an artificial alternative to the SDS." He felt that such a situation might create a backlash.

I wonder if this situation is applicable to the current one in the Republika Srpska. Certainly, the creation of an "artificial" alternative has a ring of truth to it now. How real is opposition to the anti-Dayton political parties amongst Bosnian Serbs when a near majority continued to vote for them in the last election, despite the political efforts to smear Karadzic and his cronies before the elections. One woman I spoke to in Prejidor in November said that she voted for the SRS in the National Assembly elections because she believed the allegations of corruption against Karadzic were true. Thus, rather than vote for the moderates, after all the efforts the west went to in terms of taking over the TV transmitters and smearing Karadzic, she voted for Seselj's party! She went farther to the right! Even Charles G. Boyd, General of the USAF and the former Deputy Commander in Chief of the US-European command from November 1992 to July 1995 stated in the latest issue of Foreign Affairs in an article titled Making Bosnia Work, "By taking sides in that internal struggle, the United States has convinced many Serbs that its intent is to split the Republika Srpska into two parts—one centered in Banja Luka, the other in Pale—thus fatally weakening it. Distaste for the abominable Karadizic should not require making a pact with a different devil." According to Boyd this tactic will not work because, "they play to the people's uncertainty about retention of their national identity and their right to self-determination."

Moving on to the topic of economic assistance. The growing consensus is that aid should start moving into the Bosnian Serb entity. Even Kesic who spoke here almost 2 years ago recommended it over creating an artificial political alternative to the SDS. Boyd concluded that equalization of aid between the Federation and the Republika Srpska was

the first step in reconciling Bosnia. Madeline Albright proposed, near the end of last year that aid start going into the other entity. Both USAID and the World Bank have infrastructure oriented aid projects pending for the Republika Srpska. The World Bank has something like 18 million dollars in projects and AID has 50 million which is to go to 44 locations in Bosnia, 17 of which are in the Serb entity. Of course, the bulk of that money will go to the areas around Banja Luka.

Within the OSCE as well as within the rest of the international community there were huge disagreements on the subject of aid to the Republika Srpska to the point where many of my colleagues who supported aid to the area were labeled as pro-Serb to the point of being almost pro-Karadzic. Strange and awkward suspicions arose between colleagues on either side of the IEBL, curiously mirroring the indigenous situation. Needless to say, such a situation does not breed a healthy environment for discussion about policy change. What it led to, as with so many other issues in the OSCE was stalemate. The issue of aid to the RS is a delicate and tricky one. How do you funnel it into the area? Who do you work with? How can you be sure that the money will not go into the pockets of the vile thugs, both unelected and elected, or indicted war criminals, who control their municipalities with an iron fist, especially in eastern Republika Srpska?

One solution is through democratization projects such as encouraging or simply creating local associations. When I was in Foca, for example, I tried to create a medical association between the doctors at the hospital to help the displaced persons in the collective center. Such an association could also serve in the future as a group through which aid could be funneled. In addition we tried to form or strengthen associations of displaced persons. They complained that the local Red Cross was stealing their money. It was felt that by creating a displaced person association, you would create an avenue through which international NGO's could bypass the local government and give money directly to local associations who needed the money. The World Bank and AID should have a very clear idea of where that money is going and are hopefully working on the ground with people there. It would be very dangerous to throw money around in areas that have been so economically depressed for so long. The western Republika Srpska will be easier because there are so many agencies working there. In the area between Pale and Foca there are virtually no internationals.

In conclusion, with regard to aid, I do not believe sanctions have worked. They have only served to augment pre-existing hatreds and drive people into the hands of the Nationalists.

With regard to criticisms of the OSCE, I disagree with Roland with regard to the OSCE operating with a clear mandate. I don't believe there is a very clear mandate or clear objectives with regard to what they are doing in Bosnia, to the degree that I often felt that the OSCE presence was largely symbolic. In addition, I believe that the human rights component of the OSCE has been marginalized to accommodate the elections and the priority of the elections component. Especially when you consider that the majority of human rights criteria were not met, have not been met, and do not seem to be a consideration for the holding of elections. That's about all I have to say.

Mr. **Hand.** OK. Thank you, Kathryne.

Last, but not least, Brian Marshall. Brian?

Mr. **Marshall.** Thanks, Bob.

To give a bit of background, first of all, I went over in April initially as a volunteer working with OSCE as a registration supervisor. I'll just use the map for a minute here.

Mr. **Hand.** If while you're there you'll be sure to speak up so that they can try to get you on the microphone.

Mr. **Marshall.** Yes. I was assigned to the eastern Republika Srpska also and in the area of Vlasenica, a town midway within the country and just north of Han Pijesak, which is a big Serb military center. General Mladic is thought to be living there, the man who was commanding the troops at the major massacre at Srebrinca.

Sokolac was our regional center, where I was later assigned, and it's a bit north of Pale and to the east of Sarajevo. Sokolac's area of responsibility is the entire eastern Republika Srpska.

So, anyway, as I say, my initial assignment was in the Republika Srpska, eastern Republika Srpska, as a registration supervisor. That is an opportunity for a close association with the local population because in those circumstances, you are the only foreigner working day after day with them. My interpreter and I were working 7-day weeks, 12 hours a day with the Serbs, primarily displaced persons.

Vlasenica is a former Muslim town which is approximately 80 percent displaced persons from various parts of the Federation. Most of the displaced persons come either from Kladanj, which is just across the line from Vlasenica, and also from Sarajevo. They came in two waves from Sarajevo: at the beginning of the war and later subsequent to the signing of the Dayton accords.

The economy in Vlasenica is not much different from that described by other people here. It's very bad—upwards of 80 percent unemployment, the infrastructure in severe decline. The telephones don't work, electricity, water, et cetera. I think everybody here can tell stories about those circumstances.

