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CROATIA STRATEGY

The brinkmanship of Zagreb's announcement ending UNPROFOR's mission could break the logjam that has kept a Serbo-Croat settlement out of reach, but it could also trigger hostilities with human and diplomatic casualties. The U.S. approach to Croatia must be three-pronged: maintain the essential functions of UNPROFOR in Croatia; launch a negotiating process between Serbs and Croats on a political settlement; and prepare to respond to renewed hostilities. In public, we should not undercut Croatia. But as we receive strategic warning of renewed hostilities, we must make clear to Tudjman that key elements of our bilateral relationship will be at risk.

U.S. must show support for Croatian goals . . .

In the ten weeks before UNPROFOR's current mandate expires, the U.S. will have to strike a balance, supporting Zagreb's ends while opposing its most dangerous means. There can be no question that we endorse restoration of Croatian sovereignty over the Serb-held areas, or that we recognize Croatia's role as a bulwark against Serb aggression. The U.S. has a strategic interest in backing Croatia as long as Zagreb continues to support the Federation, i.e. to keep the Bosnian Croats from cutting a deal with the Serbs to carve up Bosnia. In addition, strong bilateral cooperation will help keep Zagreb on the path of Western political and economic reform.

. . . while minimizing risks of war

We must nevertheless minimize the dangers in Tudjman's high-risk strategy for pressuring the Serbs. His approach makes a renewed conflagration more likely, particularly if UNPROFOR's withdrawal leaves the separation zone between the Croat and Serb armies unsupervised. While Tudjman's intention to avoid war seems genuine, he seems more prepared to contemplate it than ever before. If fighting breaks out, he claims that: (1) Croatia can make significant military gains against the Krajina Serbs; (2) Serbia proper will stay out (at least if Croatia spares Sector East). Both propositions are doubtful, and they cancel each other out: the more territory Croatia regains, the less likely Serbia is to sit idly by.

Whether started deliberately or accidentally, renewed Serbo-Croat warfare would have many casualties. First, the Bosnia cease-fire would unravel. Bosnian Serbs would probably attack Croatian Army forces in Bosnia (who are prepositioned to attack the Krajina Serb capital from the east). In addition,

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GOBH forces would be tempted to strike when Krajina Serbs are tied down in Croatia and unable to assist their Bosnian brethren as they did in Bihac. Second, an attack on Serbs in Croatia would rally Serb nationalists, pressuring Milosevic to re-open the border with Bosnia to resupply the Krajina Serbs. Third, substantial human casualties would result, particularly among civilians in Croatian towns, which have usually been subject to Krajina Serb shelling when hostilities erupt. Fourth, the conflict would undermine Bosnian relief efforts, which are staged from Croatia to a large extent.

UNPROFOR Negotiations

In stressing that his decision to expel UNPROFOR is irrevocable, Tudjman has made it almost inevitable that UNPROFOR as we know it has no future after March. But he has left the door open to preserving the elements that the U.S. has defined as essential. These are: cease-fire monitoring in Croatia; liaison with Knin; confidence-building measures implementation; support for Bosnia operations; force headquarters. They do not require the substantial troop presence throughout the UNPAs that UNPROFOR now maintains.

Zagreb has indicated it would accept continued UNPROFOR operations on Croatia soil in support of Bosnia, as well as an international presence to pursue the Croatia-related tasks. These tasks could be fulfilled by a UN mission with a different name. It would report to the UNSYG through Akashi in order to remain integrated with UNPROFOR, similar to the organization of the various UN peacekeeping operations in the Middle East.

The mission's top priority would be monitoring the separation zones established by the March '94 cease-fire. Otherwise, the vacuum left by UNPROFOR's withdrawal would draw Serb and Croat forces into clashes. This return to the pre-cease-fire situation is more dangerous now because both sides are spoiling for a fight; isolated incidents would quickly escalate into full-scale confrontation. International monitors could act as a brake by providing an early-warning system. Since they would not be deployed to deter a military offensive -- neither is UNPROFOR at present -- they could be unarmed. Similarly, liaison with Knin and implementation of confidence-building measures, except for de-mining, are not tasks requiring military skills.

UNSC negotiations on a new mandate are unlikely to begin until the March 31 expiration approaches. In developing a new mandate for the UN presence in Croatia, Zagreb will wait to

show flexibility in order to maintain maximum pressure on the Serbs. At the appropriate time, the U.S. should mediate between the Croats on the one hand and the UNSYG's representatives and key UNSC members on the other. No other country is positioned to do so. To prepare, we should use the intervening weeks to explore the nuts and bolts of desired UN activity in Croatia with the responsible UN officials, especially incoming force commander Smith.

