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THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

September 8, 1995

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DECL: 9/12/05

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Warren Christopher *W.C.*

SUBJECT: Your Meeting with Albanian President
Sali Berisha

Albanian President Berisha's September 12 White House visit offers a key opportunity to press forward our major policy goals for Albania. We want to use Berisha's visit to urge a continued responsible regional policy; offer our help in building democratic institutions to protect human rights for all Albanians; and signal our support for the ongoing development of a free market economy in Albania.

Long a friend of the U.S., Berisha shares these goals in principle. However, he expects more practical economic assistance than we can offer, and our priorities on some democracy issues do not always coincide. As our development aid is limited, we need to use it to expand our assistance on law and democracy, which Berisha says he welcomes, and to promote other activities that support the building of democratic institutions that can help ensure human rights for all Albanians, regardless of ethnic origin.

Bosnian developments and the resettlement of Serbian refugees in Kosovo will significantly affect the dynamics of Berisha's visit. While voicing strong support for U.S. peace efforts, Berisha urges that a peace settlement address the Kosovo issue, specifically the plight of its ethnic Albanian majority. You should underscore that we support autonomy for the region, and that we continue to urge the Serbs to respect the human and civil rights of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. You also should make clear that, although UNSC sanctions against Serbia may be lifted in the

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context of an eventual settlement, we believe Kosovo must be dealt with as part of any lasting solution. Last, you might underscore that the multilateral reconstruction package that is part of our broader Balkan peace plan is designed to promote regional economic integration and development.

Berisha's agenda in the U.S. will otherwise focus on stimulating American aid and investment in Albania. He also wants to secure U.S. backing for Albanian membership in international institutions (NATO, EBRD, the World Bank, the IMF, and the EU) and closer military and security cooperation, including material assistance to the Albanian military. He may express concern at erosion of the previously close Albanian-American relationship, owing particularly to his perception that the U.S. sided with Greece in pressing to release the Omonia case defendants earlier this year. Berisha will want a clear demonstration of American support for Albanian interests, in part due to his need for this trip to give him a political boost at home: parliamentary elections next spring may deal his Democratic Party a setback unless he can speed up economic and infrastructure improvements.

As there is no guarantee that Berisha's party will remain in power after the 1996 elections, the focus of our assistance and public statements should be on building institutions and the U.S.-Albanian relationship, not the party or Berisha as an individual. We should recognize the tremendous progress which Albania, once the most repressive of all communist dictatorships, has made under Berisha's leadership. Our commitment to the future should be to help Albania continue down this road. Moreover, to disabuse Berisha of the notion that we are interested only in security goals, you should underscore that Berisha's support for U.S. military and intelligence activities in Albania is a useful complement to his efforts to build a democratic society.

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U.S. - ALBANIAN MILITARY COOPERATION

I. BACKGROUND

In line with its pro-Western policies, Albania seeks greater military cooperation with the West, particularly the United States. In 1991 Albania was admitted to the OSCE and agreed to implement its principles and standards. Albania has institutionalized civilian control of the military. (The Minister of Defense, his deputy, and other key officials are civilians.) Forces have been slashed to some 40,000 as part of a wholesale military reorganization.

The U.S.-Albanian security relationship has evolved rapidly. In 1993, the U.S. and Albania signed a MOU on Defense Cooperation laying out numerous areas of current and projected cooperation in security matters. Albania became the first Central or Eastern European state to request membership in NATO, and in 1994 was the first to sign up for NATO'S Partnership for Peace. As a symbol of its support for UN/NATO actions in the former Yugoslavia, Albania has offered its military facilities to NATO. We are currently basing unmanned aerial vehicles for use over Bosnia at Albania's Gjader Airfield. The South Carolina National Guard is conducting major repairs of the Central Military Trauma Hospital. Numerous joint training exercises are being conducted this year.