However, the reception I found upon first arriving in Vlasenica wasn't bad. The Serbs, as I found later, with the Muslims, can be very, very hospitable people. The story is a Serb, despite the fact that he has very little, will give you the last thing out of his cupboard to show you his hospitality. We were constantly impressed by that, despite the circumstances of my being an American, which could be a little awkward at times.

Vlasenica is very much a nationalist area and Karadzic's picture was everywhere. For example, showing a map of Bosnia was a political statement. They took great offense just seeing Republika Srpska as part of Bosnia. As to media, there was one television station there, and it was Pale television.

However, I found the Serbs to be very concerned about what we thought of them. They would be constantly asking me that question, and my interpreter at times got a little tired of hearing the question and hearing my standard answer. But if I knew the person well enough, I might talk a little bit about what we had been reading in the way of the atrocities. That would always shock the Serbs. "No, n," they would say, "you're a victim of Western propaganda, Brian," and that sort of thing. Or else they'd say, "No. Look what the Croats and Muslims did to us, you know."

They are in very much a state of denial. They have a siege mentality. They feel very defensive, but in that part of the country, they're very pro-Karadzic. You did not see very much, practically nothing, in the way of support for Plavsic. She has no political infrastructure there.

In any case, after the 2 months in Vlasenica, I was assigned to the core staff. I became Operations Supervisor for the entire eastern Republika Srpska, which was an interesting job. I had an opportunity then to travel up and down the eastern Republika Srpska visiting towns all the way north from Bijeljina, all the way south to Trebinje.

I visited Serbinja, or Foca, as well. At that time, it was still a difficult town for us. The mayor there didn't like the foreigners, and he wanted to force our people out. We had one Frenchwoman there who was very much alone in some periods there.

My travel to a significant degree was to deal with security questions. Communications for the internationals, the OSCE personnel, are very much a big concern for us particularly when our volunteers come in to serve as polling supervisors. We have large numbers of foreigners coming in. They're alone, and they need to be able to communicate from their polling stations. They're very vulnerable. So this is an important area that we were dealing with—constantly trying to improve the communication situation.

You worked with a two-way radio, a VHF radio. Telephones quite often were not available while in the meantime the two-way radio quite often did not work very much either quite often because of the mountainous terrain. Quite often the polling stations would be in very remote locations.

Now, this concern regarding security became more apparent as well following the incident that we had with the shooting of the two alleged war criminals—well, shooting of one and the imprisonment and the capture of the other. There was a big reaction where I was in Sokolac at the time.

We went on a Level 2 alert. They were bombing our vehicles, including one vehicle in Vlasenica, in fact. One member of our Joint Commission Observer team, which had been assigned there subsequently, was wounded by a scythe as well in an attack by a local resident. In Zvornik, we had another vehicle bombed and another individual elsewhere had a grenade tossed at his apartment. After a few days, though, we realized they were doing this more to intimidate us than to actually hurt us because always the vehicle seemed to be empty when the explosions occurred.

But at the same time, they were doing other things, too. They had big posters of Karadzic with the words in English underneath saying, "Don't touch him." We were being refused service at the restaurants. In Sokolac, only one restaurant was serving us for that period of time and that was Mafia-owned (they weren't afraid of the SDS or anybody else). Otherwise, some of our people were also being forced out of their apartments because of threats to the landladies. As it was, after about 3 weeks, this situation subsided a bit, but it was a tricky period.

You do get a feeling there would be a big reaction if SFOR went after someone such as Karadzic. I think there would be a firestorm reaction. I'm not sure that's sufficiently realized in this country. Is the U.S. public prepared to take Western casualties if that should happen? In those circumstances, would the public react, as happened previously in Lebanon, for example, or in Somalia?

Subsequent to that, I was assigned to the "Orasje Pocket" in the Federation, where I worked with Muslims and Croats primarily, although I did work in Brcko as well with Croat police and Serb police. My job there was to serve as Corps Supervisor for the local field office. Orasje, the town itself, sits on the Croatian border in what is a complex area. The inner town is largely Muslim. The territory, though, is largely Croatian. And, in fact, they tend to think that they're part of Croatia. They don't see themselves as part of the

Federation. Not too far away, of course, is Brcko and the Serb corridor, too, which separates the Orasje Pocket from the rest of the Federation.

Relations between the peoples—the Muslims and the Croats—were considered to be not too bad compared to other parts of the Federation, although I had mentioned that to my Muslim landlady at one point and she rolled her eyes. In any case, though, the Muslims and the Croats during the war did unite to fight the Serbs to defend Orasje. There is a far greater degree of contact between the peoples there in that northern pocket area than I found in the eastern Republika Srpska.

You practically saw no evidence of Bosniacs coming into the eastern Republika Srpska. There were occasions when they might come into Gorazde, for example. The story was that they would take off their license plates and drive at 5:00 in the morning so that they wouldn't be noticed. It was a more immediate direct route to Gorazde than might otherwise be taken.

As was mentioned also, the Arizona market, which is close to Orasje, is a very impressive setting. I don't think there's any other comparable situation, but the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims actually do mix to conduct commerce.

Media. As it was, Orasje was the only area I saw where there was a fair range of opinion being expressed in the media. You had the various television stations—Croat, Bosniac, and Serb and the two perspectives, Banja Luka and Pale—being represented. Despite what's often said about the Pale television, it actually shows an awful lot of American movies.

Overall impressions. First of all, SFOR must stay, obviously. The West is doing absolutely vital work in maintaining the peace in Bosnia. It has to stay. There would be fighting again if SFOR departed. Second, despite having had their lives turned upside down, people throughout Bosnia—in the Republika Srpska and the Federation—all ethnic groups can be remarkably warm and hospitable. In the case of the Serbs, though, they appear very concerned or curious about what we think of them. There is that constant question I had mentioned before.

