

Boutros-Ghali says U.N. ready for more air strikes

Reuters, April 14, 1994

MADRID, April 14 (Reuter) - U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said on Thursday the world body would not hesitate to authorise more air strikes around the Bosnian enclave of Gorazde in order to protect peacekeeping forces deployed there.

“We will continue to ask for air support from NATO as long as we have the mandate of the (U.N.) Security Council and as long as we believe this is in the interests of maintaining the peace in former Yugoslavia,” he told journalists in Madrid.

NATO bombed Serb forces besieging the Moslem pocket of Gorazde, a U.N.-declared safe haven, earlier this week.

“We have a responsibility to protect the security of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the former Yugoslavia and we will not hesitate to ask for air support if (their) security is endangered,” said Boutros-Ghali.

“I want to confirm this is not against any party. It is not taking a position in favour of A, B or C. It is in conformity with the resolution of the Security Council,” he added.

The secretary-general is on a three-day official visit to Spain. He had talks with Foreign Minister Javier Solana on Thursday and is due to meet Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez on Friday before travelling to Barcelona for a day.

Boutros-Ghali arrived in Madrid on Wednesday, hours after Russian President Boris Yeltsin left the country, having expressed anger at not being consulted before the strikes.

“A resolution was adopted by the U.N. Security Council and it was adopted by unanimity. The resolution gave the secretary-general a mandate to demand air support from NATO if U.N. troops are in difficulty,” Boutros-Ghali said.

He added he hoped the U.N. could help to contain the destruction in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda by drawing the parties concerned into negotiations.

The Rwandan Patriotic Front on Thursday denied a U.N. report they had agreed to truce talks. The U.N. had said talks would be held under their auspices between the Front and recently-installed interim government.

(c) Reuters Limited 1994