Albania is an active participant in U.S. bilateral assistance programs. We provided Humanitarian Assistance and Security Assistance and held Bilateral Working Group meetings on Defense Matters. Under the Security Assistance Program, we have proposed doubling funding levels for IMET to \$400,000 in FY96. The Albanian military has received over 150 courses of instruction in fundamental concepts and practices of combat, combat support and combat service support. Albania is eligible to purchase defense articles commercially and through Foreign Military Sales, and to receive non-lethal EDA. Through Congressional initiative, packing, crating, and shipping costs for these articles will be paid by DoD.

A Military Liaison Team (MLT) has operated in Albania since 1992. The MLT oversees visits and exchanges between U.S. and Albanian militaries. Priorities include training in organization and structure, defense planning and policy development, personnel management, operations, naval and air force organization, and legal issues.

Apart from consultations and training, Albania has little to show for its across-the-board cooperation on overflights, basing, activities in territorial waters, and other security issues. Berisha wants U.S. assistance for: improved defense capabilities including anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons; opening of a Security Assistance Office; expanded cooperation with the U.S. Navy and help in controlling its coastal waters; and equipping an Albanian unit for peacekeeping activities.

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II. TALKING POINTS

- o The discussions of the Bilateral Working Group and our regional security and arms control dialogue have advanced our understanding of your security concerns.
- o We are grateful for your cooperation in the military field, including your offers of facilities and your participation in joint exercises.
- o The "Warsaw Initiative" which I announced earlier this year will be the centerpiece of our security assistance program for 1996. We believe that a priority for Albania under this program should be outfitting the peacekeeping unit which you have proposed. Our funding request is still before Congress.
- o Albania is eligible to purchase defense articles commercially and through Foreign Military Sales, and to receive Excess Defense Articles. This includes, in principle, lethal weapons.
- o We are prepared to consider your request for anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons. We do not yet know whether Congress will provide Foreign Military Sales assistance for such purchases.
- o NATO representatives will conduct a briefing on the subject of NATO expansion plans for your government this fall in Tirana.
- o We need to finalize a bilateral Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). The lack of this agreement has complicated U.S. activities in Albania and the training of Albanian units in the U.S.

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DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION

I. BACKGROUND

Once the most repressive and isolated of Eastern Europe's Marxist-Leninist states, Albania has over the last four years enacted significant economic restructuring and political reform. Since assuming power in April 1992, President Sali Berisha's government has completed a radical military reorganization, revamped the communist era judicial system, privatized housing and agricultural land, and passed new criminal, labor, and investment laws. Recently, Albania was admitted to the Council of Europe.

Albania is gearing up for parliamentary elections scheduled for next spring. Berisha hopes that his meeting with you will bolster his party's standing. He himself does not face election until 1997.

Berisha's Democratic Party (PD) has a solid working majority in the unicameral legislature, but has suffered a series of reverses in the three years since coming to power. Several prominent members were expelled and formed small but influential opposition parties. The government was stunned by the defeat of its draft constitution in a referendum last November. That blow brought disagreements within the party into the open, and led Berisha to reshuffle the cabinet and consolidate control of the party. He removed his former friend Eduard Selami as head of the party. In August the PD appointed 30 new District Chairmen to revitalize its grass roots organization.

The Socialist Party (PS) -- political heirs of the communist regime -- enjoys significant support and formidable organization at the local level. The second largest party in parliament, the PS controls roughly half of the local governments. Party Chairman Fatos Nano remains in prison after being jailed in 1993 on charges of corruption during his three-month tenure as Prime Minister under the last Socialist government in 1991. If released, he is expected to contest the presidency in 1997. Amnesty International considers Nano a political prisoner.

The country's political forces have not agreed on steps toward drawing up and ratifying a new constitution. The Interim Law on Major Constitutional Provisions remains the foundation for democratic government based on the rule of law. A network of laws including statutes on property questions, civil and legal rights, the government's rights and responsibilities, and commercial rules and regulations are being enacted and implemented. A new Penal Code, Penal Procedural Codes, Civil Procedures Code, and other important legislation have been adopted in recent months. In general, these laws are consistent with Western concepts.

