

II LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE

(i) Demobilizing of troops and disarming of combatants

Demobilization of troops and disarming of combatants is generally unrealistic given the history of most conflict situations and the intense distrust that prevails between belligerents. Weapons and equipment disappear into 'hides' and 'caches' for use at an appropriate time. Only firm intent backed up by intense searches and punitive measures, produces some meaningful results. This requires large numbers of well-armed and well-equipped troops, and more importantly, unqualified political resolve at the international level. What does monitoring of heavy weapons mean? Would it mean deployment of a few observers to watch them or count them; or does it imply rounding them up at selected locations and ensuring they cannot be used. The requirement of troops and equipment varies considerably depending on what is to be done. Rules of engagement must be drawn up appropriate to the task.

- The experience of UNPROFOR in the early days in this context is quite revealing. The Serbs in the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) in Croatia, so designated by a Security Council Resolution were, with great effort, persuaded to place their weapons and equipment, which included tanks and artillery, in designated areas under what was termed in the Security Council Resolution as "joint control" of the UN and the "local authorities"; a "double lock" arrangement. On the first occasion on which there was trouble, initiated by a Croatian attack on the UNPAs in January 1993, the Serbs took away the weapons and never trusted the UN forces again. Unless the UN Mission has the force capability to prevent attack on areas under its control, there is no point designating areas as UN Protected Areas.
- Similarly, UNPROFOR was tasked by the Security Council to deploy unarmed military observers at sites at which heavy weapons were to be collected in terms of some arrangement arrived at by the European Community and endorsed by the Security Council. Ironically, this arrangement was only on the Bosnian Serb side. Hence in terms of actual implementation, all that the deployment achieved was that whenever the Serbs were attacked or fired at by their opposite numbers, they deployed and fired back, and our observers were reduced to counting the number of artillery and mortar rounds fired.

(iii) Safe Havens

The terms "safe area" and "safe haven" require clear operational definition. In August/September 1992 I was informed by the Under Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations at the UN Secretariat in New York, that in view of media reports of attacks on some enclaves in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they were under severe pressure from representatives of some member states on the Security Council, to declare places like Sarajevo, Bihac, Tuzla, Goradze and Foce as "safe areas" immediately to ensure the security of the population of those