Conditions remain very difficult, as Kathryne was saying, particularly in the Republika Srpska. With upwards of 80 and 90 percent unemployment, a worn-out infrastructure, and little commerce, the Republika Srpska is considered an economic basket case.

Obviously government policies have done a lot to encourage this situation by limiting possibilities for commerce between the Federation and the Republika Srpska. I am, of course, referring to policies that result in currency difficulties and problems making a telephone call, sending a letter, or driving with the wrong license plates across the IEBL.

These problems are being worked on, fortunately, and so we may see some progress in resolving them.

However, the West has also had a role in this situation. Of the $5.1 billion in Bosnian reconstruction funds distributed since the war through the International Donors Assistance Program, 97 percent has gone to the Federation.

Now, the reason for this disparity is not understood by the Bosnian Serbs. It simply encourages their siege mentality and their resentments toward the international community and flat-out despair that I saw among so many of them in the eastern Republika Srpska.

I agree with Kathryne and Boyd in this regard. There should be some greater degree of assistance coming from the West and showing the Serbs that our presence can be of benefit to them.

Third, elections were a technical success—87 percent turnout for the municipal elections, somewhat less for the Republika Srpska parliamentary election. But as OSCE Chairman, Javier Ruperez, has said, the process was grafted onto a political environment that, quote, "falls short of democratic standards." The people pretty much voted along ethnic lines and, in my experience, mainly in areas where they now live, rather than in their pre-war locales.

In the Republika Srpska, the SDS retained absolute majorities in only 14 of 61 municipalities. However, when combined with Serb Radical Party, the SRS, 42, or more than 68 percent, of the municipalities have remained under the control of the hard-liners. The Federation parties; i.e., Muslims and Croats, won only in Srebenica. Their loss in Brcko was a little bit of a surprise. However, in Brcko, Bosanski Brod, and Kotor Varos, all Serb parties will need to cooperate in order to ensure their continued ethnic domination.

Now, in the Federation, the Bosniac-dominated SDA won absolute majorities in 42 of 74 municipalities, or 57 percent. Of their losses, only four were in Muslim-dominated municipalities and most notably in Tuzla, but Tuzla was not a surprise. The Croat-dominated HDZ won absolute majorities in 23 municipalities but sustained the only losses among the major parties in the Federation, most notably in Mostar due to the policy of encouraging Bosnian and Croat voters to register exclusively in West Mostar. Meanwhile, the parties representing potential Serb returnees gained majorities in three municipalities in the Federation.

These results relate to my next point. If we assume people vote where they intend to stay, voter registration patterns and subsequent elections have, to a significant degree, confirmed the results of ethnic cleansing. Still, the West seems unaware of the fact that most refugees and displaced persons, whether through fear or preference, have no desire to return to areas where they would be minorities in a hostile environment.

For example, the voting results I mentioned already. As to registration figures, in areas where I worked, I'm fairly confident—I don't know this for certain, but I am fairly confident—in Vlasenica I did not have a single Serb looking to vote in the Federation. We had approximately 1,500 Muslims, the former inhabitants of Vlasenica, looking to vote in Vlasenica. My colleague in Milici said the same thing, although they had fewer displaced persons. My colleague in Han Pijesak, to the south, a military town, said she had only two Serbs looking to vote in the Federation, and in both of those cases it was simply because they were not eligible to vote in the Republika Srpska.

I saw this also in talking to so many Serbs in the area where I was in Vlasenica. They were Sarajevo DPs. They were saying they would not be going back. There was no possibility of going back.

I took two interpreters back into Sarajevo on one occasion to see their former homes. My interpreter said she felt like a foreigner in her hometown. There was no possibility of going back.

In any case, this situation is further evidenced by the fact that only 30,000 of the DPs and refugees have returned since the war thus far to areas where they would be

minorities and very few of them to areas controlled by hard-liners. Meanwhile 80,000 have abandoned their homes as a result of Dayton.

The point I would like to make in this regard is that the Dayton accord would appear to be prepared to deal with such preferences. Refugees and displaced persons have the right either to return home or to obtain just compensation. In such circumstances, it would seem that the Commission of Refugees and Displaced Persons created by the accord needs to be doing more to adjudicate claims and arrange vehicles for compensation for those who do not wish to return to their pre-war homes.

I'll close it off here so as to allow a little bit more time for questions. We do have a couple of other things I would talk about.

In sum, though, I would like to stay a little bit more optimistic. Since returning to Washington, I have found one fairly common consensus among those of us who served in Bosnia. The country attracts us. Its recovery has been slow, and there remains a lot to be done. Most of us would like to go back to do something about it.

Thank you.

Mr. **Hand.** Thank you very much, Brian.

At this stage, I will open up the floor to questions from the audience. As I said at the beginning, if you could come up to the floor mike and tell us your name and affiliation and also to whom specifically you are addressing your question, I would appreciate it. Any takers? Andy?

Questioner. Andrew Eiva with the Washington Office for Bosnia.

The question is: One of the panelists brought up a thing that there are two views of U.S. policy because most of the policy implemented on the ground seems to be working at odds with what our stated policy of preserving multi-ethnic Bosnia is.

There was a recent Senate Foreign Relations hearing this past fall. Ambassador Gelbhart said under the open cities program the target goal was for 500 families to be repatriated by the middle of 1988. Then further clarification came that there would also be maybe several thousand people repatriated to minority areas in the Brcko area.

So this is a two-part question, addressed to anybody on the panel. Part one: Looking at the United State's own admission that it is only intending to repatriate 500 refugees to minority areas, does that figure seem to comport with the realities that are taking place in your areas? Is Gelbhardt's report correct numerically, roughly, based on what you saw?

