
Clinton Presidential Records Mandatory Declassification Review

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~~SECRET/NODIS~~KOSOVO DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY**Strategy**

Our diplomacy over the next week should have two main lines:

- First, reengagement with the Contact Group leading to possible Contact Group Ministerial if necessary conditions are established.
- Second, engagement with Frontline States with a view to bolstering their support and cooperation in an effort to bring more pressure to bear on Milosevic.

Track one: Contact Group

As our bombing campaign proceeds, it will be important to give visibility to some parallel diplomatic efforts. In doing so, we must be sure that any initiative does not inhibit or run at cross purposes to military efforts, or lead us into situations where we will be forced to stop the bombing without having attained our objectives.

We should take up the Russian proposal for a Contact Group Ministerial, but turn it in an way so that at a minimum, renewed Contact Group discussions do not interfere with NATO operations, and optimally, produce desirable diplomatic results and a improved situation on the ground.

The Russians have proposed a Contact Group Ministerial in Moscow conditioned on a halt to bombing. In our judgment, this is not an absolute condition. The Russians are sufficiently interested in demonstrating they are still players, that they might agree to a Contact Group meeting even while bombing continues.

After appropriate bilateral consultations with the Quad, Secretary Albright would respond to Ivanov proposal that the United States is prepared to hold a Contact Group meeting provided that Moscow is prepared to accept either of two conditions:

- no pause in bombing; or
- Ivanov succeeds in advance in getting Milosevic to halt the offensive in Kosovo and to return VJ and MUP to barracks.

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If (as seems doubtful) Ivanov were able to persuade Milosevic to halt the fighting and return his forces to barracks, we might be left with an indefinite pause without prospect of any lasting settlement. Provided the decision to resume bombing was left to SACEUR or Solana alone, based on an assessment of compliance with the October limits on units out of garrison, the pause would be unlikely to last long.

Assuming Ivanov agreed, we would insist that any ministerial-level meeting be preceded by one at the political director level (by Quad political directors as well) to ensure that there was a solid basis for expecting the Ministerial to produce a useful result. Minimal acceptable result would be agreement on a statement providing (1) re-endorsement of Rambouillet and (2) call for halt to attacks on civilian population.

Second Track - Front line states

Cooperation from front line states is a key element of bringing pressure on Milosevic. Aware of this, Milosevic has used intimidation and threats to seek to curtail cooperation. Frontline states, particularly Macedonia and Albania, are alarmed about the impact of greater refugee flows. NATO security assurances to date have not succeeded in assuaging their fears.

To provide a visible demonstration of U.S. support, Deputy Secretary Talbott will lead a small interagency team to Tirana, Skopje, Sofia, Bucharest and Brussels next week. Timing will coincide with Contact Group track, reinforcing sense of diplomatic activity even as bombing proceeds. This visit will precede Madame Ogata's April 6 "High-level" meeting on humanitarian assistance to frontline states and Kosovo and reinforce UNHCR efforts.

We are developing a package of new U.S. economic bilateral assistance (reallocated from existing SEED fund). Central themes for visit include:

- Reiteration of U.S. commitment to no new sanctions against FRY that would damage frontline states.
- Strengthened ties with NATO, Summit Open Door package.
- Formulation (to be worked out with Solana) of assurance that NATO will respond to FRY attacks on frontline states.

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April 20, 1999

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

FROM: RICHARD HOLBROOKE

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: NEXT STEPS

As the bombing ends its fourth week, allow me to offer some thoughts on the choices that lie before us:

PART ONE: His Choices, Our Choices

I. Sloba's Choices. While we control the bombing, Milosevic controls the timing and nature of the first political/diplomatic response. However, none of his options are attractive:

--First choice: he refuses to blink--and continues his current defiance of NATO;

--Second choice: he accepts our terms, in effect, surrendering--or else is replaced by a group who accept our position;

--Third choice: having emptied most of Kosovo of Albanians, Milosevic announces that he is ready to negotiate and makes a half-serious offer in an effort to split the Alliance and the Contact Group.

II. Our Choices--keyed to his three choices:

1. In the event that Belgrade continues to stand up to the air campaign: We have three courses, broadly speaking:

--end the bombing without achieving our objectives. Result: Milosevic wins.

