

Transcript of Press Briefing

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**NATO Secretary General Dr. Javier Solana High Representative Ambassador Carlos Westendorp
SACEUR Gen. Wesley Clark**

Prof. Jamie P. Shea, NATO Spokesman: Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I realize we are a little late arriving, so I am very grateful to you for your patience in waiting for us. But, we are here now.

As you can see, the Secretary General is here; SACEUR; and we are also joined today by Ambassador Westendorp, the High Representative. I'll ask the Secretary General to open with some remarks on the results of our visit today. Thereafter, I'll ask Ambassador Westendorp to make a few remarks, then SACEUR. And then, we will take as many questions as time allows. So, thank you, again, and I call on the Secretary General.

Dr. Javier Solana, NATO Secretary General: Yes. Thank you very much. I am sorry to be late. As you can imagine, we have been working all day long.

Today, Gen. Clark and myself wanted to be here in a very important moment – a few days before the Peace Implementation Council is going to meet in Madrid – to evaluate the situation from all the different aspects – and a few days after the North Atlantic Council had an important meeting in Brussels, where the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from all the different countries that belong to NATO – and all the people in all the countries that contribute to the forces to SFOR – got together to analyze the situation.

Let me tell you that we have taken important decisions. I would like to tell you that SFOR is going to continue to be present in Bosnia – and it will be present in Bosnia about the same level of force – or the same volume of force – that we have now.

We would like to see in the next six months improvement in the implementation of all the aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement. And, the NATO countries will analyze six months after the beginning of the year to see how things evolved and to see how many forces have to be maintained in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

But, I would like to say that all the countries that have forces deployed now continue with the same commitment – to help this country to find the stability – and definite peace – so that they can look to the future with hope.

I would like to say that I have met with the three Members of the Presidency; it had been the first time that I did it. We have sent a very clear message in the direction I just mentioned – about the presence of SFOR in the future – but also, we would like to establish with them some clear commitments toward the future – commitments that go at least in three directions:

- First, they have to continue – to start, some of them, to start – cooperating in order to have the returns of refugees program in place; 1998 was supposed to be the Year of Returns (of refugees). Not enough has been done. And, we hope very much – with the cooperation of all the members of the international community – to have 1999 a year in which the returns of refugees is a reality. SFOR – the countries that have troops deployed – are prepared to contribute – whatever they have to do – in order to have this project (of the returns of refugees) done. But, the main responsibility for the returns of refugees lies on the different parties and on the Members of the Presidency. I have said that very clearly to the three Members of the Presidency – that they have the major responsibility for that. The international community will help. But, the major responsibility lies on their shoulders.

- I told them also – very clearly, also – that this would be the year of establishment of the institutions – the Democratic institutions – fully. And that signifies many things. But, let me underline two: It signifies, first, that the police has to be reformed. And, the judiciary system has to be in place. Without these two requirements, it will be very difficult to have the Bosnia-Herzegovina that we dream of – and I think the majority of the people of this country – dream of.
- Thirdly, for us – for the countries that belong to SFOR – it is very important that the Standing Committee on Military Matters works – and works properly. Therefore, do we have that commitment with them – to do our best so that this important body, which is contemplated in the basic instruments of Dayton, works – and works properly.

Therefore, we have a year in 1999, in which this country will have the possibility of having these SFOR troops deployed on the ground, so that the important decisions that have to be taken – in the civil implementation, will be able to do that. But, again, the responsibility lies, basically, on the political responsables of this country.

Let me say that the cooperation between the Office of the High Representative and the High Representative, himself, which is here – Mr. Carlos Westendorp – and SFOR, is perfect. Here, we have a team of people belonging to the international community with the same aims, with the same goals and determined to help your country, Bosnia-Herzegovina, to have a future.

But, we can do what we can do. Part of the thing is, we cannot do it – and ask for the people of this country and the political responsables of this country to do the elements of the job that has to be done. We are determined to be here – to continue helping – to continue cooperating and, again, the responsibility, as I said, is not 100 percent ours, it is 90 percent yours. We create the atmosphere, but the leaders of this country have to take the lead.

Let me say a word to the soldiers, which are here. We are approaching Christmas. This is the third Christmas in which many, many youngsters from many, many countries are here, separated from their families, in order to help your country to be developed. I would like to remember those people today – those youngsters from many countries – more than 30 countries – that year after year, for three years, have been generously here spending their Christmas with their commanders, in order to help a part of our continent, a part of Europe, that we would like very much to be developed, to be stable and to be in peace.

Thank you very much.

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