

Serbs snub peace plan; tough sanctions expected

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia — The leader of Bosnia's Serbs rebuffed a last-ditch attempt Sunday to gain backing for a U.N. peace plan and avoid tougher sanctions on the remaining states of Yugoslavia.

The self-styled Bosnian Serb parliament was expected to support Radovan Karadzic's rejection of the plan, which calls for the division of Bosnia among the three warring factions.

Karadzic's meeting with European Community chief negotiator David Owen was the last before sanctions were scheduled to take effect at 6 a.m. Monday (midnight EDT).

Possibly worse was to come. The United States and its Western European allies planned to consult next week about the option of air strikes on Bosnian Serb positions if they continued to oppose the peace plan.

Karadzic was grim as he arrived in the northeastern Bosnian town of Bijelina to report to the Bosnian Serb assembly.

"If World War III erupts, it will be because of the Vance-Owen plan," he told reporters.

On Saturday, Owen stormed out of a meeting with Karadzic in frustration over obstacles set up by Bosnia's Serbs to a plan dividing Bosnia-Herzegovina into 10 provinces along ethnic lines.

Bosnian Muslims and Croats already have signed the plan, which would give each group three provinces and split control of the capital, Sarajevo, among them. As new U.N. sanctions loom against Serbia and Montenegro for backing Bosnia's Serbs in the Bosnian war, Owen redoubled efforts to win agreement from Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic to the plan.

Experts: Use of force in Bosnia would mire U.S. in a long war

WASHINGTON — As the Clinton administration gropes for ways to stop the killing in Bosnia, military experts warn that use of force could embroil the United States in a lengthy chain of action and reaction.

The most oft-mentioned military plan calls for bombing Serbian artillery guns battering Muslim towns in Bosnia.

Proponents, among them President Clinton's ambassador to the U.N. Madeleine Albright and 12 State Department officials who wrote Secretary of State Warren Christopher urging military action, argue that air strikes will still the guns and ease the suffering.

Clinton appeared less certain Friday about a possible air strike.

"If the United States takes action, we must have a clearly defined objective that can be met, we must be able to understand it, and its limitations must be clear," he said.

That's exactly what military planners have been telling him. The AP

talked to two Pentagon officials, who spoke only on condition of anonymity, and Sens. John Warner and John McCain about the risks involved in a military escalation.

Their worst case scenarios unfold like this:

U.S. bombers strike the Serbian artillery sites.

Bosnia does not lend itself to the surgical air strikes like those against Iraq, with its generally good weather and fixed, dug-in troop formations during the Gulf War.

The weather in Bosnia, says Warner, obscures aerial identification of ground targets more than 50 percent of the time, limiting chances of a successful raid on the artillery.

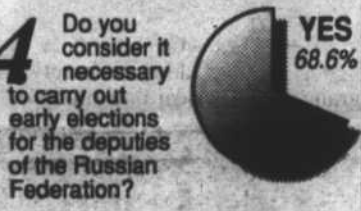
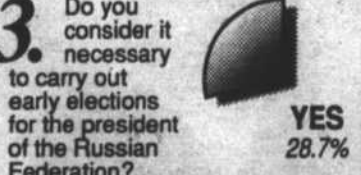
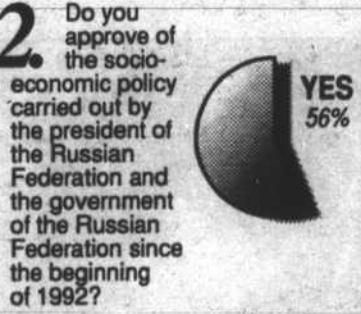
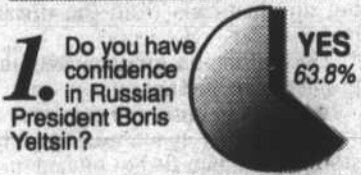
Serb militiamen might respond by moving the artillery into hilly terrain, out of sight of overhead reconnaissance flights.

Or they might move some of their guns into civilian areas, a practice they have already begun, experts warn.

Russian vote results



Exit poll of participants in Boris Yeltsin's vote of confidence. The first two questions required a majority of ballots cast to pass. The other two required a majority of all eligible voters.



Results are from an exit poll commissioned by the Associated Press and conducted in face-to-face interviews by the Russian Center for Public Opinion and Market Research. Approximately 5,000 people were polled in 11 regions in Russia.

Yeltsin survives key referendum

MOSCOW — President Boris Yeltsin won a vote of confidence in a key referendum Sunday but was likely to fall short in his push to force new parliamentary elections, according to exit polls and partial official results.

In a surprise development, most voters backed Yeltsin's market reforms despite the hardships they have brought, a result that may partially mute Yeltsin's critics in the hard-line Congress of People's Deputies.