II. TALKING POINTS

- o We have been impressed with the rapid progress of political reform during the three years you have held office.
- o Your government and legislature are creating new economic and political structures from the ground up. The huge volume of laws which have been passed by the People's Assembly attests to the scale of this effort.
- o We appreciate the difficulties involved in the transition to democracy, and we want to help to further strengthen democratic institutions in Albania.
- o Your commitment to democracy was clearly demonstrated by your gracious acceptance of the defeat of the constitutional referendum in November. That result and your efforts to stem corruption and rebuild your party's ties to the people are marks of a mature democracy.
- o We count on your continued moderation regarding the neighboring countries where there are sizeable ethnic Albanian populations. Your avoidance of inflammatory statements, even though they might be popular domestically, attests to your statesmanship.
- o As a matter of policy, the United States does not target assistance to particular political parties. I do, however, wish you success in the coming electoral campaign.

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

I. BACKGROUND

Albania's weak judicial and law enforcement structures detract from a steadily improving record on human rights. All political prisoners were freed by the summer of 1991. There are no longer any restrictions on freedom of movement within the country, and regulations on foreign travel and emigration are now in accord with international norms. Workers now have the right to associate freely, and have formed trade unions of their own choosing. Freedom of religion has been established in law and practice.

Institutionalization of democratic gains has taken hold. A Law on Basic Constitutional Provisions was passed in 1991, and the government adopted OSCE human rights principles into law in 1993. It has adhered to the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. However, political parties have been unable to agree on a process for drafting and ratifying a new constitution.

The judicial and law enforcement systems are moving toward reform, though the process is slow. Serious gaps in understanding and implementing judicial procedure remain throughout the legal system. A sustained effort will be needed to complete the transformation to a fully functioning democratic, free-market country. Special attention must be paid to perfecting the rule of law, an independent judiciary, the free press, a workable body of commercial and property law, and maintaining good relations with and fair treatment of minorities.

Police continue to beat detainees, sometimes causing deaths. Corruption is also emerging as a significant problem. Freedom of speech, press and assembly are generally respected, although the publishing and distribution system remain under state control. The electronic media (except for one radio station) are state monopolies. There is no mechanism to ensure that editorial and programming decisions are independent of the government.

The ethnic Greek community complains of discrimination in education, public employment and religious matters. Access to instruction in the Greek language could be expanded, but problems in other areas have been overstated.

II. TALKING POINTS

- o We are pleased that you have put a high priority on addressing human rights in Albania. As you know, Americans also attach great importance to the rights of individuals wherever they may live.

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- o We support your efforts to reform the judiciary, to establish rule of law, to foster political pluralism, to encourage wide-open debate in the press, and to allow ethnic minorities to pursue their own cultural identity.
- o We realize that it may take years to achieve the goals which you have set. To the extent that these problems result from inadequate resources, we want to help.
- o There are particular areas where your personal attention might have a decisive impact. We would encourage you to make sure that progress continues in these areas:
 - As you know, there are many concerns expressed by Greek-Americans about the status of ethnic Greeks in your country. These concerns focus on education, religious property, and representation of ethnic Greeks in government service.
 - We recognize that your government is trying to address these issues seriously. I hope you will continue to make progress here, recognizing that these issues can affect your relations with the United States as well.
 - The independence of the judiciary is another area. Some observers claim that personal differences have intruded into the workings of the courts. Judges must not have to consider that they could lose their positions as a result of carrying out their duties.
- o Your efforts to loosen government control of radio and television also seem to be bogged down. We consider abolition of state control of electronic media as a key step in the process of building democracy.
- o You have put a high priority on a new constitution. Although interim legal structures seem to be functioning well, we share your interest in achieving a permanent constitution. I hope that you will extend a hand to other political forces to reach agreement on a constitution embraced by all Albanians.

ALBANIAN-GREEK RELATIONS

I. BACKGROUND

Albania's relations with Greece have rebounded from serious difficulties encountered last year.

