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DRAFT MEMCON

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN
VICE PRESIDENT GORE AND RUSSIAN PRIME MINISTER
PRIMAKOV

Tuesday, April 6, 1999 10:35 - 11:20 a.m.

- * PM: I'm very glad to hear your voice, Mr. Vice President.
- * VP: Thank you for taking my call. How are you?
- * PM: I'm ok, but the situation is much worse in Yugoslavia than here.

* VP: And it's even worse in Kosovo. I'm calling because I think we are at the threshold of events that could have very long-term effects on the future, not just of the United States and Russia, but of the world as well. Let me begin by saying that I fully understand how difficult the situation in Serbia is for Russia politically and emotionally. Nevertheless, I think we both know that events in Kosovo show that Milosevic is running true to character.

At the beginning of this century, the hatreds that never seem to die out in the Balkans destroyed the hopes for the future that the people at that time entertained. It would be the most horrible irony if at the end of the twentieth century the passions of the Serbs would again be allowed to blight the future that my country, your country, and all the rest of Europe have been trying to build. I have a deep concern that we could be coming to a threshold action on your part that could risk having this effect and I wanted to talk to you about it.

I want to raise three points with you today: The importance of protecting the US-Russia relationship at this critical time; What NATO is trying to do in Kosovo and why, and; How we might work together to energize the diplomatic track. I

think you will agree that we must do all we can to protect the U.S.-
Russian
relationship from lasting damage over our disagreement about
Kosovo.

President Clinton and I deeply appreciated President Yeltsin's
statements and
your statements on the importance of Russia's continued integration
with the
international community as well as your resistance to calls for a more
isolationist posture. We also appreciate assurances that Russia will not
be
drawn militarily into the conflict in Kosovo. If that were to happen, it
would
put Russia not only on the opposite side of the United States, but
almost all of
Europe and the Muslim world as well. This would have a devastating
impact on our
relationship and everything that we've tried to build since the end of
the Cold
War.

In this regard, I have two immediate concerns. First of all, during a
recent
discussion of the Russian intelligence ship in the region, Minister
Ivanov told
Madeleine that Russia will not be sharing intelligence information
with the FRY.
It would help me a great deal if you could give me your personal
assurance that
you will not provide intelligence information to the Serbs about
NATO's military
operations. You can imagine the devastating consequences for our
relations if
Russian intelligence were used against American pilots.

The second concern relates to the UN arms embargo. I appreciate that
you and
others have said that Russia will not provide military assistance.
However, we
have reason to believe that people in the Ministry of Defense and
other
government entities are making preparations for shipments of military
equipment
to Yugoslavia. I ask that you check on the activities of the people who
may be
involved and respectfully request that you ensure that these shipments
do not
take place. Let me reiterate that shipping military equipment or
sharing

intelligence while NATO military operations are ongoing would cause grave damage to Russia's relations with the West.

* PM: First, I want to say that we're interested, like you, in maintaining the relationship and preventing deterioration. And I assure you that all possible efforts should be made to prevent deterioration. But this should not be a one-way street. You say we should not escalate our support to Yugoslavia. But at the same time you failed to mention that you won't escalate your military action against Yugoslavia. This is an illogical position for you - you should understand this because you're a clever politician and should know that these are closely linked. I would like to say that I very much liked the points you raised. So let's use them as a basis. First, you suggest we should value the relationship and do all we can to protect it. Second, you suggest that we do all we can to end military action in Kosovo. And then you say that we should think of what can be done to return to a diplomatic solution. I'm very satisfied with this. We keep working with Milosevic to assure that Yugoslavia's position is moderate. First, I visited Belgrade and he gave a signal that you didn't find satisfactory. I think today he's prepared to go even further and take another step forward. And I ask you very much to carefully analyze what he'll say and draw the logical conclusions. We are also preparing for the meeting of the G-8 foreign ministers. I think they'll be able to discuss how to switch from military to diplomatic ways to settle the conflict. Every day Madeleine discusses things with Mr. Ivanov. I ask you to believe that me that if you make efforts to defuse tensions and scale down military operations, Russia will do all it can to conserve the relationship. And we'll be even more transparent in our relations with Belgrade. Let's work together. Al, I know you're one of the leading candidates, and I hope you'll be President. So let's work

together. If you personally undertake this task and do all you can to switch to diplomatic avenues and do everything possible to divide responsibilities and functions - I think this is imperative because you also face difficulties. Because not

everyone in the West is delighted to see escalation of military operations, that Belgrade is now being bombarded and that civilian targets are being bombed more than military ones. To conclude, let me assure you once again that we'll do all in our power to find a diplomatic solution. But you should do all you can to ensure a political solution will be possible rather than assure the capitulation of Yugoslavia. Believe me, that won't happen.

* VP: Thank you, Yevgeniy. I understand from Madeleine that you raised a sub-ministerial G-8 meeting with Mr. Schroeder. Our hope is that the Contact

Group meeting tomorrow will reinforce the areas of agreement and explore how we can resolve our differences. If we make progress on Wednesday, the G-8 political directors can build on it when they meet at the end of the week. I'm aware of the diplomatic track, but I would like to return to what you noted as a logical flaw in my argument. Please understand that nothing we've done is aimed at

Russia. The actions we're taking now are designed to stop the violence and allow the Kosovar Albanians who have been expelled from their homes to return with security and autonomy. This means that for airstrikes to end, Milosevic must

agree to the return of all refugees, withdraw Serb forces, and allow deployment of an international security force, while we put in place a political framework for Kosovo on the basis of the Rambouillet accords. The situation on the ground remains very difficult. There is overwhelming evidence of ethnic cleansing. We have shared that evidence with your ambassador. They're separating out the men.

