BUSH WARNS SERBS NOT TO WIDEN WAR

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President Bush has warned Serbian leaders that the United States is ready to use military force if they widen the Balkan war to a Serbian province inhabited mainly by ethnic Albanians, diplomats said today.

As part of a Bush Administration effort to put pressure on the Serbian authorities, who have been widely blamed for the war in the Balkans, the warning was conveyed orally and in writing last week in Belgrade and was addressed to President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia and Gen. Zivota Panic, commander of the Yugoslav Army, diplomats here said.

"In the event of conflict in Kosovo caused by Serbian action, the United States will be prepared to employ military force against the Serbs in Kosovo and in Serbia proper," the document says. Fear of Wider War

As tensions have increased in Kosovo, a formerly autonomous province where ethnic Albanians make up 90 percent of the population, many diplomats have feared that the war in the former Yugoslavia could spread there and draw in other nations in the region.

The Serbian officials were also told that if the United Nations Security Council called for enforcement of the no-flight zone over Bosnia, the United States was prepared to use military force to support the ban

The message also said that the United States was ready to use force if United Nations forces were attacked in Bosnia or if relief efforts were interfered with.

Mr. Bush warned Mr. Milosevic against provoking further hostilities in Bosnia on behalf of the Bosnian Serbs, who have seized about 70 percent of the republic's territory, a United Nations official and a Serbian diplomat said. No Comment on Warning

Asked about the message, a White House spokesman said today that "we do not comment on Presidential or diplomatic correspondence."

The warning from Mr. Bush has greatly disturbed President Dobrica Cosic of Yugoslavia, according to diplomats here.

Mr. Cosic met this evening with Cyrus R. Vance, the United Nations special envoy who is the cochairman of an international conference on the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Cosic and leaders of two former Yugoslav republics reported some progress today as they gathered here to discuss how to end the Balkan conflict. Croatian-Bosnian Talks

The meetings began this morning between delegations headed by Presidents Franjo Tudjman of Croatia and Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

At issue and on the table were detailed maps of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serbian forces have seized most of the country from the Muslim-led Government, and peace proposal calls for a loosely organized central government to be created on the basis of ethnic parity among Serbs, Muslims and Croats, who also control some Bosnian territory.

Until now this has been the intractable Bosnian problem because the republic created in 1945 by the Communists under Tito was 44 percent Muslim, 31 percent Serb and 25 percent Croat before the war began. Vance Sees 'Progress'

"They made progress," Mr. Vance said after presiding over the five-hour meeting with Lord Owen, a European Community envoy who is the co-chairman of the conference.

"Our sides got much closer," Mr. Tudjman said.

Mr. Vance and Mr. Owen say they hope to arrange a cease-fire in Bosnia, followed by agreements on ethnic majorities in about 10 autonomous regions and eventually, a new constitution for the republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This would begin with an agreement on territory between the Muslims and Croats. They would then meet with the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadzic. Serbs Submit Demands

A meeting under United Nations auspices of Mr. Karadzic, representatives of the newly elected Yugoslav Government and the Croatian and Bosnian leaders is scheduled for Jan. 2. Mr. Karadzic has submitted his preliminary territorial demands to Mr. Vance and Lord Owen, a United Nations official said.

On Monday, President Cosic of Yugoslavia is to meet Mr. Tudjman. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary General of the United Nations, will also meet with the principals on Monday.

"We're doing it step by step," said Mr. Vance.

Mr. Vance met tonight with the Russian Foreign Minister, Andrei V. Kozyrev, who is in Geneva to discuss an arms-control treaty with Secretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger. A United Nations officials said Mr. Kozyrev said he and President Boris N. Yeltsin were under great pressure from the opposition in the Russian Parliament to support the Serbs as fellow Slavs