--send ground troops to Yugoslavia in a "non-permissive environment"--that is, invade and occupy at least part of Yugoslavia. Result: Potentially open-ended conflict and hostile occupation of large portion of Yugoslavia.

--continue to bomb. This leaves the situation unresolved--in effect, taking us back to the starting point of this memo.

If the Administration wishes to avoid being pushed by events into either defeat or invasion, the bombing must intensify--and continue until the Serbs change their position, preferably by changing their leader.

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2. In the event that Belgrade accepts our terms or loses power, then we achieve our objectives. Result: We win.

3. In the event that Milosevic makes a semi-serious offer that still falls short of our core goals, we will face some complicated decisions which could strain relations with our Contact Group and NATO colleagues:

--Should we negotiate with Milosevic at all? Dayton may have been a deal with the devil, but it ended a war on acceptable terms. Milosevic kept enough of his word, especially regarding no NATO/American casualties in Bosnia, so as to justify continued dealings with him. But at the same time he was re-legitimized and re-empowered politically, and he then strengthened his economy with big international deals.

--But after Kosovo he is not the same person he was after Dayton. Whatever the details of an agreement, his sole goals will be to retain power, retain Kosovo, and avoid punishment for his own deeds. Can we allow that after Kosovo? Can Milosevic, the most disruptive person in Europe in half a century, become the co-guarantor of Kosovo's future?

--After the war is over, the world is going to demand justice. There will be widespread public opposition to any deal, no matter how good, that leaves Milosevic in power. This time, the War Crimes Tribunal will need to be satisfied. We will not be able to let indicted war criminals run loose, as is the case with Karadzic and Mladic. And I assume that Louise Arbour will indict Milosevic.

Our real goal: Regime change. Our real goal, whether stated or not, must be a change in the leadership of Yugoslavia. While there is no hard information that suggests such an outcome, we should not preclude it. I have an instinct that Milosevic is finished, but cannot foresee how or when¹.

--Nothing in wartime is more difficult than effecting a regime change. Even Churchill ignored several promising opportunities to help anti-Hitler plotters. Milosevic, however, runs a "soft dictatorship," more like Marcos than Saddam or Ceaucescu. The Serbs are not the North Vietnamese or the Iraqis; Milosevic is not popular and Serb unity, while it may exist at the moment, is not a long-term Serb thing. The men around him might look for ways to distance themselves from him; one way to do this would be to re-open lines of communication with Western officials. However, it would require the active support of the Army and some powerful business interests to remove him. There is also the danger

¹ See separate memorandum, "Has Milosevic Lost His Mind?"

that he might be replaced, at least at the outset, by an even harder line ultra-nationalist, but that is a risk worth taking.

While Milosevic's departure from power is the optimum outcome, policy must be based on the likelihood that he cannot be dislodged, at least not in the time frame we seek, and it may therefore become necessary to negotiate with his regime once again. Thus the current Administration position of remaining vague on the issue in public is correct.

If negotiating with him or a regime he still controls is unavoidable, here are some important considerations:

A. Bombing must continue while the discussions take place. Milosevic is certain to try to link the opening of talks to the cessation of bombing². The Russians and perhaps some of our NATO allies will support him, but we must be unyielding.

B. Should the talks be with Milosevic, or with a subordinate? We do not wish to enhance his stature by sitting down with him again, but as long as he is in power only he can actually make a deal. Nonetheless, it would be preferable to deal with other people, if possible--including close subordinates who might look for ways to save themselves.

C. Where should talks be held? Milosevic will never leave Yugoslavia again, for fear that he will either be arrested by the War Crimes Tribunal or overthrown while he is away. So direct talks with him would have to be in Belgrade while NATO is bombing--not a good arrangement.

D. Who should conduct these talks? We are, as usual, constrained by Alliance and Contact Group politics. We cannot exclude our partners, yet we cannot conduct a serious negotiation if they participate on an equal basis. A conference can be formally co-chaired by the United States, Russia and a single EU representative, but real negotiations must be conducted in private--without the press watching every step--by the United States, which can keep the others informed. The planes are mostly ours; same with the negotiations.