No. two, if that is so, perhaps the United States has decided to acquiesce in a partitional approach to dismember Bosnia out of existence?

Mr. **Hand.** Who would like to respond first? Luke?

Mr. **Zahner.** First, I would say that from my experience in Bihac as well as in Sarajevo, there are a lot of unreported or unorganized returns that are happening.

UNHCR, who participated in the elections results implementation committees that were chaired by the OSCE after the municipal elections, was constantly saying that they could not provide accurate figures on these unorganized returns, particularly older people that were turning to homes near the IEBL.

So from an organized perspective, I think that those are just part of the figures, though I'm really not sure how many people total returned in 1997.

There are different figures that have been issued by each of the different ruling parties, too. All of them are politically skewed. None are reliable in my opinion.

I think that the biggest problem with regard to the whole system of returns, though, is that every single decision seems to have to go all the way to the top, like Roland was saying earlier.

I know of at least half a dozen examples of return matters related to Drvar where Kresimir Zubak had to get directly involved. The mayor of Drvar, a Croat mayor of Drvar, an HDZ member, said that he could not allow Serbs to return. It was a decision that had to be taken by Zubak.

When Zubak was called for the umpteenth time, he would say: Why are you bothering me with this? And then we would say: Well, the mayor of Drvar says he can't make a decision without you.

Then Zubak would come to Drvar, and he would say: Let them in or whatever. It is so time-consuming, and basically it's a stall tactic. It isn't that they don't have the authority. It's they don't want to be responsible for the decision and they want to stall it. They want to prevent it as long as possible.

I would say that another problem, though,—and this is a serious problem as well, and I don't know if my colleagues agree with me or not—there is a lot of competition and rivalry among the international organizations present in Bosnia. There isn't a lot of synergy.

The Office of the High Representative, the OSCE, UNHCR, all of them have at one time or another clashed with each other over different priorities or different issues.

Sometimes it's minor. Other times it's a pretty big issue, like the implementation of the Republika Srpska elections, who is going to take the lead for that? That wasn't a huge open fight, but we should have known who was going to be implementing the results of the Republika Srpska national assembly elections before we held the National assembly elections.

Then the last point I would make is there are very rarely consequences to these actions that have been taken by local authorities to either prevent returns or to kick people out who have already returned.

As we saw in Jajce this past summer, where the Croat population basically expelled a group of I think 250 or some odd Bosniacs who had returned, very rarely are there any sticks that are used.

I think one of the best suggestions I ever heard that came out of ICG—and I think it was Chris Bennett who actually proposed it—was for every house that's burned they take a tank or something like that because that way everything is sanctioned.

In Drvar, for example, when houses were burning last year, everybody knew about it. The mayor knew who was doing it. But he was raising his hand saying: There's nothing I can do. It's hooligans or whatever.

But if you threaten to take a tank or another piece of weaponry from the local whatever, HVO, Bosnian army, et cetera, I think that a lot of this would stop. Even the mere suggestion of it in Drvar by the SFOR troops independently—the Canadians there at the time—shook the mayor up enough so that some of the vandalism to Serb homes that were abandoned did cease.

So there are a lot of problems associated with calculating it and also implementing the returns.

Mr. **Hand.** Roland?

Mr. **De Rosiere.** Just on the numbers, in Konjic, a number of Croat DPs and Serb DPs have signed up. Fewer have actually come back, but they've signed up. Houses are being rebuilt or at least a roof is being put on the house. Probably when spring comes, they will move.

But, for the time being, they may be miserable somewhere, but they've got a stock of wood and pickled food of one kind or another. So that if they go back now, they don't have anything. They don't have any wood. So they're going to wait until the spring. They're trickling back.

In Brcko, it is happening, trickles. There is one village actually in the Republika Srpska where there is a Bosniac community. There is repopulation around Brcko, but I don't know whether it's really an open city yet. It's artificial.

Questioner. When you said a "number," what number?

Mr. **De Rosiere.** For Konjic?

Questioner. Five hundred?

Mr. **De Rosiere.** For Konjic, it's not 500. They're planning to rebuild about 100 homes. So several people would be in each of those homes.

People come and visit. They come and look. They come and stay for a while. Then they go back. They're having a difficult time making up their minds. These are not people who have always had the opportunity to choose. They've been told what to do or scared off.

So it's happening, but I don't have precise figures.

Mr. **Hand.** Candace?

Ms. **Lekic.** Yes, just one brief comment. International cooperation varies from region to region, too. I was in a situation like Kathryne, where only OSCE was present because this region was under sanctions, which I didn't go into. It's kind of complicated.

But I will say that the entire international community, which I tried to bring into my situation to assist,—and we cooperated very well—were all interested in getting people back. I think we jointly were willing to square off against the local authorities to see that happen.

But I want to make a comment. Kathryne touched upon this in the human rights operation in general, which I think is mostly being done by OSCE in Bosnia. We had no vehicles of enforcement. It was a huge problem. That exists to the present day.

So we could try to embarrass or cajole or persuade local authorities, but we had no vehicles to enforce these issues, like return of displaced persons or any other human rights violations. It's a huge problem.

As I said, laws have not been changed. And, unfortunately, economic aid for reconstruction doesn't seem to be tied to a good human rights record on returnees. So it's a problem.

Mr. **Hand.** Other questions?

Questioner. In Jay Wise with the Open Society Institute and, I might add, a proud alumni of the Helsinki Commission's illustrious internship program.

This is two questions: one for Ms. Bomberger or Mr. Marshall with regard to aid to the Republika Srpska and especially to those towns that are more hard line. You mentioned that it was an argument, but how do you respond to the argument that aid will

simply prop up leaders who not just undermine but openly flout virtually every item of the Dayton peace agreement?