Update on Launching Negotiations via the Z-4

The Z-4 Mediators (the Zagreb Ambassadors of the U.S., Russia, EU, and UN) have now finalized all provisions of their constitutional plan and map for a Croatia settlement. Their proposal to grant autonomy to ethnic Serb areas while restoring Croatian sovereignty throughout its territory is a framework for accomplishing the urgent task of bringing the parties to the negotiating table. The Z-4 are scheduled to present the plan in Zagreb and Knin on January 30 and in Belgrade on January 31. They will meet subsequently with the parties to explain the provisions and present the map, and then to organize negotiations.

We should emphasize that negotiations on a settlement must start soon and that we expect the parties to consider the Z-4 Plan seriously, since it represents what the international community is prepared to support. With the backing of all the major powers, we would expect a final settlement to look very much like this proposal, but it is not a take-it-or-leave-it proposition.

While Bosnia negotiations have gone on in one form or another for several years, a political settlement in Croatia has never been the subject of serious talks among the parties. Little has occurred in recent years to induce them to negotiate. It may be months or years until they are ready to settle, and additional fighting may occur. It is doubtful, moreover, that the fractured Krajina Serb leadership will pursue talks with Zagreb unless Belgrade dispels the dream of Greater Serbia, e.g. with recognition of Croatia and its international borders.

Despite the odds, however, every attempt must be made to launch negotiations. The bargaining would take place between representatives of Zagreb and Knin. Belgrade need not be represented if it endorses the basic plan and makes the Krajina Serbs attend. We can be flexible on modalities and venues, with the organizing principle being to support whatever works. At some point, we will have to consider possible incentives and

disincentives to keep the negotiations going, but doing so now would be premature. The bottom line is that unless we find a way to get the parties to confront each other at the negotiating table, they will move closer to a face-off on the battlefield.

Preparing for the worst

While making every effort to preserve an UNPROFOR presence that can deter renewed conflict and to invigorate the diplomatic track, the U.S. must also consider what to do in the event that hostilities erupt as a result of apparent Croatian recklessness. Senior U.S. officials (Albright, Tarnoff, Slocombe, Holbrooke, Galbraith) have already delivered the two-part message to the Croats: we will work with you to restore Croatian sovereignty, but we will not understand or help if you provoke a war. We have to keep reinforcing this message.

For now, it makes sense to hold off on intensifying military cooperation until the UNPROFOR mandate question is satisfactorily resolved, as U/S Slocombe discussed with President Tudjman on Monday. If a satisfactory new mandate proves impossible or Croatia otherwise demonstrates belligerent intentions, we would scale back the bilateral relationship. These decision would have to be carefully calibrated to respond to the specific circumstances. It nevertheless makes sense to warn the Croats ahead of time that we cannot continue close cooperation if they pursue military confrontation, at least until the possibilities for settlement talks have been exhausted.

We should also work with the UN, NATO, and NGOs to allow essential relief operations in Bosnia to continue with minimal disruption in the event that Croatia becomes unavailable as a staging ground.

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Cable

PREC: IMMEDIATE
CLASS: ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
LINE1: OAACZYUW RUEHCAA1303 0140705-CCCC--RHEHAAX.
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LINE3: O P 140658Z JAN 95 ZFF6
LINE4: FM SECSTATE WASHDC
OSRI: RUEHC
DTG: 140658Z JAN 95
ORIG: SECSTATE WASHDC
TO: RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE IMMEDIATE 0943
INFO: RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0761
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 7474
RUEHOL/AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY 3582
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RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA PRIORITY 5812
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 6089
RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB PRIORITY 4979
SUBJ: DEMARCHE TO MILOSEVIC ON CROATIA AND UNPROFOR

TEXT:
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ STATE 011303

NODIS

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, SR, HR

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE TO MILOSEVIC ON CROATIA AND UNPROFOR

1. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. EMBASSY IS INSTRUCTED TO PASS THE FOLLOWING DEMARCHE TO THE "FRY" GOVERNMENT AT THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE LEVEL.
3. BEGIN TEXT:

AS YOU ARE AWARE, THE GOVERNMENT OF CROATIA HAS INFORMED THE UNITED NATIONS OF ITS INTENTION NOT TO RENEW THE UNPROFOR MANDATE FOR CROATIA AFTER MARCH 31.

THE UNITED STATES STRONGLY ADVISED CROATIA TO EXTEND THE MANDATE AND WE HAVE EXPRESSED REGRET OVER CROATIA'S DECISION NOT TO DO SO. WE BELIEVE UNPROFOR'S WITHDRAWAL CREATES A VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION THAT REQUIRES INTENSIFIED ATTENTION TO THE PEACE PROCESS.

