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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

December 13, 1994

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ANTHONY LAKE *AL*

SUBJECT: Principals' Review of Bosnia Policy

Principals met on Monday afternoon to review our Bosnia policy in the wake of your decision in principle to commit U.S. ground forces to assist in UNPROFOR withdrawal and Chris's December 2 meeting with his Contact Group counterparts.

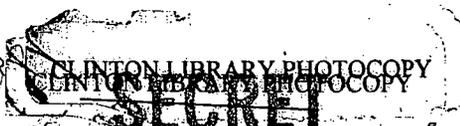
Focus on Diplomacy: Everyone agreed that it was critical to use the weeks between now and the arrival of the new Congress to show concrete progress toward a diplomatic settlement. Absent such progress, it will be much harder to fend off legislation mandating a unilateral lifting of the arms embargo. (Whether you should threaten to veto any such legislation was discussed briefly; it is the subject of a separate memorandum.)

Chris will be contacting his Contact Group counterparts in the next few days to coordinate efforts to convene a meeting of the parties under Contact Group aegis before year's end. Our special envoy, Ambassador Charles Thomas, believes both sides are eager to negotiate territorial trade-offs once a time-limited ceasefire is agreed. The challenge will be to persuade the Bosnian Serbs to accept a 3-4 month ceasefire now that they feel they have successfully intimidated the international community from taking decisive action against them. While Milosevic has put some pressure on the Bosnian Serbs through his closure of the border, Chris feels we cannot rely solely on the Serbian leader, who -- despite his personal grudge against Karadzic -- has not abandoned his Greater Serbia ambitions.

Restoring UNPROFOR's Credibility: Principals noted that, in the wake of your decision to support UNPROFOR withdrawal and with the specter of lifting the arms embargo post-withdrawal, allies have reaffirmed their desire to keep UNPROFOR in place. Following up on Bill Perry's and my encouraging talks with French Defense Minister Léotard, we will explore at NATO several options for increasing UNPROFOR's effectiveness: redeploying or reconfiguring UNPROFOR so that it can better defend itself against Serb attacks; opening a humanitarian corridor from the coast to Sarajevo; and (once again) disabling Serb heavy weapons at collection sites around Sarajevo as a basis for withdrawing

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cc: Vice President
Chief of Staff

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UNPROFOR personnel from these vulnerable sites. We will continue to take the position that if, despite our best efforts, UNPROFOR withdrawal cannot be avoided, then our strategy should be to lift the arms embargo multilaterally.

Dealing with the Congress: Principals weighed the pros and cons of seeking or encouraging a Congressional authorization in the event we have to deploy ground forces to support UNPROFOR withdrawal. No one suggested conceding Presidential prerogatives as a legal matter. But opinion was divided on whether it would be politically prudent to seek an authorization given the risk of American casualties and the need for bipartisanship, or whether this would simply be an invitation to amendments tying U.S. participation to unilateral lift. It was agreed to revisit this question after we have a clearer sense of Congressional attitudes toward U.S. participation in a withdrawal operation.

In any event, we will step up our consultations on Bosnia with the incoming Congressional leadership in the coming weeks. The aim will be to build support for our diplomatic approach and to highlight the dangers of unilateral lift -- in terms of damaging NATO and making the U.S. solely responsible for the conflict. In pursuing these consultations, we will be careful to distinguish between unilateral and multilateral lift, given the potential need for Congressional support for a lift-and-strike strategy if diplomatic efforts fail.

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