The second question, to the entire panel, is: What aspects of the Bosnian election process other than implementation of the municipal elections, which everyone agrees on, what aspects of the Bosnian election process, would you like to see changed that might help undermine the ethnic divisions in the country?

Thanks.

Mr. **Hand.** Thank you.

Which of you would like to go first: Kathryne or Brian?

Mr. **Marshall.** Either way.

Ms. **Bomberger.** OK.

Mr. **Hand.** Go ahead.

Ms. **Bomberger.** All right. Yes. I touched a bit on the question you just asked during my report. It's a very tricky issue. It's a very difficult thing to do. How do you get around the local officials and funnel the money to the people who do need it?

As I said during the report, I feel you can accomplish this through the creation of local associations. This is the only thing I could think of. It's very difficult. I hope the World Bank and AID have programs that they're thinking of using in order to implement the use of these funds.

One method is through the use of democratization projects. By creating local NGOs in the area, you can create a situation on the ground through which you could funnel money. You could send money directly to certain organizations that existed on the ground and who have been working with international organizations such as the OSCE and UNHCR.

One such program—I think I can give you an example. While I was working in Foca, I worked with a group of students. I gave them journalism classes. I was once a journalist. Eventually they were able to put together their own newspaper, which was quite phenomenal in this area where there was no print journalism.

In conjunction with another NGO operating in the Federation, I was able to bring computers into the area, but I brought them directly to the associations that I had created, to the doctors NGO or to this group of students. Eventually I was able to put the students online using those computers. They were able to then print their newspaper in the Federation using the internet. That newspaper would come back to Republika Srpska.

Yes?

Questioner. That certainly sounds like an eminently worthwhile program, especially given the lack of any journalistic foundation in Bosnia, especially in Srpska, but most of the programs that we're talking about are very basic infrastructure programs, over which local authorities tend to have great control and which carry great prestige in these municipalities.

Ms. **Bomberger.** Absolutely.

Questioner. Are you saying that you would support helping prop up those leaders through——

Ms. **Bomberger.** No, no, I'm not. I'm trying to figure out ways to get around them. I would suggest that, again, when that money does go in, or those projects are set up, that they be heavily monitored.

Assistance projects should be initiated. I think we agree on that point.

Mr. **Marshall.** Yes.

Ms. **Bomberger.** The current situation is only augmenting the state of fear and hatred. It's having the opposite effect that we want to see.

Mr. **Marshall.** There is a major requirement needed, for example, for housing construction or repair construction to get these people some places to stay.

Now, obviously we have to try to establish safeguards. It would not be our intention to seek to enrich people who are not the most exemplary individuals in their societies, but it should be mentioned also that some of those same individuals profited rather well from the sanctions.

Ms. **Bomberger.** And some of those individuals are profiting on the Federation side. It's a very difficult issue. I think heavy monitoring or close monitoring of the situation is one important method of assuring that the projects work.

Mr. **Hand.** Would anybody like to make a comment on the question regarding the elections?

Ms. **White.** I would. I think to have a free and fair election that would help break the ethnic barrier, you need a census now. Who lives where? Nobody really knows who lives where now.

Without knowing that information, it leaves the whole system open for fraud. For example, Bosnian Serbs currently displaced to Belgrade from the Federation fraudulently registered to vote in the Republika Srpska instead of their actual 1991 municipality. It leaves it open for voter registration fraud that then gets certified by polling station supervisors who are very well-intentioned but are not aware enough of what went before their arrival to stop that kind of fraud.

Also, you need to have political parties have the access to the whole country across the IEBL. Bosniac or Croat parties should be able to campaign in the Republika Srpska. Likewise, Republika Srpska parties should be able to campaign in the Federation. Absent these measures, political parties will pander to their own ethnic populous.

Mr. **Hand.** Anybody else, a comment?

Mr. **Zahner.** I think another thing with the elections, as I mentioned earlier, is the media. Many of the projects in Bosnia regarding the media have addressed some of the bigger media, but the local radio stations, in particular, is one of the most effective means of spreading hatred throughout the country and encouraging and fanning the flames of war. They're also very effective instruments in terms of expressing the propaganda of the ruling party in those towns.

I think that the international community needs to give a lot more emphasis to ways of either developing private—I don't want to say independent, because I don't know if such a concept exists as independent but private—and diverse means of getting your message across, networks of small stations throughout the country that go over the IEBL, privatizing FERN, which is the Swiss' and OSCE's project, the Free Election Radio Network, which has an expansive network that covers basically the whole country right now and which the OSCE has discussed about dismantling and giving the pieces to different stations, which I don't think is a good idea at all.

You also need to have training for journalists because there are so many journalists who have left the country or who have gone to the cities. Therefore you have these local radio stations in the hands of either—I mean, maybe not nationalists or people that really

mean bad, but this is a very important instrument. When you have people who aren't trained, it can become very dangerous.

One of the most successful things we did in Bihac, I think, is we had conflict resolution training for talk radio journalists and things like that, I think.

I think the U.S. Institute for Peace has been involved in that. Search for Common Ground and other NGOs have been encouraging things like that.

We need things like that, but we need them now. We can't think about that a month before the election. This is the kind of thing we need to be working on now.

Mr. **Hand.** Roland?

Mr. **De Rosiere.** I'd just like to stress again the importance of monitors from the political parties. That's actually not an expensive project. It's one for the future.

Also the Election Appeals Subcommission needs to be put into some sort of permanent position to ensure the new electoral law is adhered to. It could strike off candidates in the past if these candidates were violating the rules. That's very important.

I personally saw how the OSCE threatened a candidate with being struck off if he didn't do a certain thing, and it worked.

Ms. **Bomberger.** One more thing with regard to your question. This is with regard to aid again. Perhaps this is something that the OSCE can get more involved in. Since the OSCE covers more ground than any international organization operating in the area, maybe somehow, again with regard to the synergy between organizations, perhaps the World Bank and AID can somehow work with the officers out in the field in terms of acquiring information about who is who and what is what, et cetera, in the Republika Srpska in terms of giving aid to that area. That would be one way to monitor it.

