

Presidents. They will of course meet next Sunday in Cologne, and President Clinton is looking forward to this. But as you know it is critically important to get these issues resolved in the next few days to ensure that this meeting is a success.

PRIME MINISTER STEPASHIN: I absolutely agree with your formula and I am prepared for that .

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Have a very good have a good day and good luck in your Security Council meeting. And I look forward to talking with you again soon.
Good bye.

[good byes]

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memcon on vp-primakov call on kosovo march 18 1999.doc
MEMCON: TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN VICE
PRESIDENT GORE
PRIME MINISTER PRIMAKOV
MARCH 18, 1999

* AG: I appreciate your taking my call on such short notice. I am looking forward to your visit to Washington and to the upcoming session of the Commission.

* YP: I also looking forward to seeing you - impatiently

* AG: We've been preparing well for the meeting. It will have big meaning for our relations. President Clinton and I believe it is essential that we use the visit to secure maximum progress on issues like promoting Russia's economic

recovery and charting next steps on strategic stability, arms control and nonproliferation.

* YP: I propose to discuss all the subject and of course look forward to my meeting with President Clinton.

* AG: I believe success in these areas will send a very important signal about the vibrancy of the U.S.-Russian partnership and our determination to tackle

tough problems together. I know that Madeleine called Minister Ivanov because

they are working closely on Kosovo and the negotiations in Paris. I am concerned

that events on the ground are moving very fast. Belgrade continues to block

progress in the peace talks. The talks may be suspended either today or

tomorrow. The security situation on the ground is very worrisome. I hope your

members of KVM have been telling you the same information we have been receiving.

The Yugoslav army and special police forces have now reached levels in and

around Kosovo that far exceed deployments last summer when Belgrade conducted

offensive actions against the KLA. They may unleash a major offensive on very

short notice. Under these circumstances, the KVM's security is in jeopardy and

it is preparing to evacuate. With their departure, we cannot predict what will

happen. We recognize that this situation could have an impact on your own

decision making about our meeting. We are eager for you to have a successful

trip to Washington, and I am doing all I can to ensure that we make progress on

key issues. But at this key moment in the situation in Kosovo, I think Russia's

direct efforts with Belgrade are especially important. The President and I

appreciate all that your people have been doing to make them recognize their

approach is gravely mistaken. Bombing is not NATO's preference - an effective

peace agreement is. We need to put maximum pressure on the FRY authorities to

agree quickly on all aspects of the peace agreement. If the talks collapse,

strong Russian statements that Belgrade has only itself to blame would be very valuable. I understand that recent Russian talks with FRY officials have not been easy. But I think it's essential that through our public statements we make it clear that the international community is unified. Because we cannot allow Belgrade's irresponsible behavior to drive a wedge between the United States and Russia. We have too much at stake and too much important work left to accomplish.

So I wanted to communicate this to you and hope our people can stay in the closest possible touch in coming days.

* YP: I can agree with many of the assessments you made. [We called the Yugoslav ambassador in - he's the brother of Milosevich] We told him we're against Yugoslavia's [] and that we advocate signing of the peace agreement. And all

the rest can be agreed upon later. But it is very important to sign the agreement today. This is our firm position. I think that it is very necessary

to avoid any split in the Contact Group position. And I therefore believe our

visit [in Washington] can concentrate specifically on this area. I want the U.S.

side to understand well that we want to be straightforward. We're doing

everything so that there won't be an explosion in the situation. So we're trying

to influence FRY to sign the agreement. As to the statement to which you

referred: I of course link it to air strikes. We absolutely sincerely believe

that if we make such a statement now, it would invite a strike. But we can't do

that. About our diplomacy and policy work: We're still optimistic and firmly

believe we can achieve [a solution through] using it. But I believe resolutely

that we should act jointly, that we should also agree upon a division of roles.

Because I have only one objective goal. I've finished my statement.

* AG: You know the French and British Co-Chairs are considering closing the talks

today. NATO will be meeting tomorrow. I think you know that European concerns

are as high as ours about the situation there. I have to tell you frankly

that

Belgrade's continued intransigence and aggression will leave us no choice but to

act. The only way to avoid this will be for us to work together to put maximum

pressure on Belgrade both publicly and privately, starting now if at all

possible. It can still be averted, but it will require that Belgrade accept the

agreement and the reality of its position.

* YP: I agree and have enough information to testify to that fact. I told you we

invited the Yugoslav Ambassador today and sent another tough statement to

Belgrade. I think there will be a stop then because they'll understand Russia

won't be a pawn in their game.

* AG: Here's what would help most: if the talks collapse, a Russian statement

that Yugoslavia has only itself to blame. That would have the most impact.

* YP: We can't say directly that Yugoslavia is itself to be blamed because the

problem has many deviations. But at the same time we can agree that we should

make a statement if the talks are frustrated and from which our position would be

clear and would be well understood. Even now they understand our position.

* AG: Let's stay in touch. We continue to work hard on preparations for the

Commission and I look forward to seeing you.

* YP: I also think our meeting will be very fruitful and can tell you with all

sincerity that we're doing a lot and I'm spending much time on preparing for the

meeting. I gave an interview today to Tom Brokaw - if you have time, you should

watch it.

* AG: I will try. Thank you. See you in Washington.