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DATE : 8 APRIL 1994

NUMBER : **UNPROFOR Z- 545**

SUBJECT : **DEFINITION OF SAFE AREAS**

REFERENCE : UNNY MCS-945 7 June 1993

1. The recent events in Goradze have again caused the re-surfacing of some misconception with respect to the concept of safe areas. This misconception is, we believe, one causal factor in the increasingly strident media campaign for international intervention in Gorazde. It is now more vital than ever that UNNY and UNPROFOR speak with one voice with respect to what constitutes a safe area and how one defines an attack on the same.

2. It is UNPROFOR's belief that the primary intention of SCRs 824 and 836 was to protect the civilian populations of Srebrenica, Zepa, Goradze, Sarajevo, Bihac and Tuzla from armed attacks or the denial of humanitarian aid. It follows that a safe area is therefore not represented by fluid or ill defined confrontation lines; a safe area is represented by population centres, regardless of their size.

3. Safe areas can be imposed either by force, or by the negotiated agreement of the warring parties. By choosing to adopt the "light option" with respect to force levels, the international community accepted that the safe areas would be established and defined by agreement as opposed to force. This choice was a clear rejection of a

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peacemaking or peace enforcement approach and an acceptance that the task would be achieved through peacekeeping means. To quote the reference, "UNPROFOR's main deterrent capacity, rather than being a function of military strength, would essentially flow from its presence in the safe area."

4. Whilst not wishing to establish a checklist, in order to meet the UNPROFOR definition of an attack against a safe area the following criteria would have to be met:

   a. the attack must be deliberately targeted against a civilian population. An attack against BiH soldiers defending a confrontation line would not meet this criteria;

   b. the attack must be unprovoked; and

   c. given the propensity of arms in the region, an attack would have to be of sufficient intensity and duration to separate it from everyday skirmishing or exchanges of fire.

5. When these outline criteria are applied to the situation in Goradze, one can draw the following conclusions:

   a. much of the fighting consists of military activity aimed against a well-armed defending force and does not fall within UNPROFOR's understanding of attacks on a safe area; and

   b. other aspects of the BSA offensive, specifically the shelling of Gorazdze and other population centres and the burning of the villages south of the Drina are, in our view, attacks on a safe area.

6. This description is not offered to excuse or condemn the actions of either warring party nor indeed of UNPROFOR. It is an explanation of UNPROFOR's understanding of the concept of safe areas as applied since the adoption of resolution 836. UNPROFOR will continue to use this same definition unless otherwise directed. We contend that this definition continues to be appropriate and would appreciate your views.