I don't know what the OSCE is planning to do with regard to that.

Mr. **Hand.** Another question?

Questioner. Chadwick Gore from the Commission.

There's an old saying that a fish rots from the head down. What I hear from this panoply of experiences is that the solution to these problems tends over and over again to be more efficient and more effective joint action between the international organizations that are on the ground that are training for the representatives of international organizations or local assignees or volunteers that are involved with the international organizations, but I haven't heard any comment on the vapidness or inefficient or inconsequential leadership of the ethnic leaders of the respective parts of the Federation and Republika Srpska that apparently don't lead their people to bring about the kind of change that all of this operation and all of this expense is there to produce.

What are we supposed to do about and what would you recommend be done with leadership, both from the Federation and Republika Srpska, not to mention the client states outside of this entity, that are, in fact, the actual impediments to bringing about the resolution to this conflict, which right now is just in stasis? I think we'd all admit it's not over.

Anybody? Everybody?

Mr. **Hand.** Who would like to go first? Roland?

Mr. **De Rosiere.** I've heard that the threat of withdrawal of travel privileges is something that really upsets leaders who are blocking the process.

Questioner. Withdrawal of travel privileges?

Mr. **De Rosiere.** Withdrawal of travel privileges. So if they want to travel outside of Bosnia-Herzegovina, they don't get a visa, which means they don't travel. That really hits home.

Mr. **Hand.** Anybody else?

Ms. **Bomberger.** I would say that implicit perhaps in all of the reports given today are some of the issues that you have just addressed. With regard to the Republika Srpska, when we talked about the media, certainly it's the government, it's the local officials who control that media, who manipulate the population there, who issue the propaganda that exists there, who perpetrate the hatreds that exist there.

Again, back to the aid issue, I do think one way perhaps of getting rid of some of their control in the area is to get around them and filter that money to people or local NGOs who need it. That way I think you could create a bit of dissent amongst the population possibly, which would counterbalance the power that those local officials have in those areas. That might be one way.

Certainly the grip they have there is very, very strong, but I think that could be one effective way. By bringing in newspapers, also by bringing in information from the outside, by—again, this is in the Republika Srpska. By giving them access to information they don't have, again to counterbalance the propaganda that they're being fed, would be another way.

Mr. **Hand.** Brian?

Mr. **Marshall.** Yes. I would further suggest, along the same lines as were discussed before, the need for some signs of movement toward economic recovery because at this point, there's been practically nothing in the Republika Srpska that's being done to initiate economic recovery. I think in those circumstances, you might help to create an environment in which there would be less in the way of feelings of grievance or resentment toward the internationals.

We do also have to consider the fact that that's a very sensitive role you're asking us to take; i.e., to try to guide these people in what leadership they pick. I think of one Bosnian Serb who was talking to me. She said she does not like the SDS, for example. She does not like the types. But at the same time, she was going to vote SDS because the West was pushing the other groups. It was her way of showing defiance. I think we might react in a similar fashion if foreigners were trying to interfere a great deal too much in our own politics as well.

Mr. **Hand.** Candace?

Ms. **Lekic.** Yes. It has been said, but I think that the situation is the worst in the regions where there is the least amount of information. I also did not have any local press in Vares. So it was a very bad situation because the people do not know what the options are. So I think this supporting of local press, helping organize local press, is very important.

The other thing is that one of the things I was hoping to do while I was still there but we sort of ran out of time, the elections were closing in, was to utilize something like town hall meetings, the international community should certainly have this privilege; to get information to the people, things like that money can be given directly to enterprise, local enterprise. People don't even know these things. They assume everything has to go through the government.

I think now that it is beginning to be possible for certain assistance to go directly to local enterprises—and it's something that no one knows, and it would never occur to them to contact anyone directly to get money.

I also think this would help undermine local authority power. If people could understand that certain aid that is going to come in must have certain conditions tied to it, I think that's going to happen.

It hasn't so far, but, for instance, especially on housing, if money is given for reconstruction, there is going to be definite criteria that pre-war residents be able to live there. At least I've heard that. I hope that happens.

People also don't know, in other words, that that is true. And, therefore, if the local authorities don't tell them that they're not going to get aid because they're not willing to allow pre-war population, people will never find out if someone else doesn't tell them.

Mr. **Hand.** Luke?

Mr. **Zahner.** I think it's true that the fish rots from the head down. I'd guess part of the problem that, well, I had anyway, in presenting some of the problems in Bihac is the fact that a lot of these problems do stem from who the leadership in Sarajevo has chosen to be the mayor because many of these mayors were interim mayors that were picked by the SDA, in Bihac the SDA, in Canton 10 by the HDZ.

Where do you begin? The corruption is not unique to the Serb side. I could sit on the border between Croatia and Bosnia, Bihac, and see all of the goods being smuggled myself.

They estimate $20,000 worth of goods were being smuggled by lieutenants in the Fifth Corps over the past year, in 1997, $20,000 a day, that should have been going into the coffers of the Federation or Bosnia-Herzegovina.

When these charges were addressed in the press, the press, the independent press, were vilified by President Isabegavic, who generally is portrayed in the West as the leader of the victims in this conflict.

There's poor leadership on all sides and so maybe term limits? But I don't know if that would even work. I think the West needs to take a stronger tact with all of them.

The Croats have a problem because, even more than the Serbs taking their orders from Serbia, you have a situation where there are factions of Serbs, and it's hard. Milosevic can't call all of the shots in the Republika Srpska any longer.