A series of incidents in early 1994 culminated in a raid on the Albanian border post at Peshkepi and Albania's arrest and conviction of members of the ethnic Greek "Omonia" organization. The GOA claimed the GOG supported extremist groups trying to destabilize Albania, while Greece alleged that the GOA repressed the ethnic Greek minority in Albania. Greece blocked Albania's access to EU assistance and forcibly repatriated some 70,000 Albanians working illegally in Greece.

After a vigorous mediation effort by the USG, Albania released the ethnic Greek "Omonia" defendants in February, and FM Papoulias visited Tirana in March. Since that time Greek-Albanian relations have improved steadily. Working groups were established to deal with a range of bilateral issues. Greek Minister of Justice Peponis was received by his Albanian counterpart Minister Frasheri on August 15. The two sides signed an extradition treaty and other judicial agreements. Albania opened a consulate in Ioannina. Albanian FM Serreqi has been invited to Athens, and Greek President Stephanopoulos is expected to visit Tirana to maintain the momentum of their rapprochement.

Some irritants remain in the relationship. The GOA believes the GOG has badly handled the case against seven Greeks initially charged in the Peshkepi incident. Conspiracy and murder charges against the eight were dropped, and one was released from detention. Although serial numbers of weapons possessed by the defendants matched those stolen from Peshkepi, the Albanians were unable to furnish the Greeks with the sophisticated forensic evidence necessary to successfully prosecute the murder charge. All still face weapons charges, and it appears the GOG will pursue this avenue of prosecution. However, this development could be misread by Tirana as GOG backsliding on an important issue affecting bilateral relations.

Greece remains concerned about conditions of ethnic Greeks in Albania. It urges expanded access to education in the Greek language, the return of religious property taken by the previous communist government, and measures to increase representation of Greeks in the police and civil service. A new Secondary Education law will go some way toward answering the demand for Greek-language instruction. The Albanian Autocephalous Orthodox Church is experiencing problems with reclaiming its property, as are all other religious bodies and other former landowners.

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Improved Greek-Albanian relations have benefited Greek-U.S. relations. As the governments in Athens and Tirana acknowledge, the success in improving Greek-Albanian relations was due in no small part to U.S. efforts to find solutions.

II. TALKING POINTS

- o We are very pleased at the progress that your government has made in establishing better relations with Athens.
- o I would particularly like to congratulate you on the success of recent ministerial meetings, the work of the bilateral commission, and the ongoing meetings of the subcommissions.
- o Full implementation of the Council of Europe's Minorities Convention and your government's Secondary Education Law is important to regional stability and our continued support.
- o We have told the Greeks that we hope to see continued progress toward legalizing the status of Albanian workers in Greece and on demarcating the border.

ALBANIAN RELATIONS WITH SERBIA AND THE F.Y.R.O.M.

I. BACKGROUND

Serbia:

Albania and Serbia are represented in each other's capital by a Chargé d'Affaires. The issue of Kosovo dominates Albania's relations with the FR Yugoslavia. Albania is the only country to recognize the "Republic of Kosova" declared by representatives of the ethnic Albanian majority in this formerly autonomous Serbian province. The GOA maintains some ambiguity about its recognition, however. Berisha has stated that Albania recognizes Kosova as an autonomous entity within Serbia. Others, including PM Meksi, have called for its independence.

In August, following the resettlement of some Krajina Serbs in Kosovo, FM Serreqi wrote to the Secretary of State to stress that the GOA "will not be indifferent and will not adopt a passive stand" toward a possible spillover of conflict into Kosovo. Although Albania could do little to assist Kosovo militarily against the Serbs, it could provide arms and encouragement in the event of conflict. It is entirely unprepared for the potential influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Albania has opened its military facilities for use by the United States and NATO, and fears possible reprisals from Pale or Belgrade for this cooperation.

The FYROM:

Albania and the FYROM have full diplomatic ties. Relations between the two countries tend to blow hot or cold, depending on events affecting ethnic Albanians in Macedonia.