--It seems likely Milosevic will offer to negotiate with someone other than the United States--the Russians, Kofi Annan, Carl Bildt, the Greeks, the Ukrainians, the Chinese, etc. If he succeeds in such a ploy, we would be allowing other parties to determine what the air war was for--that is,

² The exact position the North Vietnamese took in 1965-68, incidentally.

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what our war aims are. This strikes me as unthinkable.

E. Where? This time around, the United States is probably out. France, which had its shot and botched it badly, should not be given a second chance. Moscow will surely offer its lovely hotels and conference rooms, but that would be absurd. Geneva reeks of history's failures, and it is virtually impossible to keep the press and the international community out of the way. A remote place somewhere in Europe that can be sealed off and controlled would have to be found.

--Given these considerations, my recommendation is that any talks with the Yugoslav government be conducted not with Milosevic, but outside Yugoslavia with empowered subordinates, while we continue to look for ways to undermine him or encourage his removal.

PART TWO: War Aims

NATO has been criticized for lack of clarity or precision about the purposes of the bombing. But this is neither surprising nor troubling in the early stages of such a fluid situation. War aims often evolve as facts on the ground change. In this case, the original stated aims of the bombing had to change once the atrocities became apparent.

The current statements of our goals seems correct to me. We should continue to stress the three most urgent: the refugees go home; the Yugoslav security forces leave; and an international security force moves into Kosovo in a permissive environment. In turn, the KLA must agree to a cease-fire. (Disarming them, a key part of Rambouillet, will be a more difficult matter.)

Of course, Milosevic's proposals will fall far short of these goals. He will seek conditions that discourage refugee return; insist on leaving some of his security and border forces and offer to return to either the October or the Rambouillet levels; and oppose any international security force, then offer to allow one that has no NATO troops. All these ploys, and others too numerous to anticipate, should be rejected.

As for the political issues, which are more complex, we are unlikely to settle them in the first phase of negotiations, although we should try to make as much progress as possible. Rambouillet will no longer satisfy the KLA, which is now in substantial control of the Kosovar political situation. But most of the principles of Rambouillet are still valid, and should be part of the general framework agreement that accompanies the end of the bombing.

PART THREE: The Post-bombing Status of Kosovo and other Considerations.

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The post-bombing status of Kosovo might be a Trusteeship, under Chapter VII authority from the UN Security Council. This would not formally change the international status of Kosovo as part of Yugoslavia, but it would remove it from the political control of Belgrade for a specified period of time. Partition of Kosovo strikes me as a bad idea, but I would not rule out completely the possibility of dividing Kosovo into different zones of temporary control, along the lines of the West Bank agreements.

Humanitarian Issues. The dimensions of this problem defy quantification at this early date, when we still do not know precisely what has happened inside Kosovo. But already we know that it will be far beyond anything Europe has seen since 1945:

--Housing and infrastructure have been destroyed. The rural population will not be able to re-establish itself before the planting season. Farm animals and wells have been destroyed. Winter is less than six months away. The costs will be staggering, higher than the highest current estimate. The international community will probably have to provide temporary housing for about one million people through the winter of 1999-2000, then provide security and a reconstruction program for years to come--an extraordinarily sad way, incidentally, to usher in the brave new millennium.

--Given this situation, we should consider immediately establishing a special high-level coordinator for humanitarian assistance in Kosovo, with authority to cut across interagency lines.

Regional Issues. The rest of the region will also need more attention, which will also be expensive. But the alternative is further instability and, ultimately, risks of further wars. Albania and Macedonia are, in different ways, close to the edge, and need immediate help far beyond what they are getting. The other near neighbors, plus Montenegro, have paid a huge price for the crisis, and also need assistance. And Bosnia must remain at the top of our agenda, since a setback there would raise questions about our entire policy.

Looking further down the road, there will also be a need to help with reconstruction within non-Kosovo Yugoslavia. It is clearly premature to think of helping the Serbs, yet in the long run building a viable, democratic Serbia is an essential goal for the European Union, Russia, and the United States.

Russia. The Russians seem to have realized that they should not let their own future be tied to the actions of a man who does not give a damn about them. The Secretary's successful Oslo talks, and the fact that the Russians have left their troops in Bosnia, are indications that Moscow is looking for ways to keep the strains within acceptable--and primarily rhetorical--limits, while dealing

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with its domestic opponents who are exploiting the issue.

While we need to work closely with Moscow, it is a dream to think they will bail us out. In fact, giving them a central role in a negotiation would probably backfire, because they would support compromises that would be unacceptable to us. Our public rejection of these proposals could then increase the strain between us. In short, we should keep in constant and close communication with Moscow, but not let them become deeply involved in a serious negotiation--for the sake of the U.S.-Russian relationship.

PART FOUR: Ground Troops.

We have been outmaneuvered by our critics on this issue, primarily because of three factors: first, the widespread theory that air campaigns alone never succeed; second, the general impatience of the public and the press; and third, the ability of Administration critics, especially Senator McCain, to hammer NATO for "not even having a plan."

The theory (almost universally held by the chattering classes and the Sunday pundits) that the air campaign has failed is not proven. While there are definitely limits to what air power alone can accomplish, it is too early to conclude that this campaign will not achieve its objectives, especially given the campaign's slow start. Comparisons are useful but can be misleading: in Vietnam most of the bombs fell in rural areas, and the economy was far less vulnerable to targeted bombing. In fact, there are already signs that the bombing is beginning to affect the thinking of business and leadership elements. Premature obituaries for the bombing will only drive the policy into a rush to a ground troop invasion--a step of historic import.

As for ground troops, our critics scored an easy point without having to support an invasion by hammering the lack of a plan. This has left the impression that we are opposed to rational and prudent planning. Yet a plan does not commit anyone; it is simply planning.

In fact, planning might highlight the costs and dangers of sending troops into Kosovo in a "non-permissive environment." Few advocates of sending ground troops into Kosovo have examined the potential costs and consequences of such a decision, which would be the most fateful any American President has taken since June-July 1965, when, after a week of intense secret debate, Lyndon Johnson told the American public that he would send 75,000 combat ground troops to Vietnam. Throughout the spring of 1965, Johnson had refused to discuss honestly with the Congress and the American public the situation, although the air war against North Vietnam had started in February. Before June, he literally tried to sneak military units into Vietnam under the fiction that they were not going into combat but merely protecting the air bases. All in all,

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it was probably the most devious act of any President in our time, with the most adverse consequences (including the beginning of an inflationary spiral at home.)

This is not, of course, an argument against the NATO-led peace-keeping force: one way or another, there will almost certainly be NATO ground troops in Kosovo later this year. And once there, they will stay a long time. But everything depends on whether they enter by invitation, along the lines of Dayton, with the formal agreement of the national authority in Belgrade--or whether they enter as an invasion force which will then become an occupation force. Talk about something in between a "permissive" and "non-permissive" force is wishful thinking; in the real world the troops are either invited in--which means low or no casualties--or they have to fight their way in. If they invade, they will not be able to stop in Kosovo; given the realities of the situation, they will have to pursue Serb forces deep into the rest of Serbia and Montenegro, perhaps as far as Belgrade itself. Under the permissive scenario, they should be able to restrict themselves to Kosovo (as well as Macedonia, Albania and perhaps Montenegro), and take low casualties as in Bosnia.

An invasion can, of course, succeed, but only at substantial cost. NATO is far too powerful, and the Serbs far too weak, to repel an invasion. If we undertake such a policy, we will surely prevail. But it could mean serious casualties, and at the end of the process NATO will "own" Yugoslavia, Albania, and Macedonia just as surely as the World War II victors owned Germany and Japan. They will have to occupy the land and defend themselves against possible attacks, including Somalia and Beirut-style terrorism. To be sure, even without an invasion NATO will be in the region for the indefinite future. But how they enter makes a huge difference. To put it somewhat melodramatically, will it be Dayton or D-Day?

PART FIVE: Summation

To summarize:

--Our most important goal should be to encourage a regime change.

--If that is not achieved before Milosevic makes a credible negotiating offer, then we should negotiate with someone other than him, in a site outside Yugoslavia.

--If Belgrade does not make a credible negotiating offer, we should intensify the bombing until it does.

--Bombing should continue during the negotiations.

--We should not compromise on our three core goals, but defer most political issues for a later date if necessary.

--We should make plans for a ground troop invasion of Kosovo, but recognize that it is a step from which there may be no exit.

--The planning effort should be made known to the public so as

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April 20, 1999

MEMORANDUM TO: The Secretary of State
The National Security Advisor

SUBJECT: Some Thoughts about Slobodan Milosevic

1. Has he lost his mind? Recent Serb behavior is so extreme, erratic and stupid that it raises questions--admittedly of a highly speculative nature--about the stability of Milosevic. Until now, while often reprehensible, his behavior was coolly and cruelly calculating. It no longer is. Recent actions, especially the bizarre reversals in the refugee flow, suggest an increasingly irrational pattern. Perhaps this is driven by rage and early signs of desperation.

His goals at the time of Dayton were clear: he would throw the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs over the side of his boat, and work out a deal acceptable to us on Bosnia, in order to bring Yugoslavia back into the community of civilized European nations. His high point was surely the ceremonies at the Elysee Palace, when he was treated with some degree of respect as an equal member of the Dayton process, and talked face to face with Presidents Clinton and Chirac, Kohl and other world leaders. Proud of his background as a banker who had negotiated with some the leading money center bankers in the world, he foresaw international recognition for his regime, membership in the major international institutions, and substantial business opportunities.

At first he made real progress toward these goals. Most of the EU recognized Yugoslavia over our objections. The Italians and Greeks made a grotesque (but potentially profitable) deal with him for a large stake in the state telecom company, netting about \$1 billion in cash to him, money he could use to pay the army, bribe people, and perhaps move partly off-shore for his own uses and future protection. The United States and the Contact Group offered him a "road map" in which in return for full implementation of Dayton he would get the "outer wall" sanctions lifted or suspended on a rolling basis.

This policy was well underway when events in Kosovo derailed everything on both sides. His dreams for rejoining Europe as a full-fledged and accepted member is now gone forever.

As this realization sinks in, as it must already have, I suspect that it will significantly affect Milosevic. He will never again be the man of Dayton, the Elysee, and the road map--and he surely knows it. He ~~is~~ will never again eat the Packy's All-Sports Bar in Dayton, or even be able to leave his country without risking arrest. Milosevic must realize that he has crossed an invisible line and cannot get back again. Trapped by the enormity of what his forces have done, at his instructions, he is isolated for the rest of his days inside Yugoslavia.

With this bleak prospect facing him--one I suspect he is beginning to understand--his behavior has shown little of its

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FROM CMN SITE 3B

previous cleverness or tactical flexibility. Although both General Anderson and I told him and his senior generals that the bombing would be "swift, severe, and sustained," it is quite possible (as Jim O'Brien suggested during our trip) that he thought it would be something along the lines of Desert Fox--short and survivable. Now that he realizes the extraordinary level of destruction his country faces, he must also begin to realize that he cannot survive long enough to re-build Yugoslavia's economy, that the international community will never give Belgrade financial assistance until he is removed, and that he will probably lose power either during or after the bombing ends.

Perhaps for this reason--or because of some --Milosevic has pursued a policy in Kosovo that will cause the Albanians the maximum pain in the short run, but doom him in the long term. It is one of the theses of this memorandum that he understands what he has done, and has embarked on this policy even though, at some level, he knows he cannot survive it.

Although it may not have been a conscious policy, he seems to have decided to destroy the Albanians as fast as possible before he falls; no more creeping repression from Belgrade. Have deeply hostile psychological factors in his make-up taken over from his rational sense? He never showed any remorse or concern for human suffering, which was far detached from his anti-septic presidential surroundings. The Milosevic we negotiated with, while dangerous and cruel, was rational. The behavior of this Milosevic is not. The fact that both his parents committed suicide may be particularly relevant now. It is my guess that Milosevic will not survive these events, that one way or another he will not only fall, but die as a result.

2. What About His Associates? They are not men of strength or courage. While they all owe their current positions to Milosevic, many of them have told Chris Hill, Wes Clark, and me over the years that they held views different from those of their leader. At times each tried to suggest to us that he held "softer," more reasonable views than Milosevic.

Nonetheless, they will want to save their own skins. Whatever their individual views on the sacredness of Serb soil in Kosovo, none are going to be ready to sacrifice themselves. I believe that the early signs of dissension within Serb ranks (and with Montenegro) are real, and probably reflect even greater unhappiness than we are aware of. This may be an exploitable opportunity, but must be handled with extreme care and confidentiality.