THE USG UNDERSTANDS CROATIA'S DECISION IS MOTIVATED BY FRUSTRATION OVER THE SLOW PACE OF THAT PEACE PROCESS, AND

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PREC: IMMEDIATE
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LINE1: OAACZYUW RUEHBWA0169 0171208-CCCC--RHEHAAX.
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0024
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA PRIORITY 8563
RUEHSQ/USLO SKOPJE PRIORITY 0793
SUBJ: JANUARY 16 MEETING WITH MILOSEVIC

TEXT:

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ BELGRADE 000169

EXDIS

VIENNA FOR BOSNIA

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PREL, SR, HR
SUBJECT: JANUARY 16 MEETING WITH MILOSEVIC

REFTEL: SECSTATE 11303

1. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SUMMARY: I MET WITH MILOSEVIC FOR ABOUT 45 MINUTES ON MONDAY, JANUARY 16, TO DELIVER THE REFTEL DEMARCHE. WHILE ADMITTING THAT TUDJMAN'S DECISION WAS WORRISOME, MILOSEVIC DID NOT CONSIDER IT IRREVOCABLE. HE SAID THAT TUDJMAN HAD DISPATCHED CROATIAN NEGOTIATOR SARINIC TO BELGRADE LAST FRIDAY TO EXPLAIN THE DECISION. SARINIC STRESSED THAT TUDJMAN DID NOT WANT A MILITARY CONFRONTATION WITH KNIN AND WAS RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC PRESSURE. MILOSEVIC EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT TUDJMAN WOULD "RECONSIDER" THE UNPROFOR DECISION IF IN COMING MONTHS THE ECONOMIC AGREEMENT WAS SUCCESSFULLY

IMPLEMENTED. TO ASSIST SUCH AN OUTCOME, MILOSEVIC ADVISED:

-- PUTTING EMPHASIS ON RAPID PROGRESS IN CONFIDENCE-BUILDING AND THE ECONOMIC AGREEMENT;

-- MOVING CAUTIOUSLY ON TABLING OF THE Z-4 PLAN, WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO POSTURING BY BOTH SIDES AND JEOPARDIZE THE IMPROVED ATMOSPHERE FROM THE ECONOMIC AGREEMENT; AND

-- "HELPING" TUDJMAN TO COPE WITH HIS DOMESTIC OPPOSITION BY PUTTING STRONG, PUBLIC PRESSURE ON HIM TO REVERSE THE UNPROFOR DECISION.

3. ON BOSNIA, MILOSEVIC VOICED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE LATEST CONTACT GROUP EFFORTS HAD NOT PRODUCED MORE RESULTS, THOUGH HE REMAINED OPTIMISTIC THAT NEITHER SERBS NOR MUSLIMS WOULD ALLOW THE NEGOTIATING OPPORTUNITY OF THE NEXT FOUR MONTHS TO BE LOST. HE SOUGHT, AS ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, TO CONVEY AN UPBEAT, CONFIDENT STANCE AND NEVER ONCE MENTIONED UNSC 970, DESPITE REPORTS THAT HE HAD BEEN VERY UPSET BY IT LAST WEEK. END SUMMARY.

4. AFTER READING THE NON-PAPER WITH REFTEL DEMARCHE, MILOSEVIC SAID THAT HE APPRECIATED THE MESSAGE AND SHARED U.S. CONCERN. HE HAD DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH CROATIAN NEGOTIATOR SARINIC, WHOM TUDJMAN HAD DISPATCHED TO BELGRADE LAST FRIDAY. SARINIC HAD EMPHASIZED THAT TUDJMAN WAS RESPONDING TO STRONG DOMESTIC PRESSURE AND DID NOT WANT A MILITARY CONFRONTATION WITH KNIN. HENCE ALMOST SIX MONTHS HAD BEEN BUILT INTO THE DECISION TO ALLOW NEW FACTORS TO COME INTO PLAY. MILOSEVIC SAID IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT TUDJMAN WOULD "RECONSIDER" THE UNPROFOR DECISION IF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECONOMIC AGREEMENT MADE SUFFICIENT PROGRESS. THIS AGREEMENT WAS KEY TO DECREASING TENSIONS AND GIVING BOTH SIDES AN INTEREST IN PEACE. IT WAS THE ONE AREA IN WHICH RAPID MOVEMENT WAS POSSIBLE IN COMING MONTHS.

