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THE BATTALION

Bosnia commitment may extend

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. troop deployment in Bosnia, originally set to end in December, is now expected to stretch well into 1998 and involve up to 10,000 Army soldiers, NATO's top official said Thursday.

The entire mission would involve 30,000 troops from 30 countries, including the United States, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana told reporters.

"I had conversations with the (NATO) foreign ministers," Solana said. "I would say that all of them ... are moving toward Option C," the option among four being considered that would keep troops in the former Yugoslav republic.

In Washington, Solana met privately with Vice President Al Gore.

Apparently caught off guard, White House press secretary Mike McCurry and State Department spokesman Glyn Davies told reporters that Gore made it clear to Solana that President Clinton had not signed off on the troop commitment.

McCurry added that the administration is anxious not to squander gains made in Bosnia and noted that Gore "did share some of that thinking" with Solana.

Speaking anonymously, administration officials confirmed Solana's description of the primary plan under consideration.

These officials said Clinton was to approve the extended troop commitment as early as Thursday night.

The issue is quite sensitive. A year ago the Clinton administration was assuring lawmakers that 19,000 American soldiers in

Bosnia with a 60,000-member NATO peacekeeping mission would be home by December. The U.S. force, now about 14,000, is scheduled to leave by mid-March.

Renewed fighting in Bosnia this week has heightened worries over the possible departure of NATO peacekeepers. Top advisers to the president — particularly diplomat Richard Holbrooke, who negotiated the Bosnia peace agreement in 1995 — vigorously urged Clinton to continue a U.S. presence to avoid resuming the vicious 3 1/2-year ethnic war that Holbrooke's agreement halted.

"That may require some type of presence in Bosnia," McCurry said. "We've said that they were going to just pull up stakes and go home. We needed to preserve the gains that have been made."

Republican lawmakers have bitterly criticized the administration over Bosnia.

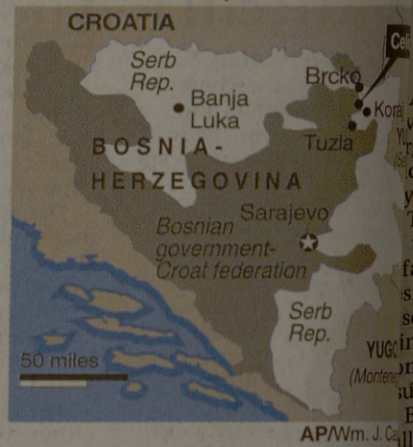
"After spending the better part of the year evading the question, the Clinton administration appears ready to finally own up to the fact that it was never serious about its commitment to limit U.S. involvement in Bosnia to one year," said Rep. Floyd Spence, R-S.C., chairman of the House National Security Committee.

Defense Secretary William Perry and his top deputy, John White, rushed to Capitol Hill on Thursday to brief members of the Senate Armed Services Committee on Bosnia and a pending U.S. troop deployment to Zaire.

"I remain deeply concerned about the increasing use of U.S. troops for 'policing' operations throughout the world, as well as the costs

Muslim weapons seized

NATO-led U.S. and Russian troops have seized two five-ton trucks and two armored personnel carriers from the Bosnian Army 254th brigade just west of Celic after a dawn raid, Thursday.



associated with such operations," Sen. Thurmond, R-S.C., the Armed Services man, said after the meeting.

A congressional staffer speaking on condition of anonymity said the ground-troop mission in Bosnia involved 8,000 to 10,000 Army troops. The mission would extend from mid-March for perhaps as long as another year. The U.S. troop presence would gradually decline during that time.

Korea rearranges day for college exams

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — It was the morning after the gong-beating crowds and 10,000 extra traffic police were off the streets. Airlines were back on schedule. And high school seniors were back in class Thursday after taking college entrance exams — a momentous, anxious annual event in a nation that reveres education.

Nearly 795,000 students nationwide took the test Wednesday, competing for 567,000 freshman openings at Korea's universities. Scores won't be announced until Dec. 7, but the results were told on the young faces. Some seniors were smiling, said Oh Sehoon, a Korean-language teacher at Paehwa Girls High School, in Seoul. "Those who didn't do so well seemed a little glum," he said.

The days before had South Koreans riveted. The media reported students gripped by worry; mothers prayed at churches and Buddhist temples.

On test day, the government issued special decrees — including banning airplane landings and takeoffs from 8:40 a.m. to 8:55 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 4:20 p.m. to keep noise down during the listening comprehension part of the exam.

Employees started work an hour later than usual so students wouldn't be caught in Seoul's often horrendous rush-hour traffic. Extra taxis, subway trains and traffic police were mobilized.

Younger students had the day off, but they flocked to the school gates anyway to beat gongs and wish the seniors good luck.

As the exam started, some mothers pressed sticks of caramel-laced rice called "yor" to the

gates of a favorite university. Superstition that posting the gummy treat on exam takers cement a child's future.

The educational fervor in this nation of 44 million is rooted in Confucian practices centuries old, in which young men show scholarly and aesthetic achievements to get a government job.

Today, Korea has a 97 percent literacy rate, and students attend school six days a week. As more and more young Koreans shun labor and aspire to professional university education is seen as the path to success.

