Chapter Three

Tragedy as Turning Point: The First Shuttle, Mt. Igman, and Operation Deliberate Force

Following the hand-off meeting with Lake in London, Holbrooke departed the afternoon of August 14 with Frasure, Clark, Kruzel, and Drew for Split, Croatia. The results of the Lake trip had been very positive, with the Allies firmly in support of the new U.S. initiative. To Holbrooke, the Lake mission successfully represented a new departure in U.S. policy; a departure, significantly, with the imprimatur of President Clinton. "The trip by Tony Lake, the President's National Security Advisor, conveyed, as no other signal could, that the President was personally behind these negotiations," Holbrooke has written. "It was a valuable prelude to out shuttle diplomacy, investing it with far greater credibility than previous American negotiating efforts."[1]

The next and most crucial step was to sustain this momentum with the regional leaders. The Holbrooke team would not only present the parties with the details of the initiative, but outline the array of carrots and sticks that the U.S. and its Allies were willing to deploy. Despite the success of Lake's mission, Holbrooke remained pessimistic that an agreement could be worked out. He had told Lake in London that the chance for success was only "fifteen percent." Holbrooke knew that the parties would have to compromise a great deal, and he was not entirely convinced that they were prepared to do so.[2]

That the parties had to change was well understood by officials in Washington. In a detailed "gameplan" paper prepared for the negotiating team, State Department officials in the European Bureau noted that "achieving of our goals will require significant changes in the stances of all the parties. The Bosnians will have to adjust their thinking on the map. Croatia will have to accept something short of immediate return of Sector East, [and] Milosevic will have to adjust his stance on sanctions relief to fit the new situation."

According to the "gameplan," the Holbrooke delegation would have to overcome four obstacles to achieve U.S. objectives: 1) break the logjam over the Contact Group map by exploring Bosnian flexibility on territorial exchanges; 2) get the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Contact Group map as a basis for negotiations; 3) solve the Croat-Serbian confrontation in Eastern Slavonia, and 4) find some way to get the Bosnian Serbs to engage in serious discussions.[3] The delegation would have to make it clear to the parties

---

[1] Quote from preliminary draft of Holbrooke's memoirs, Chapter 2 (September 21, 1996), p10.
[2] Holbrooke interview 3 (notes).
[3] The difficulties with the Bosnian Serbs were more than merely getting them to come to the table -- negotiators had to decide how and where to meet them. State officials believed that any meeting with

that if they did not negotiate in good faith, "UNPROFOR will leave – with all the consequences that would flow from such a decision." In this sense, U.S. officials believed that uncertainty could work to the advantage of their strategy: if the parties were concerned about the potential consequences of not cooperating, emphasizing specifically "lift-and-leave" -- UNPROFOR withdrawal and lifting the arms embargo -- they might be more amenable to approach the peace table.[4]

The Croatians and Bosnians

Getting the Bosnian leadership to agree to the principles of the initiative was an important first obstacle for U.S. negotiators. They realized from intelligence reports that many Bosnians were already suspicious of the U.S. proposal, believing that it simply amounted to a "carve-up" of Bosnia. [redacted] the Bosnians were angry B1 that they had not been consulted during the formation of the U.S. initiative, and felt that the plan was "an effort to obtain peace at any price."[5] U.S. diplomats reported similar skepticism. On August 14, Bosnian Federation Vice President Ejup Ganic voiced his concerns about the initiative to the U.S. Ambassador to Austria, Swanee Hunt. Meeting in a hospital room outside Vienna where he was recovering from a serious auto accident, Ganic claimed that the draft plan "does not look promising." The Bosnians were now invigorated by the Croat successes in the Krajina and around Bihac, and felt encouraged about their own military possibilities.[6] Likewise, Bosnian Foreign Minister Mohamed Sacirbey had hinted as much in a telephone conversation with Ambassador Albright on that same day, indicating that Bosnia planned to continue its military operations in central, southern, and western Bosnia. On a more hopeful note, Sacirbey also told Albright that President Izetbegovic wanted to avoid another winter at war and that it "is time to make a deal." The Holbrooke delegation was ready to test the will behind this assertion.[7]

The team intended to present the plan first to the Bosnians, but nature interfered. On the morning of August 15, the team had attempted to travel to Sarajevo, but after a harrowing two-hour helicopter ride, was turned back due to inclement weather. Unable to get into the Bosnian capital, the team invited Foreign Minister Sacirbey to Split to present to him the key points of the U.S. initiative. Since Sacirbey's drive would take nearly ten hours, the team decided to spend the afternoon with Ambassador Galbraith in the Croatian town of Imoski. There, they watched Assumption Day festivities including a 25,000 person Mass, and over lunch they met with Croat Foreign Minister Mate Granic and Tudjman's Special Envoy Miomir Zuzul. Holbrooke and Frasure outlined the peace initiative for the two Croatian officials, who responded favorably. After the meeting, Holbrooke reflected that it had been better to present the plan to the Croatians first -- they

---

Karadzic or Mladic should take place inside Bosnia, although the prosecutor of the International War Crimes Tribunal had informed the US that he would "not mind" if a meeting were to take place in Belgrade.