Relations were severely strained in 1993 when ethnic Albanians caught trafficking arms across the FYROM/Albania border were served harsh sentences for treason. The GOFYROM alleged that the Albanian government had been directly involved. A meeting between Berisha and FYROM President Gligorov in the spring of 1994 smoothed troubled waters and, as a result, Berisha encouraged ethnic Albanians in the FYROM to participate in the 1994 census. Later in 1994, however, the GOFYROM accused the Albanian government of interfering in internal Macedonian affairs twice: once when the largest ethnic Albanian party split and the GOA openly supported the more radical faction, and again when the Albanian MFA issued a statement in support of an illegally-formed Albanian university in the FYROM. A confrontation between police and faculty and supporters of Tetovo University resulted in the death of an ethnic Albanian and several wounded policemen in February. Since that time tension has subsided considerably.

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II. TALKING POINTS

- o Your continued moderation toward neighboring states which include large ethnic Albanian populations is essential to avoid further instability in the Balkans. The danger of sparking conflict in Kosovo or Macedonia far overshadows the gains of championing a "Greater Albania."
- o A solution for Kosovo must be found before Serbia-Montenegro can be fully reintegrated into the international community. We support restoration of autonomy for the province, and we continue to urge the Serbs to respect the human and civil rights of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.
- o We support the aspirations of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia for access to education in their native tongue. The means to achieving this goal, however, should be cooperative, not confrontational.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Sali Berisha, President of
Albania (U)

PARTICIPANTS: U.S.
The President
The Vice President
Warren Christopher, Secretary of State
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Joseph Lake, U.S. Ambassador to Albania
George Stephanopoulos, Senior Advisor to the
President for Policy and Strategy
Christopher Hill, Director for South
Central Europe, Department of State
Daniel Fried, Senior Director for Central
and Eastern Europe, NSC Staff (notetaker)

Albania
President Sali Berisha
Dylber Vrioni, Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister of Finance
Alfred Serreqi, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Lublin Dilja, Ambassador
Fatos Beja, Diplomatic Advisor to the
President

DATE, TIME September 12, 1995, 11:45 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Welcome and I'm very glad to see you here. (U)

President Berisha: Thank you, Mr. President, for this meeting. I and all Albanians are grateful to you, to the United States and to the American taxpayer for your important assistance to Albania at this most crucial time in all of our long history. Since the very beginning of our struggle for democracy, the United States has provided assistance to Albania, the most forgotten country in Europe. You are helping us through one of the worst crises in Europe and are helping us to build the rule of law and a market economy in Albania. The level of friendly feeling by Albanians toward the U.S. is very high, and I am especially proud of this.

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When (former Secretary of State James) Baker came to Albania there was an explosion of friendly feeling toward the United States, and Albanians are just as well disposed toward the United States now as then. (S)

The President: I greatly appreciate the progress you have made, especially your work to develop democracy in Albania and to transform your economy. I also appreciate your role in Albania's policy toward Kosovo and your support for the enforcement of sanctions on the former Yugoslavia. The United States is trying to create the basis for peace in former Yugoslavia but we will not forget Kosovo. We will not have fully normalized relations with Serbia without fully restored autonomy for the people of Kosovo. (S)

President Berisha: I have always been convinced of the crucial and useful role of the United States in Europe and the Balkans. The United States is not playing the role of world gendarme. But it is responsible for international law and order. Please accept my congratulations at the latest developments in Bosnia. Now, thanks to you, there is a real hope for peace. Your agenda should be supported and this includes airstrikes which I consider important and completely justified. In a way, the airstrikes have compensated for the arms embargo, which was not justified. Albania is ready to work closely with you and in particular to increase support for your pilots and planes. (S)

Other Central and Eastern European countries did not start their process of democratization as badly off as Albania. But thanks to the impulse of freedom and your help, Albania in the past three years has fixed two goals and made progress. First, we have created a democratic space for Albanians: the rule of law and a market economy. Second, we have achieved fast economic growth. This is an impressive achievement because we lost fifty years. Now we are moving ahead. (S)