But the turnout of about 65 percent was too low to enable Yeltsin to force elections. Approval for new elections required a majority of Russia's 105.5 million registered voters, not just of those casting ballots.

Yet while voter support was strong for new elections, it did not tally up to a majority of the electorate, one poll showed.

Such a result would also mean that Yeltsin would not have the mandate to push through a new constitution to replace the Congress with a two-chamber, U.S.-style legislature. He had hinted that he would take a "yes" vote on elections as voter approval for a new constitution.

Yeltsin sought a mandate for change from the referendum so that he could overcome the Communist-era parliament that has tried to thwart his reforms and curb his powers.

Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, a close Yeltsin aide, said early returns were encouraging, but he did not give specifics.

Across 11 time zones, from snowy Kamchatka to the balmy Black Sea, millions of Russians voted by dropping a paper ballot into a wooden box.

Many of the ballot boxes still bore the hammer-and-sickle seal of the Soviet Union.

Well-stocked buffets at polling places did a brisk trade in imported cigarettes, coffee, beer, tomato sauce, and other items — at market prices.



Boris Yeltsin

Brian Shellito/DN

The 62-year-old leader also made a raft of promises to special interest groups, raising pensions for the elderly, increasing stipends for students, promising land to army officers and reversing a decision to raise the price of gasoline.

The referendum asked voters whether they had confidence in Yeltsin, who was elected to a five-year term in 1991 as Russia's first popularly chosen president. Other questions asked whether Russians approved of his economic reforms launched in 1992, and whether there should be new presidential and parliamentary elections.

An exit poll of 5,219 voters nationwide by the Russian Center for Public Opinion and Market Research found that 63.8 percent backed the president and a surprising 56 percent supported his market reforms, despite the hardships.

The poll, commissioned by The Associated Press, found that 28.7 percent of those voting, or 18.5 percent of the total electorate, favored holding presidential elections earlier than currently scheduled, in 1996.

Oklahoma tornado 'flattens everything' — 7 people die

TULSA, Okla. — National Guardsmen searched for a missing child and residents picked up belongings Sunday along the path of a tornado that killed at least seven, swept vehicles from a highway and smashed homes and businesses.

"This just flattened everything," Gov. David Walters said after seeing the damage in Tulsa and suburban Catoosa.

More than 95 people were treated for injuries ranging from cuts to burns. The twister toppled a church in

Tulsa. In Catoosa, it demolished at least 60 mobile homes, 23 houses and several businesses, Police Chief Benny Dirck said.

Authorities concentrated their search for a 4-year-old boy missing since the tornado hit Saturday night.

"With a missing child, I didn't pay a whole lot of attention to the property damage," Walters said from a demolished truck stop when he was asked about the destruction.

State emergency director Tom Feuerborn called a damage estimate

of \$100 million "very loose." He said he hoped to have better totals after teams from the state and the Federal Emergency Management Agency checked the area.

Walters sent about 100 National Guardsmen to Catoosa and said he would ask President Clinton for a disaster declaration to make federal funds available.

"We will ask early and often," Walters said, standing in front of the truck stop where strips of shredded metal roof dangled like Christmas

treeinsel. Tractor-trailer rigs were turned over in the truck stop's parking lot.

Houses were left without walls or roofs. Cars rested atop piles of rubble. Garbage clung to the limbs of trees. Utility crews worked through the night to remove downed power lines.

People knelt precariously on the ruins of their businesses and homes to reach for belongings.

"A lot of people just want to give up," Dirck said.



AP

Mobs of gay marchers demand rights

WASHINGTON — Throngs of gay men and women spilled across the historic Mall on Sunday demanding acceptance and equal rights from a society that often scorns their community. "A simple matter of justice" was their rallying cry.

In brilliant, summery sunshine, they came by the tens of thousands to tell America who they are and what they want, and hoping to shatter the stereotypes that dominate many people's perceptions of the gay community.

"All gays aren't flaming queens," said Steve Starr, 43, a Denver travel agent marching alongside Robert Jacobson, 37, a telephone company technician.

Organizers hoped for a million marchers, and predicted that in size, their crowd would rival the great civil rights and anti-war marches of the past quarter-century.

The crowds clogging streets and lawns on an unusually warm spring day looked a lot like other summer demonstrators in their shorts, colorful

T-shirts and sensible shoes. Some same-sex couples held hands or hugged.

March contingents ranged from parents with their grown gay children to gay parents pushing their toddlers in strollers. There were disabled people in wheelchairs, and a separate group of marchers with AIDS.

T-shirts and banners advertised attitudes from humorous to defiant. "It's not just a phase," and "Friend or phobe?"

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