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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
March 9, 1995

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

3/11/95

MR. PRESIDENT

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Attached is a decision memo from Tony Lake on U.S. participation in NATO's "Step Two" prepositioning of communications systems for use in possible withdrawal of UNPROFOR troops from Croatia. Step Two would involve agreement to deploy some 450 U.S. military personnel in Europe, 320 of them in Croatia -- though actual deployment would be subject to a further decision of the NAC.

Pros: Our participation would send the right signal about U.S. leadership in NATO. Our allies' forces on the ground are in danger and we must not be seen obstructing NATO military planning needed to protect them. Cons: prepositioning could embolden Tudjman to keep refusing any UNPROFOR successor force, moving us toward commitment of a large-scale ground force to help extract UNPROFOR, and in turn leading to a wider war.

Our allies would prefer to keep UNPROFOR in place and are reluctant to proceed with Step Two deployment at this time, fearing this could hasten UNPROFOR's departure and open the way for air strikes and lifting the arms embargo. But deployment may become unavoidable.

While recognizing the real risks, NSC Principals recommend approval of U.S. participation in Step Two. Leon and George concur, though George is concerned that this might trigger a War Powers debate. We have forwarded a copy of the memo to the Vice President. If you approve, State and Defense will consult with Congress next week before informing NATO of our decision.

John Podesta
Todd Stern

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Tony

I want to revisit
when the VP returns
to trip - visit of Tudjman

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 6, 1995

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ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: ANTHONY LAKE ✓

SUBJECT: U.S. Participation in Step Two of NATO
Prepositioning for UNPROFOR Withdrawal

Purpose

To obtain your agreement for U.S. forces' participation in Step Two of NATO prepositioning for UNPROFOR withdrawal.

Background

Principals met Friday to discuss U.S. participation in Step Two of NATO's ongoing efforts to prepare to support a possible UNPROFOR withdrawal from Bosnia or Croatia. We are seeking your approval to inform NATO that the United States agrees to support Step Two of NATO's efforts to preposition communications systems and operators in Croatia. Step Two includes deployment of approximately 450 U.S. military personnel within Europe, including 320 to government-controlled areas of Croatia, although the timing of the actual deployment of the prepositioning force will be subject to a subsequent NAC decision.

NATO and UNPROFOR military planning for UNPROFOR's possible withdrawal from Bosnia has been underway for several months. With UNPROFOR withdrawal a possibility this spring, NATO began to take action in February by executing Step One, which initiated the process of establishing an enhanced theater communications system. No U.S. forces were involved. With Step One well underway, NATO is seeking approval to execute Step Two, which will deploy military personnel to set up and operate the communications system.

Prepositioning is a necessary step to support a large operation. Nearly 1800 personnel are involved, including the 450 Americans. The total NATO cost for prepositioning is estimated at \$11.3M and comes from existing NATO funds (the U.S. pays 25 percent), although we will pay our own transportation and sustainment costs. An orderly withdrawal of UNPROFOR cannot begin until

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cc: Vice President
Chief of Staff

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eight weeks after the prepositioning occurs; thus Shali argues that delaying a decision will put Allied forces at risk.

This decision would carry significant risks, even though it would send the right signal about U.S. leadership in NATO, support our military leaders and maximize military preparedness. In the worst case, it could set in motion a series of events leading to UNPROFOR's withdrawal and renewed fighting, with NATO and U.S. forces left on the ground to deal with the aftermath. Tudjman might welcome the NATO deployment as a stepping stone to a larger NATO and U.S. ground role as UNPROFOR's replacement. Emboldened by NATO and U.S. forces in Croatia, Tudjman could become even more intransigent on accepting an UNPROFOR successor force. This could move us closer to an actual commitment of ground forces for a large-scale operation to extract UNPROFOR, the exact dimensions of which will remain unknown until the plan is completed in about two weeks. With NATO on the ground, or positioned to extract UNPROFOR, the decision to withdraw UNPROFOR will be easier for the UN and troop contributors to make. If they withdraw, renewed fighting is a certainty and the wider war we feared will have been facilitated by NATO's deployment into Croatia. While we anticipate a subsequent NAC decision will be taken to deploy the forces into Croatia, with each incremental step, it becomes more unlikely that our decision will be reversible. In fact, if NATO decides to conduct the operation, large-scale U.S. participation is inevitable.

Not all Allies support prepositioning, so our decision may prove academic for the time being. The French have been the most adamant, calling for a delay on the grounds that putting NATO personnel on the ground in Croatia would undermine efforts to change Tudjman's mind. Other Allies have voiced similar concerns and fear that NATO prepositioning will set in train the steps described above, leading to UNPROFOR's withdrawal and the wider war that diplomatic efforts aim to prevent. They also see UNPROFOR's departure as the opening to lifting the arms embargo and accompanying air strikes. Allies prefer to keep UNPROFOR in place and muddle through.

After balancing the risks against the military requirements, Principals decided that, because of the danger to our Allies who have forces on the ground and to sustain our leadership of the Alliance, we should make the commitment to support Step Two. This will permit the personnel to be organized and trained, with their actual deployment subject to a further decision by the NAC. Principals agreed that we will not press those Allies who are reluctant to execute Step Two but that it is important that the U.S. not be seen as obstructing NATO military planning needed to reduce the risks to Allied forces.

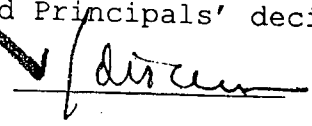
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Principals also concluded that, in view of the Congressional interest that the deployment of 320 U.S. military personnel to Croatia will generate, consultations must be completed before informing NATO of our decision. We would seek to cast this as a limited, precautionary move that is being taken without prejudice to a possible future decision to help in a NATO-led withdrawal of UNPROFOR. We would make clear that we intend to consult closely with the Congress on the latter (more formidable) undertaking and seek prior Congressional approval of the necessary funding. If you agree, State and Defense will brief leadership and key committee chairs early next week.

RECOMMENDATION

That you authorize U.S. representatives at NATO to support Step Two prepositioning, subject to consultations with Congress, and with the actual deployment of U.S. personnel to Croatia subject to a subsequent NAC and Principals' decision.

Approve 

Disapprove _____

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