In all of our efforts we had your support. We are a nation divided into three states. We shall oppose changes of borders through force, and we will seek to support democracy and free markets for Albanians living in these other states. Such achievements would bring 90 percent happiness to these Albanians. (S)

The President: Ninety percent is as good as it gets. (U)

President Berisha: We are striving to make progress. We have changed our laws and passed laws on a European model. We have changed 40 percent of government personnel and 60-90 percent in some categories. I tried to use my political mandate to speed economic reforms, and we liberalized prices and began to privatize. The result has been lowered inflation and a tripling

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of per capita income from \$200 to \$700. We have achieved macroeconomic stability, and I think we can call ourselves today a poor but healthy economy. Now we are engaged in large scale privatization and are making progress. (X)

Our main goal is integration with Euroatlantic structures. The Partnership for Peace (PFP) was a great idea, a great invention that opened doors to countries in our region with a strange past. We were the first country to ask to join NATO. We have begun good military cooperation with NATO countries which will help us, one day, to join the alliance. (X)

We also have made great progress in human and national rights and in the establishment of democratic institutions. Before, Albania was a country that banned religion, that banned rights. Now we are establishing tolerance and freedom. Freedom of information is important, and we have different television programs and stations throughout Albania. We have passed good laws, although the referendum to establish a new constitution failed. (X)

Still, the situation in the region is very worrying. Kosovo is under total occupation. I spoke about this with the Secretary of State and asked whether the United States could take the role of intermediary in negotiations to restore autonomy there. Of course, I'll be asked by Albanians about whether we should ask for more. But I say no because asking too much would mean war. The warnings of the Bush Administration (the Christmas warnings with respect to Kosovo) and the presence of U.S. troops in Macedonia was crucial to preventing a spillover of the Bosnian conflict to the south. (X)

Our relations with Greece went through a very difficult stage but now are becoming better. What is the real story? In 1990 and 1991, during a period of real turmoil in Albania, many thousands of Albanians fled south. Greece received them well, and I am grateful. But some Greeks thought that Albania was dying and they began thinking about annexation, about "Northern Epirus." I am grateful to your statements encouraging Greece to negotiate and to remove a blockade in our relations with the EU. The Holbrooke mission was successful. He understood the situation. We want to work with Greece to improve relations. The current issues can be solved and will be solved. This is important for us. If the Government of Greece is willing, we will be able to work toward this result. (X)

The President: What you have said is very important. The Greeks are working with the Government of FYROM, and if we make the progress we hope for, it may become easier to make progress between Greece and Albania. We were right to put troops in FYROM. President Bush issued his warning to the Serbs about Kosovo and because it took occurred in December, after the

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elections, the Serbs came to me. I said this was a proper decision. We are doing what we can to end the war and we will keep up our efforts. I appreciated what you said to me about Greece. They are showing a new willingness to work with their neighbors and this is very important. Still, the Government of Greece has concerns regarding the Greek minority in Albania in the areas of education, religious discrimination and employment discrimination, including in areas of administration and law enforcement. We're hopeful that you can make progress on these questions. (S)

You mentioned progress in establishing democratic institutions. I hope you will do more regarding an independent judiciary. We have found some funds in our assistance budget can help with a program for the training of prosecutors and the police, and I'm encouraged that we are able to help. (S)

Our assistance to Albania has come to about \$140 million so far, and we hope to be able to provide about \$45 million in fiscal year 1996. We hope that this will be helpful to your efforts. We are impressed by your economic growth and by your efforts to resolve issues concerned with human and minority rights. Some believe that ethnic conflicts will destroy the world in the next twenty years, but you can prove them wrong. If you can, we won't have more Bosnias, Rwandas and Burundis -- a world in which people just kill one another because of these issues. So, Albania is not simply a little country all alone and forgotten. (S)

President Berisha: The role of the United States is primary, and we appreciate it. I assure that you we will move ahead. The most difficult question is the consolidation of democratic and other institutions. Albania must do better than in the past. Freedom gives a great potential and freedom can be assured by consolidating institutions. I asked Secretary Christopher and Secretary Rubin for help to do this. I am grateful for your offer of judicial assistance and believe that, working with Ambassador Lake, we can use it well. Please encourage your government to keep providing such assistance. (S)

We also need support for our institutions that are doing the most to stimulate economic growth. We need foreign investment and OPIC could play an important role. Perhaps OPIC could treat Albania as a special case. (S)

President Clinton: How is the Albanian-American Enterprise Fund doing? (U)

Mr. Fried: It is very active. (U)

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President Berisha: It is very good and has strong leadership under Mr. Domenick Scaglione. He wants to launch a commercial bank and we consider this a very good idea. Your decision to appoint him was excellent. (✓)

President Clinton: Perhaps we could do more with OPIC as well. Let me thank you for your support in basing the Predator unmanned aircraft. Thank you also for your active participation in the Partnership for Peace. I want to continue our defense cooperation and look to increase it. (✓)

My notes for this meeting mentioned a \$7 million reforestation project. This is very important. We are working hard to support democracy in Haiti near to our own country, and we have found that erosion and environmental problems have a bad effect on the economy and on peoples lives. In Haiti, the top soil has just been washed away because of the absence of forests. So we don't underestimate the importance of such projects. (✓)

President Berisha: It is a very important project, and we need to proceed with it. Military cooperation is very important as well. I would particularly appreciate your support for military infrastructure projects. We need basic things, not any sort of high technology. Before, our military was dispersed through the country in a crazy way. We need to deploy it in a way that makes sense. We also need help to control our territorial waters and airspace. We are facing pressure from the east; problems could come from this area, and we lack the capability to carry out our responsibility to control our own water and air territory. We would be grateful if you could help us in this area. (✓)

The Vice President: It is great to see you here. I have many friends in the Albanian-American community, including Bill Kovac. I know how excited they are about Albania's transformation. This generates great enthusiasm. Listening to you, it seems to me that you are close to the threshold of a surge of your economy and a surge of investment. (✓)

Countries that have enjoyed democratic successes are often held to higher standards. Problems in this area can cause more concern on the part of your friends. So it would help us to help you if you were able to fight any authoritarian trends or anything else that could hurt investments. But it is clear that there is great excitement about Albania in the United States. (✓)

The President: We may be able to do more in our military cooperation. For example, we may be able to support the equipping of an Albanian peacekeeping company. I understand your point about control of your airspace and territorial waters and we will follow up. (✓)

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President Berisha: Thank you. This would help us control our own territory. I understand the Vice President's point. I assure you that we will do your best to consolidate our democracy. We had to make some strong decisions, like cutting back on the state administration, and proceeded. The results justify these steps. Of course, we have committed mistakes and lots of them. We are engaged in a tremendous transition and the forces involved are very powerful. (S)

The Vice President: We here are still trying to perfect our own democracy. (U)

The President: I can't tell you how pleased I am that you have come so far in so short a time. (U)

Secretary Christopher: I should add that Albania has just dedicated a new military hospital to the memory of Joe Kruzel. (U)

The President: Thank you so much. (U)

President Berisha: I was shaken by the news of his death. I had had two meetings with him and knew that Mr. Kruzel was a real friend of Albania and a real supporter of PFP. I also had met with Bob Frasure and had had a long conversation with him; I was very impressed by him. I think that the most recent developments in Bosnia are the best memorial to their sacrifice. America's commitment to remain engaged in the Balkans brings us hope. NATO's airstrikes are a great step for NATO and for friendly countries. (S)

I think that Yeltsin's recent reaction to this shows that he is really a member of the Politburo. He reacted in a Brezhnev style. (S)

The President: We are determined to resolve the Bosnian situation. We cannot let it remain a cancer in the world, unresolved and festering. (S)

President Berisha: How do you plan to help reorganize the Bosnian Army? This is an important question. (S)

The Vice President: Do you have any suggestions for resettling General Mladic?

The President: Thank you.

-- End of Conversation --