5. MILOSEVIC SAID HE HAD TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF SARINIC'S PRESENCE TO CALL DOWN MIKELIC AND WORK ON FURTHER STEPS. THE TWO SIDES WERE NOW VERY CLOSE ON AN OIL AGREEMENT, WITH ONLY THE NAME OF THE COMPANY AND THE STATUS OF SEVERAL STATIONS IN DISPUTE. HE HAD MADE SUGGESTIONS ON BOTH POINTS AND HOPED THEY WOULD BE ACCEPTED. ON THE BELGRADE-ZAGREB HIGHWAY SIGN DISPUTE, HE HAD RECOMMENDED THAT BOTH CROATIAN AND RSK SIGNS BE REPLACED BY INTERNATIONAL EUROPEAN SIGNS AND DESIGNATIONS. HE SAID MIKELIC AND SARINIC REACTED FAVORABLY TO THE IDEA.

6. MILOSEVIC SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT TO CONTINUE PUSHING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECONOMIC AGREEMENT, BUT ALSO TO EXERT "STRONG, PUBLIC PRESSURE" ON TUDJMAN TO REVERSE THE UNPROFOR DECISION. HERE, THE ROLES OF THE U.S. AND GERMANY WOULD BE KEY.

MILOSEVIC REGRETTED GERMAN CG REP STEINER'S REMARK THAT KOHL WAS LEAVING THIS TASK TO KINKEL AND DID NOT WANT TO GET INVOLVED HIMSELF. MILOSEVIC SAID PUBLIC PRESSURE WOULD "HELP" TUDJMAN COPE WITH HIS DOMESTIC OPPOSITION.

7. RETURNING TO OUR DEMARCHE, MILOSEVIC SAID THE ONE AREA ON WHICH HE WOULD COUNSEL CAUTION WAS TABLING OF THE Z-4 PLAN. BY RAISING THESE SENSITIVE ISSUES PREMATURELY, WE COULD FORCE BOTH SIDES TO POSTURE AND DAMAGE THE IMPROVED ATMOSPHERE FROM THE CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES. THERE WAS STRONG LOGIC TO THE PHASED APPROACH, MILOSEVIC RECALLED. IT WAS IMPORTANT NOT TO LINK THE PLAN TO THE ECONOMIC AGREEMENT AND TO GIVE THE LATTER A CHANCE TO TAKE ROOT. HE RECOMMENDED WAITING AT LEAST A "MONTH OR A MONTH AND A HALF" AND THEN RE-EVALUATING THE SITUATION.

8. I ASKED HOW HE THOUGHT THE KRAJINA SERBS WOULD REACT TO THE Z-4 PLAN. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THEY WOULD REJECT IT, BUT COULD NOT BE SURE. HE CLAIMED NOT TO HAVE DISCUSSED IT WITH THEM BECAUSE THE FINAL PROVISIONS WERE STILL UNCLEAR. MUCH WOULD DEPEND ON HOW WELL THE CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES WORKED. HE SAID THAT, IN ANY CASE, THOSE WOULD HAVE TO BE DIRECT TALKS BETWEEN KNIN AND ZAGREB TO WHICH HE DID NOT WISH TO BE A PARTY.

9. I SAID THAT I HAD NO DOUBT WE WOULD EXPECT HIM TO CONTINUE USING HIS INFLUENCE WITH THE KRAJINA SERBS IN SUCH NEGOTIATIONS. SHRUGGING HIS SHOULDERS, HE REPLIED THAT HE MIGHT TRY TO BE HELPFUL, AS ON THE ECONOMIC AGREEMENT, BUT WOULD NOT BECOME A "PARTY TO THE TALKS."

10. TURNING TO BOSNIA, I ASKED FOR HIS REACTION TO THE LATEST EFFORTS OF THE CONTACT GROUP, WHICH HAD NOT YET SUCCEEDED IN BRIDGING DIFFERENCES ON ACCEPTANCE OF THE CG PLAN. HE SAID THAT SOME TIME AGO HE HAD CHALLENGED BOSNIAN SERB "FOREIGN MINISTER" BUHA TO EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "STARTING POINT" AND "BASIS FOR" NEGOTIATIONS, AND BUHA COULD NOT DO IT. BUHA PROMISED TO WORK FOR MORE FLEXIBILITY IN THE BOSNIAN SERB POSITION BUT HE -- LIKE THE OTHERS -- "COULD NOT BE TRUSTED." THE PROBLEM WAS ALSO ON THE MUSLIM SIDE, WHERE IZETBEGOVIC AND GANIC WERE SCHEMING TO OUST SILAJDZIC. SUCH POWER STRUGGLES ALWAYS LED TO HARDENED POSITIONS.

11. I ASKED IF HE SAW SIMILAR POWER STRUGGLES ON THE BOSNIAN SERB SIDE. HE REPLIED THAT THERE THE KEY ISSUE WAS THE FUTURE OF SARAJEVO. KARADZIC AND KRAJISNIK WANTED TO HOLD ON TO AS MUCH OF THE CITY AS POSSIBLE, WHILE MOST OF THE DEPUTIES IN THE

