

THE WHITE HOUSE

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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Boris Yeltsin of
Russia on April 20, 1994 (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Boris Yeltsin
Interpreter: Dimitry Zarechnak
Notetaker: Rick Waddell

DATE, TIME April 20, 1994; 2:25 - 3:05pm
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello, Boris? (U)

President Yeltsin: Hello, Bill? Good to hear from you. (U)

The President: It's good to talk to you, too. I know it's late there. (U)

President Yeltsin: Bill, from you, anytime. I'm always ready to talk to you. (U)

The President: First, I wanted to talk to you about Bosnia and Gorazde. I want to first thank you for yesterday's statement about the Bosnia situation and about the need to get diplomacy back on track. I believe that you and I agree that the U.S., Russia, NATO, and UN must work together to turn the bloodshed off. (S)

I want to make a public statement this afternoon but wanted to talk to you first. It seems to me that our credibility is on the line, and we must act decisively to, on one hand, tell Serbia that they can't thwart international will in Gorazde or other areas. On the other hand, we need to increase our diplomatic pressure, as you've wanted, to convince the Muslims that the international community is not going to enter the war on their side. (S)

So, I propose that we increase our economic and military pressure on the Serbs, while simultaneously increasing diplomatic pressure along the lines you suggest. Specifically, I think we need to take action to protect the other safe areas. I believe we need to protect them as we did Sarajevo -- remove the weapons a certain distance. Then, all military targets within the area would be subject to attack. (S)

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I believe that our two governments need to work on a joint approach. There won't be success unless the U.S. and Russia work together. We believe that UN Resolution 836 gives authority to protect safe zones as we did Sarajevo, but we could also consider action first at the UN Security Council, or a Security Council presidential statement, or a joint U.S.-Russian approach directly to Belgrade. (S)

I also believe we should tighten economic sanctions as we get the diplomatic efforts on track. But finally, I believe your proposal for a high-level meeting between the U.S., Russia, the UN, and the European Union is a good one. It's obvious we can't succeed without a major new diplomatic effort. (S)

I know that the threat of NATO airstrikes and economic sanctions are controversial in Russia, but after Gorazde...we need to push strongly to send Serbia a message: withdraw from Gorazde and don't attack other safe havens. Also we need to send a message to the Muslims: you won't draw the international community into the war on your side. These two efforts will only work if we work together. That's why I wanted to talk to you before making any statement to the American media. (S)

President Yeltsin: Dear Bill, I'm very sorry that this conflict in Yugoslavia is seen in the American media, and in our media, as a departure from the partnership which you and I have, as well as the partnership between our two countries. The partnership is still strong. There are not any concrete issues that could destroy that impression [of a strong partnership]. There is nothing to suggest that a black cat has crossed our paths. I keep repeating over and over again that President Clinton and I have a good partnership. (S)

With regards to Bosnia, I fully agree with your proposals. As I understand, at the present time, it is hard to understand who shot first and who shot second...hard to tell who is responsible...but I have taken great efforts to talk to Milosevic and to the general in charge to get the shelling of Gorazde stopped. And I sent Kozyrev to a whole series of talks there. And my defense minister has talked to the general in charge to get the shelling stopped. And I promised that if they stopped military activity that I would address the U.S. to get the economic pressure relieved. (S)

At the same time, Bill, I'm worried about airstrikes. I'm afraid that this would so anger the Serbs that there'd be no end to the fighting. So that is the reason that yesterday I proposed that we have a high-level meeting and that our foreign ministers would meet first....Then we'd invite the Muslim and the Serb leaders to sign an agreement. I ask you to agree to that. I think this is the only way to end the bloodshed. Then we can show the world community that we're capable of solving the worst problems. Of course, I understand your problems as well. I just feel, Bill, on the basis of my experience and in my heart, that if we have new airstrikes, there'll be no end to the fighting. The Serbs will not take Gorazde. So we need to have a peace agreement and

sign a cease-fire agreement to end war throughout Yugoslavia.

(S)

The President: I agree.... (U)

President Yeltsin: If we together call upon the world community, the European Union, and all Yugoslav leaders to sign a cease-fire, I'm sure we'll be successful. Helmut Kohl called yesterday and I told him about my proposal, and he agrees completely with it. The Muslim states will agree as will the Muslims [in Bosnia] on whom you have influence. So you will influence the Muslims and the Croats, and we'll influence the Serbs, and we'll be successful. What do you think? (S)

The President: I agree that this is the best way. Here are my concerns: yesterday you made a good statement on Gorazde -- that the Serbs should withdraw a certain distance and let the UN back in. I agree with you that this war cannot be settled by the UN, or by NATO airstrikes, but what we did around Sarajevo worked. The Serbs had to remove weapons but both the Serbs and the Muslims understood that military activity in the zone was subject to airstrikes. Today we do not have the Sarajevo system for Gorazde and the other safe areas. As a result, the rules for airstrikes were unclear. And, when the NATO commander asked for airstrikes, there was a big question over who was responsible, and whether the strikes were right. The present rules leave us in the worst of both worlds: on one hand, they aren't as strong as around Sarajevo with respect to Serb heavy weapons. On the other hand, they leave NATO and UN forces to be manipulated by the Muslims, who can give up ground which brings NATO and UN personnel under attack which then leads to airstrikes to protect them. (S)

So I think we need a credible use of force as in the Sarajevo area, but I agree that we need a new diplomatic effort, as you said, with us pressuring the Muslims and you the Serbs. We should get Christopher and Kozyrev together and get a quick agreement....I agree with you that the only solution is a negotiated agreement....France and Germany agree, too. (S)

President Yeltsin: Bill, I fully agree. Let our foreign ministers immediately begin to prepare for a summit meeting. And after additional warnings, we can tell the Serbs, Muslims, and Croats that if fighting doesn't stop, we will take drastic measures. But at the same time, we must use peaceful measures as much as possible. (S)

The President: I agree...Let's go to work... (U)

President Yeltsin: So let us get our foreign ministers together, and furthermore, let's sign a statement at the UN with two signatures. Thirdly, let's warn all sides that this is their last chance. And at the same time, we can say that if there is movement on their part, we can say in the UN that we'll lessen and eventually end sanctions against Yugoslavia. What do you think, Bill? (S)

The President: We need to work on the details. We are broadly in agreement....I feel good about this conversation....I also agree with one of the first things you said -- we mustn't let the press drive a wedge between us....Christopher and Kozyrev need to get together immediately...We can talk again tomorrow. (S)

President Yeltsin [interrupting]: I agree and I'm glad to talk to you and glad that there are no problems between us. We had a good partnership and friendship and still do. Regards to Hillary and you, too. (U)

The President: One more suggestion: You should make no statement to the press in Moscow or in the U.S. about the meeting while we're working out the details. Only say that we are working together. (S)

President Yeltsin: Yes, I agree, especially to say that there are not any differences between us. (S)

The President: Good-bye. (U)

President Yeltsin: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --