

# EC's motley monitoring force heads for Zagreb

By David Buchan in Brussels

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A MOTLEY group of about 50 diplomats and army officers, with several dozen support staff from the 12 EC member states and the European Commission, will today assemble in Zagreb for the start of the European Community's first venture in international peace-keeping.

From the Croatian capital, where the EC already has a 21-strong advance party, the EC monitoring force hopes to fan out to positions in Croatia and Slovenia tomorrow in three Dutch army helicopters. These have been specially repainted a peaceful white, carrying the EC emblem of 12 gold stars.

Precisely how the monitors carry out their task of supervising the Brioni accords falls chiefly to the Dutch head and deputy head of the mission. They are, respectively, Mr Jo van der Valk, a former Dutch ambassador to Belgrade, and Brig-Gen Johannes Kusters.

The Brioni accords set the EC force the task of monitoring the ceasefire between federal and republican forces, the lifting of the road blockade of federal troops to allow them to return to barracks, the return

of equipment to federal troops, de-activation of the republics' territorial defence units, release and return of all prisoners, and the suspension of any implementation of the two republics' declarations of independence for three months.

The small, unarmed EC force would not be capable of physically separating warring Yugoslavs even if it had been mandated to do so. Although the EC monitors will be accompanied by federal and republican liaison officers, they want to be as independent as possible.

There are some Serbo-Croat speakers, including Mr van der Valk, among the monitoring force, which will also have its own interpreters. Ground transport is being provided by the EC itself, chiefly in the form of 20 jeeps from Italy.

Britain, France, Germany and Italy are providing five observers each, as is the Netherlands as presidency country. Spain, Belgium and Denmark are fielding four each, and most other EC states three. The Commission, with no soldiers to offer, is providing a Dutchman, an Italian and a Frenchman, plus a German security guard.