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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 19, 1993

MR. PRESIDENT:

Tony Lake requested that you
receive this memo this evening.
He will be discussing it with
you in the morning.

W's meet
John Podesta

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 19, 1993 93 FEB 19 P8:36

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ANTHONY LAKE *AL*

SUBJECT: Presidential Decision on Humanitarian Air Drops
for Bosnia

The Principals Committee recommends that you authorize us to begin consultations with allies, the Russians, the UN, and Congress about emergency air drops of humanitarian supplies to besieged cities in eastern Bosnia for a limited period.

We would make clear that we are acting in response to an emergency situation; that our action is supplementary to the ground relief convoys and cannot substitute for them; and that we still are considering how the U.S. might increase its longer term role in the humanitarian effort. In fact, we would try to use this action as leverage with the parties on the ground to cease interference with relief convoys and with the relief agencies (and their UNPROFOR escorts) to be more assertive in getting the convoys through.

We would seek the prior endorsement of other UN Security Council permanent members for this effort and we would urge the Russians in particular, but also our West European allies, to join it. Because Moscow is eager for visible partnership with us, this initiative could also serve our broader goals with it. Russia's price for participation probably would be including Serb-populated areas of eastern Bosnia in the air drops. While we believe the humanitarian needs are much less there we would not object, especially if the supplies are largely medical.

An initial effort would be neither very risky nor very expensive. Colin Powell recommends, and the rest of us agree, that transport aircraft should operate initially at altitudes high enough to avoid anti-aircraft weapons in the area. The aircraft would carry defensive countermeasures but would not be escorted by fighter aircraft. The latter would be ineffective against irregular forces and their presence could dilute the "humanitarian mission only" message we would have sent to all concerned parties before the operation began. In the event of hostile action against U.S. transport aircraft, the operation would be suspended while we reassessed the threat.

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Chief of Staff

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But no military action is without risk. There is the possibility that a C-130 and its crew would crash in the Bosnian mountains or be deliberately targeted. Each of the warring sides could have an incentive to fire at our aircraft: Serbs to prevent resupply of a surrounded Bosnian enclave, and Bosnians to blame an attack on the Serbs. If we later undertook deliveries at lower altitudes in order to deliver more supplies with greater accuracy, the risks would be higher.

The costs of the flights themselves would come out of normal operating budgets and each aircraft would use about \$4-5,000 worth of parachutes and other equipment. The humanitarian supplies for this initial effort could come from the U.S. military's humanitarian relief stocks, possibly supplemented by UN or other states' supplies.

The U.S. military could begin flights 3-5 days after you make a decision. Thus if you approved our recommendation on Saturday, for example, we would begin the necessary exchanges with the Russians, allied governments, the UN, the Bosnian government and its attackers and Congressional leaders on Monday and could begin the air drops Wednesday or Thursday.

RECOMMENDATION

That you approve the use of air drops as an emergency humanitarian measure and authorize us to begin the necessary consultations.

Approve Disapprove

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