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TRANSLATED_ATTACHMENT memcon -- vp cherno kosovo call april 26.doc
DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: THE VICE PRESIDENT
VIKTOR STEPANOVICH CHERNOMYRDIN

LOCATION: WEST WING OFFICE

NOTE TAKER: RICHARD BRODY

INTERPRETER: YURIY SHKEYROV

DATE/TIME: 26 APRIL 1999/1210-1310 EDT

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Viktor Stepanovich? It's great to talk to you. Thanks for taking my call.

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: I'm happy to hear you.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: How is Valentina Fedorovna?

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: She's doing fine. How are you and your children?

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Well, we're fine. We're expecting our first

grandchild at
the end of June.

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: I hope that everything will go well.
Please convey my best
wishes to your family.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Well thank you and please convey my
best wishes and
Tipper's to your family. And I hope your grandchildren are well.

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: How are you doing?

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: I'm doing very well. I just returned from
the memorial
service in Colorado for that horrible tragedy at the school there, but
overall
things are going very well. I'm glad to have the chance to work with
you again.
I know you've been to Belgrade and that you just had your party
congress and that
you have little time.
So perhaps we should turn to the topic of Kosovo. As you know, our
Presidents
had an important talk on Sunday. For 90 minutes they discussed the
requirements
for a diplomatic solution to the crisis. I was pleased, Viktor
Stepanovich, that
President Yeltsin suggested that you and I may have a role to play. Of
course,
we have done excellent work together. We now owe it to our
Presidents and to our
countries to think very carefully of how we can best serve each of our
national
interests and our bilateral relationship.

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: This problem is very important for all
of us...We have
found solutions to other problems...We need to do that for
everybody...I will do
my best to find a solution for everybody

[Interruption by US interpreter to ask Russian interpreter to translate
consecutively, not simultaneously]

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: I got most of what you said and I agree
with it and I hope
we can do two things in this call. The first is to discuss procedural
questions
on what needs to be done next. The second is to review some of the

key
substantive issues. Is that alright as a way to proceed in this
conversation?

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: Yes, I absolutely agree with that.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Well ok. One of the reasons for our
success has been total
candor, and I will be frank now. President Yeltsin suggested that we
reactivate
our commission. And I think what he is really trying to say is we did
great work
on our commission and wants us to....that. But we cannot have two
commissions.
I have one with Prime Minister Primakov and it would be harmful to
create a
second one. I'm sure this was President Yeltsin's way of having us
work
together. We can be more effective if we add a channel to our
dialogue rather
than reactivate the commission.

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: I totally agree with you. I've just
spoken a few hours ago
with our president and we discussed all these problems including the
Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission. I believe there is no need to replace
the existing
commission, Gore-Primakov, and all the more there is no need to set
up a second
commission. What we need is to ensure permanent communication
and to attract the
necessary experts to work at our level to help work out our positions,
which must
be agreed upon with our presidents and then get results. Once again, I
would
like to agree with you there's no need for another commission.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: I know you so well, my friend. I Knew
you would agree.
But it was important to raise this point. I know you spent nine hours
with
Milosevic. We cannot cover all the details and nuances by phone. But
it is
important for us to understand his position. That is why the President
and I
have asked Strobe to go to Moscow and get a full briefing from you
about your
meetings with Milosevic. Some of what we've heard from the Russian
side confirms
that you are trying hard to be constructive and achieve a solution. I

know for
certain myself that that is exactly what you are doing. However, what
we've
heard from Belgrade since you left is just the opposite: it suggests that
they're still dug in on their old, unacceptable positions. So, we need to
truly
understand every aspect of what you accomplished, the issues where
Milosevic
refused to cooperate, and the nature of Milosevic's situation that we
might be
able to work with together. In the same visit, I also want Strobe to
brief you
on our discussions in Washington this past weekend with all of the
NATO
countries. We remain firmly united and we want to be flexible, but
there are
some irreducible conditions that simply must be met from our
standpoint. I want
you to be able to ask Strobe as many questions as you need to fully
understand
these conditions - where we are and what the conditions are.

