

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with Russian President
Yeltsin (S)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Yeltsin

INTERPRETER: Nikolai Sorokin
Notetakers: Joel Schrader, Miles Murphy, Matt
Sibley, Joel Ehrendreich, Roger Merletti, Doug
Bayley, and Andrew Weiss

DATE, TIME June 14, 1999, 10:06 - 10:32 a.m.
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello. (U)

President Yeltsin: Good morning, Bill. (U)

The President: Good morning, Boris. Yesterday, you and I agreed to instruct our generals to meet and resolve the problem of command at the airport and report back to us on what they worked out. I was quite disappointed -- (S)

President Yeltsin: Yes, they did. They met yesterday, and I gave instructions to hold the necessary negotiations in order to come to an agreement with regard to the regulations of the support team for the Russian presence at the airport of Slatina near Pristina. And we proceed from the understanding that this group, in the framework of the first stage, will remain at the airport and will be functioning in the interests of the international security force. And the cooperation of the group with the commanders of the international peacemaking force will be portrayed in an accord based on the Bosnia formula. (S)

The forces that are not there yet, to ensure the full functioning of the group, will be deployed upon reaching an agreement and in the framework of coordination with General Jackson. Generals Zavarzin and Jackson have already exchanged liaison officers. They have discussed the problems of ensuring the security of the personnel of the Russian contingent. (S)

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I instructed General Zavarzin to arrive at an agreement providing for the joint operation of the Slatina airport. An example of such joint use, of clear-cut use, could be the joint operation of the Tuzla airport in Bosnia. However, in this case the positions of control should be retained by Russia. (S)

And it is of extreme importance to have, in the coming two or three days, completed the process of reaching an agreement on the principal issue of deployment in the course of the second stage of the full scope of the peacemaking operation of the Russian contingent under a joint command. Such agreement to Track 2, or the second stage, should be reached at the level of Ministers of Defense and Ministers of Foreign Affairs and reported to you and me before the meeting in Cologne. (S)

In this connection, I consider it very important for our Ministers of Defense to meet tomorrow or at the latest the day after tomorrow at a place acceptable for them. If Secretary Cohen is prepared, then Minister of Defense Sergeyev would be prepared to welcome him in Moscow and meet him here. (S)

I proceed from the understanding that, having reached such agreements on the matters of principle regarding the settlement in Kosovo, that should enable us not to overburden the agenda of our conversation in Cologne. In that event, we would be in position to center our attention on Russian-American cooperation in other important areas. (S)

I should like to raise for your benefit, with regard to Kosovo, another problem. If measures, timely measures, are not taken then the settlement could be in danger, could be jeopardized. What is meant is the provocative actions of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army. We continuously said, and all the other members of the G-8 agreed, that such a situation cannot be permitted to materialize in which the return of the Albanian refugees to Kosovo could and would result in chasing away the representatives of other nationalities. Regrettably, that is taking place. And the main responsibility is with the Albanian militants. This is a cause of my disenchantment, that the peacemakers in Kosovo, in fact, turn a blind eye to that occurrence. The result of that, when it went as far as this, is that the militants begin to threaten the Russian peacekeepers. And you can imagine the consequences if these threats are translated into reality. Madame Albright assured Ivanov that appropriate work has been done vis-a-vis the leaders of the Kosovo Liberation Army. I should like to ask you to take this issue and keep it under your personal control. This is all I wanted to say. (S)

The President: First of all, let me say with regard to the Kosovo Liberation Army, we did learn of a plot against Russia,

and we told them we would not tolerate attacks on your forces, and they agreed not to do it. But it is important to understand why they wanted to do it. They believe the impasse at the airport will prevent an effective KFOR. They believe you came into Kosovo only to protect the Serbs, not to be part of the international force. We made it clear we will not tolerate attacks on your forces. We have to get this resolved or we can expect trouble. We have to resolve the airport issue. (S)

Now what you have said about the airport today is good. That is, it could be jointly operated and access be guaranteed, but this is not what came out of the meeting between General Jackson and your general. So based on what you have said to me and the conversation Al Gore and Stepashin had, the general has to get those instructions so we can resolve that matter today. (S)

President Yeltsin: But that was not our agreement. First, the agreement should be reached, and then we shall immediately issue instructions. (S)

The President: I agree. So what I am saying, if we are agreeing on this, let me go through the points, and see if we have agreement. (S)

President Yeltsin: Okay. (U)

The President: First, there will be an interim deployment, short-term, using the Bosnian model that will include a Russian component at the airport. Second, impasses at the airport will be resolved. Russian troops will stay there, but there will be no more deployments until we agree. Third, our defense ministers will meet to work out the long-term arrangements for Russian participation so we can, you and I, have a meeting in Cologne and ratify that. (S)

President Yeltsin: Agreed. (U)

The President: I would like to -- (U)

President Yeltsin: I say outright and from the outset that I agree. (U)

The President: Okay, I would like to make another point or two if I might. First of all, I would like to propose that Secretary Cohen and Minister Sergeyev meet in Helsinki because I know that we have discussed that with Mr. Stepashin, and I mentioned it to President Ahtisaari, and he has agreed to do it, so I think they should meet there. (S)

President Yeltsin: I agree and shall issue the appropriate instructions. (U)

The President: That is great. The other thing I wanted to say is that I will work hard on this. There must be a fair and responsible role for Russia in this united operation, and there are issues somewhat different than in Bosnia, and I have some ideas that I will give to Secretary Cohen and try to work through this so you will be pleased and so that the mission will be successful. But I think it is very important that we come to terms that will assure us that this mission will succeed. (S)

Therefore, we have to agree on terms for the unified command, but one that will be acceptable to you. I think we can do that. I commit to you we will ensure an equitable and responsible role of Russia worthy of your interests and capacity to contribute. There are things there that no one else can do, and we need you there. It is very important. (S)

President Yeltsin: Did you set forth all your items that you wanted to share with me? (U)

The President: Absolutely. (U)

President Yeltsin: Then I would like to tell you I fully agree, that I will issue appropriate instructions and then those instructions would be fully carried into effect. (U)

The President: Thank you so much, Boris. I look forward to seeing you in Cologne. We will work this out, and it will be a good thing. (U)

President Yeltsin: Very good, very good. Bill, I am very glad we have elected such issues, which do not infringe on the interests of the other partner. (U)

The President: Good. Boris, I will see you soon. (U)

President Yeltsin: Until we meet. (U)

The President: Goodbye. (U)

President Yeltsin: Goodbye, Bill. I embrace you. (U)

-- End of Conversation --