"I'm very nervous about the day which my future totally depends," said Kim Hyon-shik, 19, a senior at a Seoul high school. "I should I do if the results fall short of expectations?"

Troops aim to keep aid mission peaceful

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — The premise sounds straightforward enough. The Clinton administration is prepared to send up to 10,000 troops and support forces to Central Africa to help with the worsening humanitarian crisis. They would take part along with troops from about a dozen other countries.

At least 1 million Rwandan Hutu refugees, displaced by fighting from their camps in eastern Zaire, desperately need help.

Food, water and medicine are available. But aid agencies cannot reach the refugees to distribute the goods without protection.

France offers troops, and Spain and several African nations follow suit. Britain says perhaps, and Canada offers to lead.

The United States, under pressure to offer its unique capacity to airlift troops and materiel over long distances and to build small cities overnight, signs on to the plan.

Eastern Zaire is not a disaster area created by a hurricane, cyclone, tornado or earthquake. This disaster has been made by men — men with hearts full of revenge, armed with political agendas and guns. They include armed Hutus who participated in the slaughter of a half-million Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994.

Whether the international operation can go ahead successfully will depend to a great de-

gree on the cooperation of the former Rwandan soldiers. Hutu gangs and Zairian rebels.

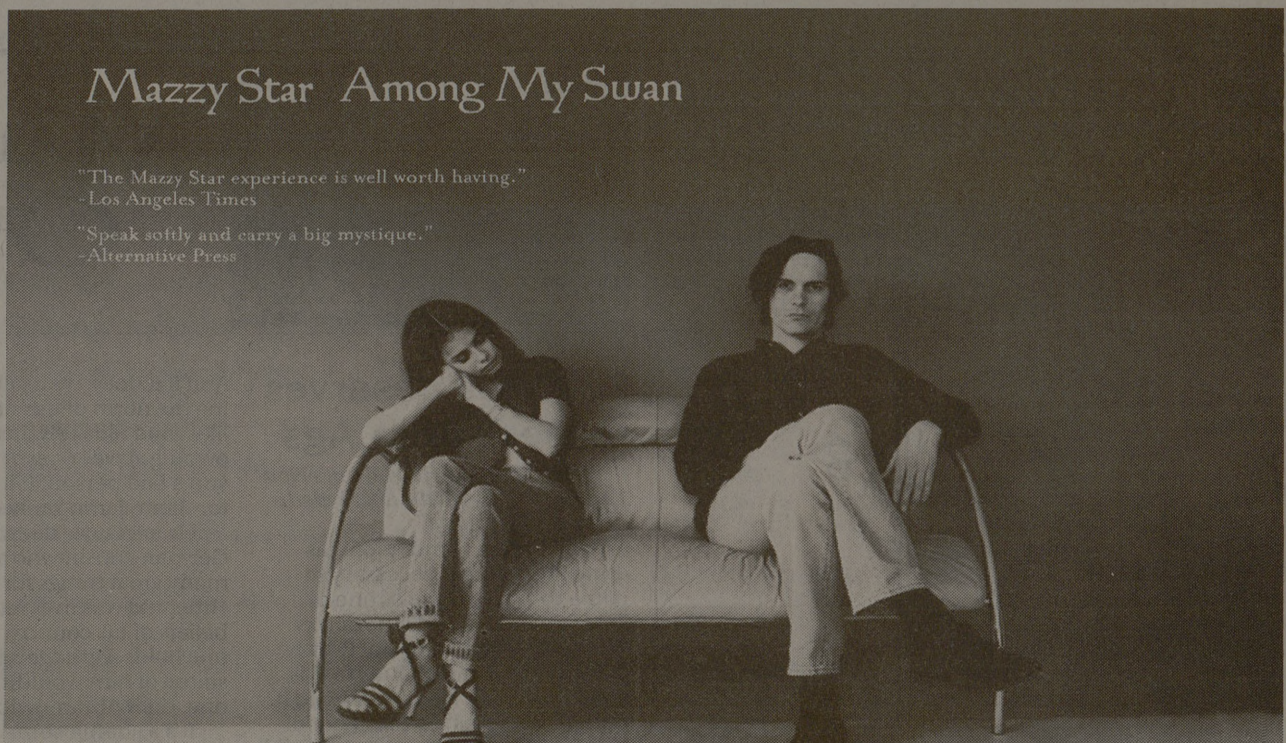
From indications so far, international military forces tend to avoid conflict with these armed groups. It was work out accommodations with them, and does not intend to shoot its way into the region.

Instead, it wants to concentrate simply on feeding and opening a corridor to Rwanda. The corridor could allow a permanent solution to the problem through the return of the refugees to their homeland.

The force's mandate, according to U.S. officials, will not include disarming Hutu militiamen living among the refugees, or separating them from their current human cover.

It is precisely those militiamen and former Rwandan fighters who have been keeping the refugees from returning home.

Unless the refugees go home, the assistance delivered by international protection forces just buy time for the refugees to dig in and create new camps. In Zaire, leading to another disaster.



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Zaire update

Fighting resumed at dawn Thursday in Goma, where the shelling prevented the distribution of food.

- Forces will remain about four months under a U.S. commander.
- Airlift forces from other countries to the region.
- Provide security along a 3-mile corridor from Goma to the Rwandan border. Seek the voluntary repatriation of refugees.