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: I know that Mr. Talbott is already here
in Moscow, and
tomorrow I will meet him. First at 9 o'clock he will have a talk with
Mr.
Ivanov, our foreign minister, and then we'll get together with him. I'll
inform
him of our position in the first stage and my talks with Milosevic. It
was a
hard talk, and we have to convince him of many things, which is not
easy. One
thing he has accepted is the international presence there. Naturally, he
is
against NATO, but there are some advances in his position and
evidently we need
to work out some type of compromise. What is important is that in the
statement
you adopted in Washington you expressed certain positions which
coincide with
those we take and with what sometimes Milosevic says. Those
positions have been
discussed with Mr. Ivanov and Madame Albright. All we need now is
to deepen
those positions. I talked just ten minutes before our call to the deputy
of Mr.
Milosevic, Mr. Draskovic, and he also accepted the international
presence. He
shares many positions of ours. Tomorrow we will discuss with Mr.

Talbott and it will be a large talk and we will see what compromises are possible. We need to meet each other at one point and time. To prevent the situation from getting worse. All we need is to find some kind of compromise.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: There are three issues that I would like to ask you to give special attention because we have to understand every detail, and Strobe can follow up on these. The first is the complete withdrawal of Serb forces from Kosovo. All the Contact Group, including Russia, have agreed on this point. There can be no compromise on this point. But what we hear from Milosevic is that he will only consider a reduction of his forces. There is simply no way we can get the refugees back into Kosovo if Serb forces are still there on the ground. Viktor Stepanovich, can you tell me if there was any agreement on a complete force withdrawal, including VJ, MUP, and paramilitaries?

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: Yes, he has agreed, but only to reduce his armed forces to the limit he had in the prewar period, and the same goes for the police forces which are there to ensure peace and order. Naturally, he insists that NATO also would withdraw its forces from the Yugoslav border. We did not discuss the details as to how much the armed forces and police forces should be reduced, but naturally, the police is needed there to ensure elementary peace and order. It was difficult at the first talk to agree on anything. We have to continue. He said he will reserve some police forces in the Serbian part of Kosovo.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Okay, well, it's obvious that's something that will require a good deal more discussion. But let me move to the second point, and that is the nature of an international security force. President Clinton and NATO have made clear that we would welcome a UN mandate, although UN command and control doesn't work, as we saw in Somalia and the early days of Bosnia.

Bosnia is a good model to start from. There is a key role for NATO (which is essential for our participation, for the Kosovars to return, and to enable force to disarm the KLA). But Russia should be a key participant along with other non-NATO nations and other organizations like OSCE. We don't care what the force is called. It doesn't need a NATO sign over the door or NATO patches on the uniforms. But it must be a security force, or civilians and refugees simply won't return. Now I don't think we can proceed if there is any kind of Serb police or VJ or MUP there, but on this point about the international security force, there is a basis for our position to be accepted by Milosevic, if he is agreed to a security force. Has he moved at all on this point?

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: This was the main issue we discussed with him. He accepted the international security forces and he said it may be...or military people from Greece or from other NATO countries may take part in the international forces, but he made a point that Russia must be largely represented in those forces...Ukraine also and from South Africa, but I totally agree with you there's no need to put a sign on the door or to put the NATO patch on the uniform. The main thing is it should be under the aegis of the United Nations. He insists on a large participation from Russia. Geography can be discussed later. The main thing is to find a compromise. He agreed the international forces should be headed by someone from the United Nations.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: We would welcome a UN mandate, but it must be a security force, or civilians and refugees simply won't return. Now the third issue has to do with NATO's conditions to stop the bombing. The Alliance has just affirmed in a formal document agreed to by 19 heads of state that the bombing could be suspended if Milosevic were to do five things: First, ensure a verifiable stop

