

## Silajdzic urges U.S. to lift embargo

Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic addressed the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on Feb. 1, to urge an immediate lifting of the arms embargo against his country. On Feb. 2, former U.N. forces commander in Bosnia, Lt. Gen. Sir Michael Rose, took the opposite position at the National Press Club. We present excerpts of both speeches and exchanges with reporters.

### Prime Minister Silajdzic

**Silajdzic:** It's beyond doubt that Bosnia and Hercegovina is a victim of an aggression in which 200,000 people lost their lives, the country is destroyed, 17,000 children killed, concentration camps, rape camps.

Now, the response of the international community was to punish the Bosnians and not to punish the aggressor. . . . Because we had the arms embargo . . . we suffered. . . . So we consider the arms embargo, therefore, not only illegal, not only immoral, not only unjust, but also unproductive. . . . It helped only kill innocent people.

That's why we think that if there is no other way to achieve peace in Bosnia, there are only two ways. It's either they do it, the international community, either they do it, or they let us do it. Any other solution is tantamount to being an accomplice in this crime. I repeat: The arms embargo is there long enough to prove that it only helps kill innocent people.

And the international community owes us—this is the truth—they owe us 200,000 people dead, they owe us the country destroyed, they owe us three years of suffering and misery.

So this is about the line I used here in my conversations with the people in the [U.S.] administration and on the [Capitol] Hill, and I found that most of them, 90% of them agree with everything I say, but don't know what to do. . . .

The Unprofor in Bosnia-Hercegovina is doing some good things, but it's also mainly keeping the gains by genocide and force there, because they provide a status quo there. So if we continue negotiating and continue keeping the Unprofor, that keeps peace in Bosnia where there is no peace, then we actually say that's more of the same, and more of the same means more innocent lives lost.

**Q:** So, there is an idea that is on the table now, the French proposal by Mr. Juppé. How have you received this proposal?

**Silajdzic:** We do not need any more PR conferences. We had the London conference, the big London conference that got nothing. Zero. But no new conferences, no new peace

plans, because it only buys time for our enemy and buys status quo for one to legalize the deeds by genocide and force and draw new borders in Europe by genocide and force.

**Q:** I'm just curious, if the worst happens and this deadline—maybe I should say when—this deadline passes and there's no progress, and if the United States should agree to unilaterally lift this embargo, what kind of shape militarily is the Bosnian government in to resist an initial attack and initial all-out war on the part of the Serb forces?

**Silajdzic:** I'm glad you asked that question, because some people think that it's a very good argument against lifting of the arms embargo. They say, "Well, you know, we give the arms embargo on the same day those very forces overrun Bosnia."

It implies that they are not overrunning Bosnia right now because of their good will. So they're not off to build a reputation here. If they could, they would do it right away, right now. They would have done it yesterday if they could. They cannot. And you know why? It's not because of the air strikes or NATO or Boutros-Ghali. It's because of us. We stopped them.

So don't worry about them overrunning Bosnia; they will not overrun us. . . .

### General Rose

**Q:** There are a number of questions on the arms embargo. Should it be lifted? If not, why not? And have you been sent to the United States by the British government to persuade Congress not to lift the embargo?

**Rose:** Well I've been accused of many things in the columns of the press, but being a running dog of the British government when I am actually in the United Nations, is something I haven't been accused of before. . . .

I think that lifting the arms embargo, while I can see the moral arguments for it, in practical terms would be catastrophic, and not only for the people of Bosnia-Hercegovina, but also the state. It is our presence which stops her state being overrun. The thought that you can issue people, who are not really a formed army in the way we know it, with some nice sites, some good weapons, tanks and artillery, and expect them to win a war in short order, is deluded thinking, even if it was supported by air, which again, as I described, has a very, very limited application in the theater of operations. . . .

They are very brave fighters, they had to seize their rifles without really being in any form of army, rushing into the street and defend their territory. And that's how they started it and they created their army into a formed structure from that moment on. But they have great limitations as a result. They are good at the tactical level of war, they cannot conduct operations at the operational level of war. Certainly they cannot sustain an offense capable of recovering their lost territory in certain areas. . . .

Sarajevo certainly would not be living as it does today if it had not been for Unprofor and the UNHCR. . . .