But in Croatia, we often were told in Drvar that policy was made in Zagreb. We were told point-blank that President Tudjman wants this. You know, he wouldn't say that on the record or in front of journalists, of course, but he told us that point-blank.

The only success we ever had in solving some of the return issues of Serbs to Drvar was by having somebody very high-level go to Zagreb and meet with either the president or the foreign minister of Croatia.

Why this is necessary, I do not know, but it does not bode well for the country. I think that the West needs to take a much more active stand and the United States needs to take a much more active stand against all three sides.

The Serbs have been beaten quite a bit by the West and by the United States over the past couple of years. I don't think we should let up maybe on them, but I think we need to start addressing some of the similar problems on the other sides.

I'm not saying we need to treat everybody equally, regardless of what is going on, but what I am saying is that we shouldn't be ignoring things, such as the housing problem in Sarajevo, which has been in the papers recently, or the corruption problem, which is in the Bosnian and the Bosniac-controlled government as well.

These things have been relatively quiet and ignored, I think, over the past year or so.

Mr. **Hand.** I think I'll open up for one more question, maybe two.

Questioner. I'm Didi Fowler with the Bosnia Support Committee.

I am still deeply disturbed about the idea of aid going to Republika Srpska, which is a criminal entity, which was legitimized at Dayton. If you don't tie aid to repatriation, what makes you think that people will be allowed to ever return?

I just don't see how giving them money—the agenda of this criminal entity as well as that of Herceg-Bosnia, which does exist, is ethnic separation after all. I don't know that.

I think your idea about certain democracy projects is a very good one, but I just don't see how this will facilitate people going home to so-called Republika Srpska, people who want to go there. I don't see how giving money to this entity or that of Herzeg-Bosnia is going to facilitate repatriation. I think it will do the absolute opposite.

So can you tell me how this will facilitate repatriation? I don't think that it will.

Ms. **Bomberger.** Why do you think it will do the opposite, though?

Questioner. Because it further entrenches the people who are in power.

Ms. **Bomberger.** Whose stated policy is to keep people there.

Questioner. It's like: OK. Now we get what we wanted. Why should we let these people come back? You know, they're still seen as the source of all of our problems anyway.

Mr. **Marshall.** I'm not sure that it would further entrench them, but at the same time, I don't think the Serbs understand that carrot and stick approach that you're talking about. The people that I encountered constantly were complaining: Why is the West against us? I would respond and talk about the Dayton accords, and I would talk about how they had to live up to certain criteria first. They didn't understand that. At least they didn't express any understanding. They don't see it that way. They feel as though we're hostile to them.

Questioner. If they go back to work, say? That's like the best case scenario——

Mr. **Hand.** If you could come up to the microphone?

Questioner. [continuing]. For those who live there, who live in ethnically pure, so-called, Republika Srpska. So everything is hunky-dory? Then that will facilitate refugees who are displaced to come back?

Ms. **Bomberger.** I think over time—no, no. I would say that wouldn't be the primary objective, but I think over tideland I think it's an unfortunate link in a way, but over time possibly that could create an atmosphere in which, again, the control that the leaders have over the area would be decreased. Currently these people live in abject fear of their local officials. This situation is more apparent in the eastern part of Republika Srpska than it is in the Banja Luka region.

Again, I think that a lot of the hatred that permeates the area is due to jealousy on the part of the Serbs that live in the area who see the UNHCR trucks bypass them on their way to places in the Federation.

For example, in Foca, trucks containing aid materials would bypass Foca on the way to Gorazde. The local inhabitants knew what was going on. This situation increased their hatreds and it allowed the local government to further manipulate them in my opinion.

If you begin to give money or start projects in that area, perhaps that will decrease a lot of the jealousies. Perhaps that will decrease a lot of the propaganda that the local officials are able to use to manipulate them. Maybe with that aid will come information, with that aid will come newspapers that will give them another outlook on life.

Assistance should also go to alternative political parties that exist in the area in an attempt to create a viable opposition in areas where there is none.

Maybe over time that situation will lead to a more open environment in which there will be a repatriation. As it stands now, there's absolutely no way anyone can return to those areas.

Questioner. Can I just say one little——

Mr. **Hand.** Very quickly.

Questioner. You're talking about over time. The more time that passes by, the less possibility of people going home.

Mr. **Marshall.** The problem is we don't have the public with us right now.

Ms. **White.** I have one brief comment. The World Bank came to Serbsko-Gorazde, the one-third of the municipality that was given to the Serbs by Dayton. The Bank expressed interest in restarting a factory in Serb-Gorazde. The requirement was that they work across the IEBL and that the Muslims displaced from the area now called Serb-Gorazde had to also be employed by the factory.

The Bosnian-Serb leadership in Serb-Gorazde declined World Bank assistance attached to those conditions.

Mr. **De Rosiere.** Well, the Serb leadership, as opposed to the Serb people.

Ms. **White.** Exactly.

Mr. **De Rosiere.** There was no local referendum on that issue.

Ms. **White.** Well, we just fraudulently reelected those Serb leaders, too.

Ms. **Bomberger.** There is a distinction, obviously, but it's hard to make, between the local officials and the people. Again, I think one of the issues here is trying to create some sort of dissent. I think by giving aid, we may be able to create such a situation.

As it stands right now, no one is going to return.

Mr. **Marshall.** Yes. You're talking about——

Questioner. It should not be up to those people there.

Ms. **Bomberger.** Absolutely, absolutely, but it is.

Mr. **Marshall.** You're talking about changing public opinion, and that's a little bit of a slower process.

Mr. **Hand.** OK. I think at that point, I'll close the briefing. I would like to say that, as a staff member of the Helsinki Commission, that we are very concerned—have been since before the conflict actually began in Bosnia—about the situation in that country, but also in the Dayton period with the OSCE taking such a large role in implementing

particularly the elections. Given the Commission's interest in seeing the OSCE succeed, we have taken a very good look at the mission and its work as well. I've gotten a lot from all of you, either individually or here at this briefing, in terms of ideas for the OSCE.