Albanian males are being executed. Kosovar Albanian houses are being

systematically burned. Over a million people have been driven from their homes, with elderly people forced from their sick beds, forced into the rain and mountains, many dying along the way. NATO is acting against this crime against humanity. NATO is targeting the tools that Serbia is using to conduct its campaign of ethnic cleansing. That's why we are now hitting targets inside Belgrade and why we are sending attack helicopters to the region. I want to be clear, though, we would rather resolve this crisis through diplomacy than by force. If Milosevic takes the actions we have specified, we will stop the bombing and work hard to reach a lasting political settlement. But nothing we have done is directed against Russia. And let me repeat that there would be grave consequences if Russia took actions that could be used against the U.S., such as sharing intelligence or shipping military equipment.

* PM: Al, I want to tell you that a missile missed the Russian embassy by 500 meters. What would happen if it had hit? A missile landed 300 meters from our school. What if it had landed in our school? I absolutely am not defending ethnic cleansing. That is absolutely inhumane.

* VP: Spasibo.

* PM: But the mass exodus began and people were squeezed out after the beginning of the bombing.

* VP: No, it started long before the bombing.

* PM: Our ambassador was in a hospital in Pristina and says that 70% of the wounded are Albanian civilians. Every day, thousand of refugees come to Belgrade, including Albanians. Where did you get that figure - one million?

It's the entire population. Again, I repeat that this is horrible - ethnic cleansing and military actions against civilians. But this is a consequence of the bombing. Please listen carefully to what will be said today because not all can be solved overnight. If we start a political settlement process and

work
together, then we'll be in a position to solve everything. Now, about
ground
operations. There would be many casualties on both sides. God forbid
it comes
to this.

* VP: First of all, let me assure you that deployment of helicopters to
Albania
is not a precursor for deployment of NATO ground forces. Our
position on ground
forces has not changed - we intend to deploy them only as part of a
settlement.
Let me return to your comments on ethnic cleansing. Thank you so
much for
feeling the compassion we feel for the people who are suffering so
badly in
Kosovo. Our evidence is comprehensive that ethnic cleansing began
long before
the bombings. And all of the refugees in the camps, the hundreds of
thousands of
refugees confirm that the bombing had nothing to do with the refugee
crisis. In
interviews on television with little boys and girls, they tell of the
knock on
the door in the middle of the night by armed men in ski-masks saying
that they
had to hand over their money and leave their house in five minutes
and then march
over the mountains with the men separated out and murdered. These
are the
actions of a mass murderer.

* PM: I want you to know that we're sending our aid to both sides, to
Macedonia
and not just Montenegro.

* VP: Thanks for that. It is very significant. You say that our missiles
didn't
hit the Russian buildings in Belgrade. They did not because we took
great
precautions not to hit Russian targets. We have taken no actions
against Russia.
But we see signs that some in Russia are talking about taking actions
against us
by providing intelligence or military equipment to the Serbs. This
would cause
grave consequences for our relationship. Believe me that we would
like to
preserve [our overall relationship]. So it would help a great deal if you

could
assure me that Russia will not provide intelligence or military
equipment to the
Serbs.

* PM: We know you are assisting the UCK with weapons and have
liaison officers
there. [Note: In Russian, Primakov says, "Your communications
specialists are
there working with them."]. These are hard facts. We're not asking
you to
stop this. I'm urging you to do all you can to try to explore political
avenues
to settle the conflict and there will be no need to ask such pointed
questions.
Let me assure you that neither President Yeltsin nor I want Russia to
get
involved in that conflict in any way. And we'll do all we can to
prevent this.
But not everything depends on us - there are others in Russia. It
depends on you
too.

* VP: We, too, would like to stop this through diplomacy rather than
through the
use of force. We know from Madeleine's conversations with Foreign
Minister Ivanov
that we already agree on many key areas including ending repression
of the
civilian population, withdrawal of Serb security forces, unhindered
return of
refugees, and full access by humanitarian organizations. We still
disagree on
two key points: the need for an international security force to
guarantee safe
return of refugees and the need for Belgrade to move first. Our hope is
that the
Contact Group meeting tomorrow will reinforce the areas of
agreement and explore
how we can resolve our differences. In respect to your comment, we
do not have
military officers with the UCK and are not changing our position on
ground
forces. I again ask you to consider after this call is concluded how
important
it is to protect this relationship. You yourself know the stakes before
us as
well as anyone -- we cannot sacrifice all we have accomplished since
the Cold War
because of our differences over Belgrade. Let's keep in touch directly

to make

sure we keep the relationship on a solid track.

* PM: Let's keep it such. I share your view about the necessity to do all our

best to keep the relationship on track. It's our aim also. You see I'm a little

more optimistic after your assurances about ground operations and about the

discussions over the next several days.

* VP: I hope you'll be able to give assurances about sharing of intelligence and

military assistance. This is very important to our country.

* PM: Yes, we shall think about it.

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DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: THE VICE PRESIDENT
SERGEY VADIMOVICH STEPASHIN

LOCATION: RESIDENCE

NOTE TAKER: RICHARD BRODY

INTERPRETER: Nick Sorokin

DATE/TIME: 12 JUNE (times?)

VICE PRESIDENT GORE: Hello, this is Al Gore. Thank you for taking this call. I

know it's your national day and that you are very busy. I wouldn't be calling

unless it was very important and urgent. I know that our Presidents plan to

speak tomorrow and that they will discuss the current situation in Kosovo. The

reason I am calling is to suggest a way to resolve the problems currently before