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MEMORANDUM FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR
FROM AMBASSADOR ALBRIGHT

At our meeting on August 1 you asked for each Principal's views on our endgame strategy for Bosnia. I would be largely comfortable with your original paper that envisions a modified lift and strike if UNPROFOR were to collapse.

But I have thought for some time that we must put Bosnia in a larger political context and re-examine our fundamental assumption that the Europeans have a greater stake in resolving Bosnia than we do. In so doing, we may conclude that extending the life of UNPROFOR is no longer in our interest. (Why should we wait for the day when London and Paris tell us that they are leaving?)

The following paper is designed to examine how to shift from a European-led plan to an American-led plan.

Why America Must Take the Lead

Our commitment to use American ground forces to extract UNPROFOR on the one hand or implement a peace plan on the other means that this conflict will be "Americanized" sooner or later. Our previous strategy -- give primary responsibility to the Europeans, help the Bosnians rhetorically and hope the parties will choose peace -- is no longer sustainable. With a stronger Bosnian army unwilling to wait for peace at the negotiating table, and in the aftermath of Srebrenica and Zepa, the Bosnian side and international opinion will simply not allow us to return to the relative success of 1994. Muddle through is no longer an option.

Meanwhile, I strongly believe that the issue has become bigger than Bosnia. Although we may have been correct to limit our role in the past -- on the grounds that the former Yugoslavia was primarily a European responsibility -- the circumstances and our interests have now changed. Our interest in resolving this conflict has broadened.

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In much the same way that our failure to solve the Haiti problem last year threatened to overshadow all of our other accomplishments, I fear Bosnia will overshadow our entire first term.

The failure of our European allies to resolve the Bosnia crisis has not only exposed the bankruptcy of their policy, but it has also caused serious erosion in the credibility of the NATO alliance and the United Nations. Worse, our continued reluctance to lead an effort to resolve a military crisis in the heart of Europe has placed at risk our leadership of the post Cold War world. President Chirac's comment -- however self-serving -- that "there is no leader of the Atlantic Alliance" has been chilling my bones for weeks.

We have also failed to take into account the damage Bosnia has done to our leadership outside Europe. Moreover, our failure to act in support of Bosnia threatens to undermine moderate Islamic ties to the United States. By contrast, American leadership in support of Bosnia will redound to our advantage throughout the Muslim world for a long time to come and could help shore up key relationships.

For these reasons, I believe we must stop thinking of Bosnia as a "tar baby." Instead, we should recognize that -- notwithstanding our successes in trade, Russia, and the Middle East and despite general agreement regarding Bosnia's complexity -- our Administration's stewardship of foreign policy will be measured -- fairly or unfairly -- by our response to this issue. That is why we must take the lead in devising a diplomatic and military plan to achieve a durable peace. If we agree that American troops will be in Bosnia sooner or later, why not do it on our terms and on our timetable?

The Requirement for Military Pressure

The essence of any new strategy for Bosnia must recognize the one truth of this sad story: our only successes have come when the Bosnian Serbs faced a credible threat of military force. Hence, we must base our plan on using military pressure to compel the Pale Serbs to negotiate a suitable peace settlement. If despite our best efforts, UNPROFOR becomes unsustainable, then a modified form of lift and strike remains the best way to promote an acceptable peace over the long term.

This approach entails significant responsibilities for the United States. It means using our military forces, primarily through the air, to help the Bosnians by changing the balance of power. After a suitable transition period to improve

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Bosnian military capabilities, we can and should disengage. In the absence of this support from us to improve the Bosnian military position, the history of this conflict demonstrates that the Pale Serbs will never feel enough military pressure to negotiate a durable peace settlement.

The Current Diplomatic Track

We should actively pursue a peace settlement now. Recent actions by NATO, as well as the military credibility inherent in the rapid reaction force have given UNPROFOR a small window of credibility. In conjunction with the ascendant threat from Croatia, UNPROFOR's short-lived, new credibility may be sufficient to convince Pale to negotiate seriously.

The steps we are now taking in the Contact Group (i.e., the revised Bildt option) will test this proposition. My strong suspicion, however, is that the Serbs will not be prepared to negotiate on the basis of the Contact Group map, or if they do, their proposals will be so one-sided as to create a stalemate.

Even in 1994, perhaps our best year in Bosnia, a more effective UNPROFOR and improved Bosnian-Croat military cooperation did not bring the Serbs to the table in a serious way. Unless the Bosnian Serbs are convinced that failure at the peace table will mean not only stalemate on the battlefield but worse some roll-back of their military gains, I do not believe they are likely to make the concessions necessary for a durable peace.

In the event a new diplomatic track fails to produce a settlement, the next few months will see a reinvigorated UNPROFOR help reduce fighting, Federation forces poking at Serb defenses around the country, and the Serbs continuing to pick off as many innocent and helpless persons as international opinion will allow. Eventually, all sides will settle in for the winter.

But this pattern will not last. UNPROFOR's window of credibility will begin to shut as the Europeans lose their stomach for military action. (The pattern of strong political will to act followed by erosion of allied support will continue. Just as the allies' commitment to the Sarajevo ultimatum of 1994 eroded one year later, so will their support for NATO's recent decisions soften over time.) And as UNPROFOR weakens, the Serbs motivation to negotiate will wane. Hostilities will increase by spring, and the threat of UNPROFOR's departure will emerge again -- stronger than ever. We could well face the prospect of U.S. forces on the ground in the spring and summer of 1996.

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In addition to the obvious political risks for the Administration, an UNPROFOR withdrawal next year will enable the parties to exploit campaign developments, as they play the candidates off.