In terms of the elections that will be coming up later on this year, I have heard some disturbing reports as well about enfranchisement of displaced persons from Croatia but also the possibility that people would be reregistered to vote where they are at now, as opposed to where they once were. Hopefully we'll all be able to counter some of these negative things and have elections that would be better than previous ones.

I think that our overall argument to the new head of the OSCE mission, Ambassador Barry, is that the way to have better elections is not to focus as much on election administration but to focus more on the environment and on human rights, to enhance the media, to allow freedom of movement, et cetera, to create conditions so that we could say that at least there's been more progress toward free and fair elections.

I think that one thing I also have taken away from this is that we have a lot of good people in the OSCE mission out there in the field, often ignored. I'm sure that you all have felt that way at times.

A lot of times there's the opportunity to take some initiatives to get things done on the local levels. I think sometimes you have succeeded in that. Other times you have encountered people above you who have made it a little bit difficult for you to take the initiative and to make improvements in the region.

We're hoping that the OSCE mission will improve its coordination and its communication from Sarajevo through the regional centers to the field offices so that more initiatives can be taken not just to monitor the human rights situation or other aspects of the situation locally but to do something about it.

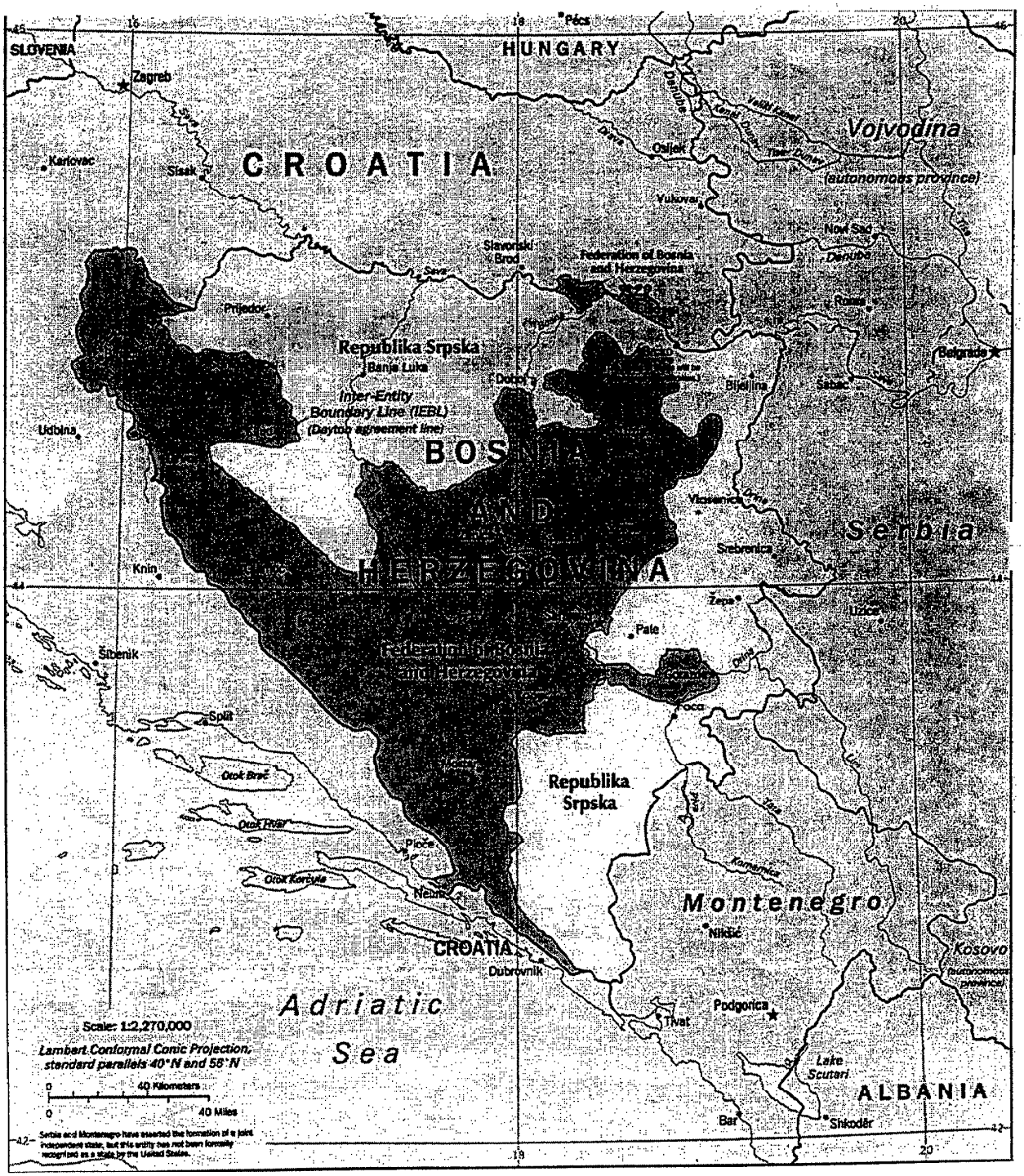
And, finally, something which I think the Commission wholeheartedly endorses is moving more and more toward the cross-boundary initiatives, making the IEBL as porous as possible, as irrelevant as possible. I think that is something that the OSCE and all organizations really need to start working on.

Since I had been referred to as the IEBL up here on the panel, I will, therefore, close the briefing and go away. So I'd like to thank you all for coming here and for staying for what was a very interesting briefing and some very excellent panelists. Thank you.

(Applause.)

(Whereupon, the foregoing matter was concluded at 12:29 p.m.)

A Map of Bosnia and Herzegovina



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