

Generals Jump Ship

Author: [Miroslav Filipovic](#)

Three former Yugoslav Army generals have outraged Belgrade by backing the Montenegrin leadership.

If Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic is a dangerous wolf, Milo Djukanovic, president of Montenegro, is no helpless lamb waiting to be swallowed.

Djukanovic's latest move - the appointment of three former Yugoslav Army, VJ, generals as special advisors to high-ranking Montenegrin politicians - proves the point.

Ex Generals Radoslav Martinovic, Blagoje Grahovac, and Nedeljko Boskovic, have become advisors to Prime Minister Filip Vujanovic, President Djukanovic and Police Minister, Vukasin Maras, respectively.

The generals' very public change of allegiance is a big blow to Milosevic, who is said to have regarded their move as a personal defeat.

The two remaining republics in the Yugoslav Federation have been drifting apart for several years. Montenegro is on the brink of secession, and Milosevic, Montenegrin by origin, may be close to intervening militarily to thwart moves towards independence.

The two regimes are locked in a "neck and neck" race over the loyalty of the army in Montenegro.

Djukanovic's latest move has infuriated Milosevic, an IWPR source in the VJ claims. "The president was so furious that a medical team had to intervene," he said.

The first task of the troika of former generals was to mediate in the escalating political conflict between Serbia and Montenegro.

"Djukanovic sent a personal message to Milosevic via them that they could mediate in the crisis between the two leaderships," the IWPR source said.

The offer, however, was turned down. "We are not convinced of the good intentions of Martinovic, Grahovac and Boskovic," said the VJ chief of staff, Nebojsa Pavkovic, in a statement read out on Serbian State Television.

Milosevic, meanwhile, is said to be dismissing officers with questionable allegiances. Former VJ lieutenant colonel, Radislav Vojvodic, said officers who declare their nationality as Montenegrin or challenge Milosevic's policies have been removed from the army.

Sources close to the VJ leadership say the dismissals are the result of a carefully conducted survey of officers' attitudes towards military intervention in Montenegro.

The results of the survey are devastating for Milosevic. Many officers warned that the use of the VJ against

a member of the federation will provoke the kind of mutinies and desertions the former Yugoslav People's Army suffered when it intervened in Slovenia and Croatia.

The officers said the VJ was never intended to be used against the citizens of Yugoslavia, and that the army would disintegrate if it were forced to do so.

"I am sure that the majority of officers and soldiers will refuse to follow an order that might cause bloodshed in Montenegro," the commander of a motorised unit told IWPR. "The Belgrade regime is trying to counter this by not leaving anyone in Montenegro long enough to be bought by Milo (Djukanovic.)"

At the same time, Milosevic is filling the ranks of the 2nd Army's 7th Battalion of military police with officers from Serbia, some of whom are believed to be Ministry of Interior troops from Kosovo, MUP, fiercely loyal to Belgrade.

VJ has already used this tactic. During the Kosovo campaign, MUP officers brutally suppressed a rebellion by reservists in at least one brigade.

Sources close to the army leadership envisage the prelude to military conflict will see northern Montenegro, a region loyal to Belgrade, seceding from the rest of the republic and declaring autonomy or even uniting with Serbia.

At this point, the army would take up strategic positions in the region, provoking an open conflict with the Montenegrin security forces.

Diplomats believe one way of preventing such a scenario from unfolding would be to recognise Montenegrin independence, even if it hasn't been sanctioned by a referendum.

"The Yugoslav Army would thus acquire the status of a foreign army in a sovereign state," one diplomat told IWPR. "And it will be given a short deadline to pullout of Montenegro unconditionally."

Milosevic's position vis-à-vis Montenegro and NATO is reminiscent of a man with many enemies, but only one bullet in his gun. He is strong for as long as he threatens to use it. The moment he does, he's finished.

"Milosevic knows that," an IWPR source close to the army claims, "and therefore he will not be the first to attack Montenegro. He will threaten to, in an attempt to goad the other side into a confrontation."

Miroslav Filipovic is a regular contributor to IWPR from Kraljevo.

Location: Serbia
Kosovo
Croatia

Focus: Balkans: Regional Reporting & Sustainable
Training

Source URL: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/generals-jump-ship>