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Prisoners of war, held in reprisal for three feeble NATO air strikes at the Bosnian Serb army, which had defied the United Nations' line in the sand by blasting its way into the designated ``safe'' area around the town of Bihac in northwestern Bosnia.

-UN ROEs, regulations and abilities were so miniscule that they were unable to properly defend themselves (never mind the civilians) from Serb rebels

At week's end, it remained uncertain whether the Serbs would deliver on their

promise to release their hostages. It appeared they were not merely thumbing their noses at the United Nations; they seemed determined to inflict humiliation.

The 39,173 members of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) are getting

used to the feeling. The smell of retreat is in the air and, if the choppers are not yet on the roof of UNPROFOR headquarters in the Croatian capital of Zagreb, the drone of whirring blades is not far off.

-Mission is failing, as the UN is unable to take control over the situation (let its soldiers do their job properly and without such strict mandates)

To U.S. Senator Bob Dole and former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, the peacekeepers are simply in the way. Get the UN troops out and NATO could bomb the Serbs with impunity, they argue. To Bosnia's Muslim-led government, which also wants NATO to unleash its power on the Serbs, the blue berets are useless bystanders who

have failed to deliver them from their enemy.

-The UN forces are completely useless, and helpless as they are unable to engage these hostile forces like the NATO forces can

``Everybody is playing the United Nations for a patsy,'' said one Canadian official. ``But the problem is no one has ever known what to do about Bosnia, so we just threw the United Nations at the problem.''

-Unprepared solution to a difficult and complicated problem, soldiers were not given the proper training, support, equipment, or guidelines to effectively deal with this situation

``In order to do that, there is one principle that thou shall not violate, and that is impartiality,'' Canadian Maj.-Gen. Ray Crabbe, UNPROFOR's deputy force commander, told Maclean's last week in his Zagreb headquarters. ``Once you become partial to the conflict, you might as well go home--because it is impossible to execute peacekeeping

functions. If you have a massive bombing campaign, you are siding with one of the parties. Once you cross that line you can't step back.''

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For several days last week, aid convoys ground to a halt--the Serbs would not let them pass. Many of UNPROFOR's soldiers admit that they have lost faith in the mission. Once, it was UN cars that were being stolen at will by the factions. Now, peacekeepers themselves are being hijacked.

-Examples of incidents that caused frustration among soldiers on tour

On a single day, UN observers reported 132 ceasefire violations. If the region

explodes into full-scale war again, it will be a vicious fight.

``I am not accustomed to being spat at,'' said Allan Seward, who normally serves with an RCMP detachment in Cole Harbour, N.S. ``If you do that to me at home, you've got a problem. But here, we had no authority.''

-Example of the frustrations encountered by UN personnel, even with those people that they are trying to help

The CIVPOL officers came to the Balkans expecting to patrol alongside Croatian and Serbian militias to ensure the rights of all parties were protected. They quickly learned their task was not a normal police operation. They would investigate a murder, but discover later that their findings had been ignored. They would arrest armed Croatian police who were trying to infiltrate the Turanj camp--only to see the perpetrators released by Croatian superiors. They attempted to stop ethnic expulsions, but their only weapon was the power of persuasion. When refugees began pouring in from Bihac, suddenly they were handing out blankets and delivering food to angry, frustrated people who were

anything but grateful.

-Expectations of what types of missions that UN forces would be carrying out on their tour, and the harsh realities of the situation while in Bosnia

``The Serbs were nice to us when times were fine,'' said Roberts. ``But I had no doubt that if the order came down to kill us, they would have. They were kamikazes, and they had no respect for us.''

As for the politicians who have put their soldiers, police and civilians in the former Yugoslavia in the name of the United Nations, they have paid little heed to the risks--until the possibility that large numbers of bodies would come home in bags turned Bosnia into a domestic political problem.

-Split between the government, those who give the orders to go, and those who are serving on the tour, soldiers and civilians, and the difference in opinion and experiences