Press conference

by Mr Jamie Shea, NATO Spokesman and Major General Walter Jertz, SHAPE

20 May 1999
(1 : 1.04.50.0)

Jamie Shea: *Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon. Welcome to our 5.00 p.m. briefing on Operation Allied Force.*

Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, first of all, as you know, on the diplomatic front NATO has been a feedback of diplomatic activity this morning. We had first of all the visit of Mr Edward Kaiser, the Slovak Foreign Minister, but also the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General who was here seeing the Secretary General and also the Secretary General has been in consultation with the President of Russia, President Yeltsin, and also with the President of Finland, President Ahtisaari, who has been in consultation from the Prime Minister of Spain, Mr Aznar, and this afternoon at 5.00 p.m. the Council will be meeting once again with the Foreign Ministers of Russia to review NATO's military campaign and the progress in the region. There we will certainly discuss how Belgrade is coping now with 450,000 refugees on its territory, the ethnic cleansing that is being carried out by Belgrade and the military forces of Belgrade and deploying also the military forces of the refugees, the refugees, the will discuss with the Russian Government our plans for the Peace Implementation Force to go to Kosovo once NATO's essential objectives have been met. We will once again reiterate our plans for an important step forward in reconciliation in Albania, and finally we will discuss the question of border security in the wake of the recent incidents along the border between Yugoslavia and Albania.

I must say it was a depressing weekend, wasn't it? Permission, I think, is the time when the Spokesman wants to spread the word of peace, and reconciliation and harmony after the death and reconstruction of Christ, but certainly it was a very depressing weekend that was being spread in Kosovo this past weekend. We had the news of the 19 refugees who were killed by a NATO bomb, we had the news that Belgrade, for the first time, is using refugees as refugees keeping the military installations, specifically in the South, in the Kosmet Republic of Yugoslavia, Albania, 50,000 were released at the weekend with the refugees agreeing to stay in that position. 20,000 - 30,000 are said to be now in the south. We bring the total of refugees in that country now to nearly 450,000 and that is notwithstanding the fact that we have now, as you know, 5,000 refugees per day being flown out of the region. We have been concerned as you can imagine that there would be, with the refugees, the will discuss with the Russian Government our plans for the Peace Implementation Force to go to Kosovo once NATO's essential objectives have been met. We will once again reiterate our plans for an important step forward in reconciliation in Albania, and finally we will discuss the question of border security in the wake of the recent incidents along the border between Yugoslavia and Albania.

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And, as you have seen, not only do we have this refugee, but we have lost 19 people in bad shape as well corresponding the problem with further. Most of the refugees coming out are desperate, both psychologically and physically. They say that they no longer can live in Kosovo and they want to leave Kosovo.

The overall security situation has deteriorated in the degree that they are not frightened to leave their homes. And not only, therefore, do we have a difficulty with refugees, but we also as you know also have seen much evidence the ethnic cleansing of Albanians in Kosovo, which is contrary to the Dayton, to the Kosmet Republic of Yesterday, Albania, 50,000 were released at the weekend with the refugees agreeing to stay in that position. 20,000 - 30,000 are said to be now in the south. They bring the total of refugees in that country now to nearly 450,000 and that is notwithstanding the fact that we have now, as you know, 5,000 refugees per day being flown out of the region. We have been concerned as you can imagine that there would be, with the refugees, the refugees, the will discuss with the Russian Government our plans for the Peace Implementation Force to go to Kosovo once NATO's essential objectives have been met. We will once again reiterate our plans for an important step forward in reconciliation in Albania, and finally we will discuss the question of border security in the wake of the recent incidents along the border between Yugoslavia and Albania.

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Now, let me begin with the military situation. Well, Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Serb forces have to leave Kosovo. That's right. What comes afterwards, that can be discussed in the framework of the UN Security Council resolution but again the forces have to leave first and NATO is attached to that and we remain attached to that.

We will take one more question after General Jertz has answered your second question.

Major General Jertz : Well you know the targets, I wouldn't go too much into the targeting process because it's not for the audience, but we know we do have a straightforward strategy, targets do come out of the tactical side, they are in Kosovo, they are in the operational side of the house, they are inside and outside Kosovo and they are strategic targets. All those targets of course have to be there in a wide range and they have to be destroyed because they are part of the command and control and of the force that Milosevic is using against the Kosovar Albanians and that is why I am not going into more details on how many targets are outside or inside. You remember that I said at the beginning because of bad weather we did have the emphasis on the targets outside Kosovo, because of bad weather, of course our main goal is to destroy, attack and destroy, the targets within Kosovo, inside Kosovo, to give the refugees a chance to come back to their homes again.

Question: I am talking about inside Kosovo itself, the southern part of Kosovo and the northern part of Kosovo?

Major General Jertz : That is a tactical question, wherever targets do come up and wherever they are valid targets they will be attacked, there is no distinction between northern and southern Kosovo.

Question: I wanted to ask you, how far did you get in the negotiations with the Macedonian government concerning the KFOR in Macedonia? And second question, what about the Apaches, we haven't heard about them for a few days.

Jamie Shea : Well, they are there I can assure you, they're there. Have they discreetly gone back to Germany? No. And as for the first part of your question, well as you know we have had extensive conversations and discussions in the past with the government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the deployment of the NATO forces there. Once the NATO Council has finalised the arrangements for the updated operational plan at the appropriate time, as you can imagine, the Secretary General naturally will be in contact with the authorities in Skopje because clearly NATO cannot place any forces on the territory of non-member states without their consent or of member states for that matter without the consent of the government concerned. And we will, once the decisions have been made, be appealing for their support pointing out of course that this is done in the name of having an effective peace implementation force, that this will help to promote overall stability in the region and I think that anything that hastens the peace in Kosovo and which provides for a permanent peace in Kosovo, is going to benefit the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the first instance as well.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Secretary General, at 5.45 p.m. will be holding a Point de Press with the Albanian Prime Minister at the main entrance.

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