to all military action and the immediate ending of violence and repression in Kosovo; second, withdraw from Kosovo his military, police and paramilitary forces; third, agree to the stationing in Kosovo of an international military presence; fourth, agree to the unconditional and safe return of all refugees and displaced persons, and unhindered access to them by humanitarian aid

organizations; and fifth, provide credible assurance of his willingness to work

for the establishment of a political framework agreement. I know President

Yeltsin wants NATO to halt the air strikes the moment a diplomatic initiative

begins. But that won't work. We will suspend bombing once he has demonstrably

begun to withdraw his forces according to a rapid timetable and has accepted our

conditions. We must have more than promises. We have seen him break those

promises too often before. Strobe can follow up on these points but I wanted to

make sure you heard from me as far as this third issue is concerned.

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: We have those joint statements adopted in Washington and if

we look at that statement and at the outcome of the talks with Mr. Milosevic, we

can see many things are either close or coincide, including the cessation of the

military hostilities, the safe return of the refugees, necessary conditions for

humanitarian organizations, and the need to work out a [political] framework

agreement. If we look once again, we see half of the provisions, half of the

points, may be considered as coinciding. Naturally, we need to persuade him and

convince him. One talk I had with Milosevic already revealed the possibility of

working further. He has agreed to pull out his troops and what is needed is to

establish security conditions for the return of the refugees. There must be

someone to ensure security, and that is international forces. We should have a

100 percent guarantee for the safe conditions for the refugees. My talk with

Draskovic once again convinced me that it is possible as I return to exert every effort in order to achieve that agreement.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Well, that's very good. We each need to assess the situation and decide if we see a path forward. And I need to hear back from

Strobe after his visit with you, and I need to discuss this with my colleagues.

For now, it does not help to say publicly that you and I were instructed to find

a solution to the crisis. That will make success more difficult by raising

expectations before we've all been able to make an assessment.

Rather, I suggest

we say publicly that we were asked to be in touch to create a channel of

discussions to review your trip and highlight issues for further discussion. I

suggest we talk again soon, possibly at the end of this week or over the weekend.

We can set the time later. But it will be soon. There is room for creativity

here, Viktor Stepanovich; we have a lot to work with. And if Russia plays this

right, it can be a great victory for Russian diplomacy and Russian peacekeeping

that will help you outflank the critics that want to draw Russia into the

conflict militarily. I look forward to talking again soon on this. It's a great

joy to work with you again my friend.

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: Thank you. It is true we have to analyze the situation and

have to be aware of all the developments that take place in Yugoslavia. And I

totally agree with you we should not make any public announcements that we were

instructed to work together. All we can mention is yes, we have to work in

concert to work on an acceptable solution...The situation is getting more and

more complicated and with destruction taking place on a large scale it is more

difficult to convince Milosevic. You have to realize in our country it is also

not that easy. There are people who want to send military units to Yugoslavia.

I think the situation here and there is not that easy and we should not delay the search for the solution because conditions are becoming more and more severe and the destruction larger and larger. I don't think the delay will help us find a solution at a later stage because we could see a final destruction [in Yugoslavia]... Tomorrow I'll meet with Talbott and we will discuss all those issues. After that we can analyze the situation and we can meet to work out options further. We can meet some place in Europe like Zurich, together with other West European leaders. We have to find a way out of this. You are getting more and more involved in this humane [sic] force, and perhaps we'll work together to find a solution. Tomorrow the situation may become even more difficult, and that's why we have to see what we can do.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Well, very good. I enjoyed talking with you and look forward to hearing from you soon. I look forward to hearing back from Strobe. Once again, give my best to Valentina, and I wish the best for you, too and look forward to talking to you soon. Goodbye.

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: Thank you. I'm really, really happy to have this chance to talk with you and I hope we'll keep in touch to find an acceptable solution, and I wish you all the best in everything.

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Okay, bye.

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