

Yugoslav army ready to enforce state unity

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By Laura Silber in Belgrade and Judy Dempsey in Ljubljana

THE Yugoslav army called up thousands of reservists yesterday and warned it would "react in a massive manner" if the rebel republic of Slovenia broke a ceasefire accord.

A statement from the Serbian-dominated army high command accused Slovenia of preventing the withdrawal of federal army units back to barracks, taking families of army personnel hostage, and preventing food and medical supplies getting through.

The army said it was "at the highest level of combat readiness" to hold Yugoslavia together by force. Belgrade television reported that the army had called up 200,000 reservists from the republics of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the wake of independence moves by Slovenia and Croatia.

The dispute over implementing the ceasefire accord, which was worked out on Sunday between the federation's political leaders and European Community foreign ministers, began to raise tensions hours after the EC mission left Yugoslavia. The ministers said they had won formal agreement from all sides for a three-point peace plan aimed at halting the country's slide into civil war.

As the Yugoslav army issued its latest warning to Slovenia, Mr Janez Jansa, the Slovene defence minister, said that federal troops would be allowed to return to barracks or leave the republic "if they surrender their equipment and weapons".

"For the army, this may be a question of honour. But they cannot take their weapons with them," Mr Jansa said. "This is a question of resolving such a material question as war reparations."

The army leadership has also sacked General Konrad Kolsek, who is a Slovene, as head of the Fifth Military District, based in the Croatian capital of Zagreb.

Gen Kolsek headed the forces which intervened in Slovenia after the republic declared independence. His replacement suggests that the army is determined to reinforce discipline and weed out

officers not considered reliable.

Gen Kolsek was replaced by Gen Zivota Avramovic, head of the Third Military District, who is believed to be a Serb.

Western military analysts said Slovenes and Croats were leaving the army and that the largely Serb officer class did not trust the Albanians and other ethnic groups. However, an army without these groups would, in effect, become a rump Serbian army which would fight on the side of the Serb minority in Croatia if the situation deteriorated further following clashes between the groups on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the international

EC may help check Yugoslav ceasefirePage 2

community continued its mediation efforts with an announcement that senior officials from the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) would meet in Prague, the Czechoslovak capital, tomorrow to discuss the possibility of sending a monitoring force to Yugoslavia.

In another development, Mr Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the German foreign minister, said on a visit to Belgrade yesterday, in his capacity as chairman of the ministerial council of CSCE, that Yugoslavia should not be held together by force.

After meeting the federal government, Mr Genscher said: "Any border changes must be made peacefully through negotiations."

He added that "Germany favours the proposal that political observers, either from the EC, or the CSCE, are sent to Yugoslavia to help the country out of its prolonged crisis".

Slovenia and Croatia have asked the EC to send observers to supervise the withdrawal of federal troops.

The political situation remains confused, even though the country now has a president - Mr Stipe Mesic, a Croat - as part of the agreement worked out with the EC.