

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Alija Izetbegovic, President of
Bosnia-Herzegovina

PARTICIPANTS: The President
John Menzies, U.S. Ambassador to Sarajevo
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Samuel Berger, Deputy Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
Robert Gallucci, Ambassador-at-Large
Brian J. Atwood, Administrator, USAID
Alexander Vershbow, Senior Director for
European Affairs, NSC Staff, Notetaker

President Alija Izetbegovic
Foreign Minister Muhamed Sacirbey
Minister for Relations with IFOR Hasan
Muratovic
Federation President Kresimir Zubak
Federation Vice President Ejup Ganic
Federation Prime Minister Kapetanovic
Presidency Member Lasovic
Ambassador to U.S. Sven Alkalaj

DATE, TIME January 13, 1996, 3:52 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.
AND PLACE: Vocal, Tuzla Air Force Base, Bosnia-
Herzegovina

President Izetbegovic: I know we have limited time, so I will go straight to the point. Our assessment is that implementation of the Peace Agreement is going well overall. In some areas, it is going very well and U.S. forces, in our opinion, should be congratulated for their very successful work. We congratulate them in particular for their rapid construction of the pontoon bridge, which the people of Bosnia followed with admiration. Implementation has been going very well despite the difficult weather conditions and the difficult terrain. We all felt the weather today. There are, however, certain difficulties. You

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Classified by: Andrew D. Sens

Reason: 1.5 (b,d)

Declassify on: OADR 1/16/06

CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 13526

have heard of the problems around Mostar. Fortunately, there are signs that the situation is calming down today, and I hope there will not be any more violence. ~~(C)~~

I would like to tell you personally our diagnosis of the problem in Mostar. The tensions there are not a problem of borders, frontiers or municipalities but a result of the lack of basic human rights there. There is no religious or political freedom, no freedom of movement. It is a sad situation with which the world must deal. If the problem of human rights is resolved, the problem of Mostar will be resolved as well. I understand that tonight you will be meeting with President Tudjman. I plead with you to have this in mind when you meet. He can change the situation there in a day. That is my opinion, although perhaps not that of every member of my delegation. Without progress in Mostar, we cannot implement the program for the Federation. ~~(C)~~

We have also had certain difficulties with respect to Sarajevo. You know that we have proclaimed an amnesty with the aim of helping to resolve the issues there. There are already signs that this was the right decision, although it is too early to judge since the amnesty is only four days old. However, there is one aspect that disturbs our people in Sarajevo. All the time the international community talks about the right of Serbs to stay in their homes. We accept this, but no one ever speaks of the right of those who were forcibly expelled three or four years ago to return to their homes. As for the four suburbs around Sarajevo that are coming back to the Federation, it is not without reason that Milosevic handed these over. The four are in fact not Serb areas: according to the 1991 census, none of them were originally Serb; all were majority non-Serb. All the non-Serb population was killed or forcibly expelled. Therefore, it is important to speak of several rights in Sarajevo: the right of Serbs to stay in their homes; the right of non-Serbs to go back to their homes; and the right of war criminals to be punished for what they did. If these three rights are put into effect, then we will find a solution for Sarajevo. In any case, let me assure you that our government will cooperate in the best way to ease your mission in Sarajevo. ~~(C)~~

There is still another problem that the United States should know about. I refer to one of the articles in the Peace Agreement about the exchange of prisoners and missing persons. The Serb side has submitted a list of only 120-130 prisoners, even though we have more than 20,000 who are missing. This creates a serious problem. Recently, Americans discovered a new mass grave in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We are asking that the grave sites be checked and that the missing from Srebrenica be accounted for.

~~(C)~~

Let me repeat that we thank you for coming to Bosnia, and we also thank the American people and the American government for your engagement in solving the conflict. It is our belief that your effort will not be in vain. ~~(C)~~

The President: I appreciate your effort in coming here today. I know how difficult it was. The weather is deteriorating, and I will have to be brief in order to make my departure but let me make a few points. First, with respect to Mostar, we are very concerned about the situation, and I will have a very clear conversation with President Tudjman tonight on this subject. We cannot let that situation endanger the integrity of the Federation. For the Peace Agreement to work out, we must preserve the Federation and human rights within the Federation. ~~(C)~~

Second, on Sarajevo, we are very concerned about the attacks on innocent civilians. I'm pleased that, despite those incidents, you went ahead with your amnesty. In doing this, you did the right thing. These kinds of confidence-building measures will be well received. But I also agree that we have not done a good job in saying not only that the Serbs have the right to stay but that other groups have the right to come back. We will try to do a better job of this in the future. Meanwhile, anything else you can do in the direction of building confidence -- for example, establishing a multi-ethnic police force -- would be very good. I am relying heavily on Ambassador Menzies and Ambassador Gallucci. They will be working very hard on these issues. We will also be supporting Carl Bildt in the reconstruction effort. ~~(C)~~

Let me raise one more issue relating to the equip and train program. I understand you have met with Jim Pardew, who is already doing a lot to assess your needs and to identify possible sources for meeting those needs. As we have discussed before, we remain concerned about the question of the Mujahedin. While it is hard to determine who is in and who is out, it is very important for us that the Iranians go and that the terms of the Dayton Agreement be honored. We want our people to help to build a stable democratic society. Therefore, I want to reaffirm our strong position on Iran. You know how strongly we feel about this. ~~(C)~~

Mr. President, if we don't stop the meeting now, my plane will not be able to get out. Thank you very much. (U)

President Izetbegovic: Thank you, Mr. President. (U)

-- End of Conversation --