New Military Strategy Meets New Diplomatic Strategy

If the foregoing analysis is correct, we should consider taking control of the situation now. We should develop a plan that sets a deadline for the Bildt-plus diplomatic track, after which we would promote the collapse of UNPROFOR and begin the inevitable process of handing off military responsibility for Bosnia to the Bosnians through a modified lift and strike option.

This initiative has two essential advantages over our current policy. First, it ensures that we are not held hostage to the timetable of London, Paris or the Bosnian government. We decide when our commitment to extract UNPROFOR would be operative. Second, by setting a deadline after which the Serbs would face the possibility of a reversal on the battlefield, we would create a powerful incentive for the Serbs to make their concessions now. (For example, once we think Bildt has run its course, we could send an American envoy to Belgrade with a message that the military track will be immediately implemented unless we see some marked change in the Serb position.)

Military Support for Bosnia after UNPROFOR

The objective is handing-off to the Bosnians the responsibility for self-defense and military pressure on the Serbs. This requires lifting the arms embargo and military support, through air strikes and ground-based training, until the Bosnians can act themselves. The sooner we start preparing Federation forces, the sooner they can act on their own. As the NSC paper indicates, a transition period should be some six months to one year.

The Role of Air Power. The linchpin of international assistance will be a credible commitment to the decisive use of air power against the Serbs to prevent a collapse of Sarajevo and other Federation territory before new arms can be integrated into the Bosnian army. This means implementing the type of air strikes NATO has just promised but without the risk of hostages. No fly zone implementation would also continue. (The NSC paper has an effective description of how these missions can be handled.)

The New Ground Force. The post-UNPROFOR multinational force on the ground will also be important, both to sustain momentum in Bosniac-Croat reconciliation and to train Federation forces (as well as target acquisition for any

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possible air campaign). In order to show our bona fides to our allies and maximize our influence with the Bosnians, we should offer a small ground contingent, whose primary mission would be training the Bosnian forces. In the light of Congressional support for lift, military trainers should be politically sustainable, especially if limits on their numbers and length of deployment are spelled out from the start.

In response to the obvious charge of "slippery slope," we should point to Haiti, where we set a timetable for deployment and met the deadline. It is simply wrong to argue that a multinational force with a U.S. component spells an open-ended American commitment. Indeed, a U.S. role in the training of the Federation forces would ensure that it could be completed quickly. A side benefit would be the fact that an American contribution of this kind could serve as a magnet for European participation, thus avoiding the possible all-Muslim army scenario many fear.

With U.S.-led air power and training for the Bosnians, this transition can be accomplished with a minimum exposure for the United States. The effect would be a new balance of power that provides the only real chance of concessions by the Bosnian Serbs as well as new leverage for us to play a decisive diplomatic role with all sides.

What Is the End-state?

I would obviously prefer to see the Bosnians achieve a settlement in accordance with the Contact Group principles, that is, a majority of Bosnia's territory and a union established between the Federation and a Serb entity, thus preserving the Republic of Bosnia's territorial borders.

But two significant alterations suggest themselves. And I would condition our support for this modified lift and strike with approval in advance from the Bosnian government for these two modifications.

First, the settlement could be more forward-leaning on the Serbs right to secede peacefully from Bosnia and join a potential "Greater Serbia."

Second, it may be necessary to consider proposals to trade Federation territory for Serb-held territory, especially if the Federation agrees and if the exchange makes the Federation more durable. This means population transfers that we have previously been unwilling to countenance. (In the context of an American leadership role to put military pressure on the Serbs, such transfers are politically and morally defensible).

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The principle would be quality not quantity. Population transfers that increase the viability of both parties could now be safely proposed. For example, Gorazde or Federation territory around the Posavina corridor might be exchanged for territory around Sarajevo and in Central Bosnia. Again, the threat to use decisive force may be dispositive. Exchanges beneficial to the Federation would probably require that the Serbs concede land they assert was Serb-majority. This will require confronting the Serbs with a credible threat of force.

In the context of new engagement by Washington, a serious discussion with Sarajevo should yield these concessions. But even more important, the Bosnian Government must be told bluntly that our support for this initiative is contingent upon its commitment not to seek military gains beyond the Contact Group plan and its guarantee to limit severely the influence of radical Islamic regimes in Bosnia. In summary, we must ensure that all the parties can achieve reasonable objectives and thus their conflict can be contained over the long-term.

How Long a Deadline?

We should set a deadline for the Bildt-plus phase sometime this fall. In as much as withdrawal has become easier and some may choose to stay in a follow-on force in Central Bosnia, our previous timetable under 40104 should be significantly shorter. If diplomacy falls in the near-term, the new variants of 40104 may allow us to begin a withdrawal mid-fall and end it before winter sets in.

What About the Russians?

Some persuading of Britain and France will obviously be necessary, but the prime diplomatic obstacle would be Russia. We should not underestimate the high-level diplomatic effort that will be necessary to avoid a Russian veto in the Security Council and minimize Russian support for Serbia. We will have to make clear that a solution to Bosnia has become America's top priority, and we intend to calibrate our relationship accordingly.

As far as lift is concerned, I would expect they would not want to isolate themselves and veto such a resolution if Britain and France went along and key Muslim Countries were induced to weigh in. Legally, they could accept that withdrawal of UNPROFOR will materially change the circumstances in which the arms embargo was established, leaving it -- unlike other embargoes -- without a rationale. (As the NSC paper points out, we may need some parallel lifting of sanctions on Serbia.)

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How To Deter Serbia and a Third Balkan War?

The NSC paper treats these subjects adequately. Suffice it to say, the entire climate for containment of a wider war and deterrence against Milosevic would be changed if Washington were to engage fully and NATO were to remain united.

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