pressure on Serbs
Invasion would cost time, many lives, officials say

BY PAUL RICHTER
LOS ANGELES TIMES

WASHINGTON—A NATO ground invasion of Kosovo would involve weeks of preparation, difficult logistics and high risk to alliance troops as they seek to wrest mountainous terrain from a determined foe, Pentagon officials say.

While casualties from such a mission would be hard to predict, some defense officials fear the death toll could quickly reach into the hundreds, or higher, even before the difficult job of monitoring peace would begin.

Such an operation could require 200,000 soldiers, Clinton administration officials say. They insist they have no current plans to use ground forces—a move entailing huge political risks—but have not ruled it out.

And the rising toll of atrocities against Kosovo’s ethnic Albanians—which have continued unchecked by NATO’s air strikes—could make it the best of many bad choices, according to some senior Congress and elsewhere.

“There are no easy options,” said Richard Haass, director of foreign policy studies at the Brookings Institution and a former national security adviser in the Bush administration.

A German officer scans the horizon Monday in Macedonia. His NATO armored unit was positioned near Tetovo, close to the Kosovo border.

“By Bacon’s estimate, it would take “three weeks to more than a month” before troops could begin an invasion, during which time Yugoslav forces could continue their campaign of “white cleansing.”

Other analysts say the Pentagon is exaggerating the possible costs.

John Hudson III, an analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and an Army officer in the Gulf War, said he believes the job could be done with an initial force of 50,000 to 70,000 soldiers.

Like the high casualty estimates offered before the Gulf War, he said, military officials were making dark warnings to “scare off the policymakers.”

E-mail brings home the pathos of war

BY BECKY BEAUPRE
STAFF REPORTER

University of Chicago professor Victor Friedman was working at his computer Monday when a news bulletin in French appeared on his screen.

One of his acquaintances—Fehmi Agani—was among a small group of prominent ethnic Albanians reportedly executed Sunday in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo.

“He was an individual of great moral strength,” said Friedman, who met Agani in Pristina in 1995, as part of a Council on Foreign Relations project.

Friedman learned of Agani’s reported death from an e-mail group.

“It was very depressing,” said Friedman, a Slavic language professor who has friends and colleagues on both sides of the conflict. “It makes me worry even more.”

But e-mail has given Friedman and many others a tighter link to the faraway fighting.

“I’m getting most of my news from e-mail,” Friedman said. “People don’t have a sense of what’s going on unless they get personal accounts.”

Like this one in Serbian by another friend that arrived Saturday.

“Last night in Belgrade was very noisy and disturbing. The air raid sirens were deafening and going off constantly,” the friend wrote. “Even as I write you, I can hear the explosions in the distance.”

The Internet has already become an invaluable tool in business, politics and education. Now, it is proving its worth in war.

A growing network that includes Albanian and Serbian Web sites, chat rooms and news groups has emerged in a variety of languages on the Internet.

“It’s a fantastic way of getting your message out to an audience that’s wider than any one faction might otherwise be able to reach,” said Martin Burnes, executive director of the Internet Society in Reston, Va.

E-mail has played a particularly important role, offering an alternative to unreliable and expensive telephone service.

“Getting through to that part of the world even under the best circumstances can be difficult,” Friedman said.

The messages have also given Friedman a deeper and more human understanding of the conflict.

“Yesterday, while they were bombing, I spent the day running around for food,” a friend in Belgrade wrote to Friedman on Friday. “It is good that I did that, since today the shops are empty. We are completely paralyzed.”

“The other night I watched the reporting of journalists... They were seeing some horrible things in the distance and guessing what they might be. What is the use of this? I am somehow glad they were being asked to leave the country.”

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