[4] See State Department paper, "Proposals for Next Round of Negotiations: Gameplan for Regional Mission (Draft), no date. Not clear who saw the memorandum, although was found in EUR, COS, and S/P files.

[5] [redacted] B1

[6] "My fourth meeting with Dr. Ejup Ganic," Cable, Vienna 6396, August 15, 1995.

[7] "Ambassador Albright's telcon with Bosnian Foreign Minister Sacirbey," Cable, USUN 3109, August 15, 1995.

could now tell Milosevic that Tudjman supported the initiative -- referring to the fog that prevented the team from going to Sarajevo as the "fortuitous fog."[8]

Later that day, the team returned to Split to see Sacirbey. They met for 2 1/2 hours in the back of the delegation's military airplane to ensure privacy. The meeting went well, later characterized by Frasure as "a good start" and "generally constructive." Holbrooke walked Sacirbey through Lake's seven points, explaining that they had the full backing of the President and that the U.S. would support the goals of the Bosnian government within the general framework of the 1994 Contact Group plan. As Holbrooke outlined the carrots and sticks, Sacirbey paid particular attention to the subject of UNPROFOR withdrawal and lift-and-strike. Disturbingly, the Bosnian Foreign Minister indicated that a scenario involving lift-and-strike "might be more interesting for the Bosnians than reaching a peace accord." Sacirbey also complained about the "red light" received from Washington on Bosnian military advances (presumably conveyed during his telephone conversation with Albright the previous day)[9]; stressed his desire for a strong Bosniac-Croat federation government; reaffirmed the integrity of the 51-49 territorial division; and outlined the need for Sarajevo to be under UN control.

On Gorazde, Sacirbey insisted that the Bosnians keep it. Holbrooke agreed, and therefore did not ask for any changes in consideration of Gorazde's status. To assure that there was no question about this sentiment, Holbrooke told Sacirbey to deny publicly that the U.S. had pressured the Bosnians to give it up. With pleasure, the telegenic and media-savvy Sacirbey obliged.[10]

This Gorazde announcement was the first substantive departure from Lake's seven points, which had outlined that the U.S. would seek to "steer" the Bosnians to trade Gorazde for Serb concessions. Although many U.S. officials, particularly those in the Pentagon, felt that Bosnian territory needed to be more compact and militarily defensible, Holbrooke strongly believed that the U.S. could not ask them to give up the safe area in eastern Bosnia. He had told Lake this in London, and the National Security Advisor did not push the issue. With Sacirbey's public statement, Holbrooke hoped that trading Gorazde would now be off the table.[11]

While Sacirbey's comments that day to the team were supportive of the U.S. approach, Holbrooke, Frasure and Kruzel were troubled by his statement that the failure scenario seemed attractive. They feared that there could be a flaw in the U.S. plan -- the Bosnians might misperceive the "stick" of lift-and-leave as a "carrot." The Bosnians possibly did not believe that the U.S. would ever simply lift the arms embargo and walk away; they felt they had too much support in the U.S., particularly on Capitol Hill. Although Sacirbey's comment merely suggested this, the U.S. team knew that they would have to maintain the pressure on the Bosnians and remind them that if their intransigence killed an agreement, they would be left behind.[12]

---

[8] See Galbraith Diplomatic Diary, p41; Galbraith interview 2; Owen interview; Menzies interview; Hill comment, Dayton History Seminar; and Holbrooke interview 3 (notes).

[9] According to the telcon, Albright had urged that the Bosnian military be careful not to overextend itself in action around Bihac. She did not threaten Sacirbey, but merely told him continued action might be unwise.

[10] See Memorandum from Kornblum (EUR) to Christopher, "Holbrooke Mission: Meeting with Sacirbey," (based on Frasure phone call), August 15, 1995; and, Kruzel notes (both type-written and hand-written) "Conversation with Sacirbey -- Comments of Peace Agreement," undated.

[11] Holbrooke interview 3 (notes).

[12] Hill, Clark, Kerrick and Holbrooke comments, Dayton History Seminar.

[redacted]

After the meeting in Split the U.S. team left for Zagreb. In contrast to Sacirbey's generally favorable response to the plan, the team received a much different Bosnian reaction when Frasure met that night with Hasan Muratovic, a Bosnian Muslim and Prime Minister of the Federation. In a passionate appraisal of the U.S. plan, the Federation minister explained that while it was "interesting," it wouldn't work. In his view, there was "not enough in it" for Milosevic, Karadzic, and Mladic. Muratovic went on to explain that he had concluded "reluctantly" that the Contact Group plan was dead, and that the only viable solution was the partition of Bosnia – with a 60/40 breakdown in favor of the Bosnians. "If the Serbs leave," he said, "they don't deserve to take half the country with them". Perhaps when the U.S. proposal "runs onto the rocks," Muratovic mused, "the time will have come to approach Belgrade on a partition deal."[13]

Tudjman: The Master of the Game

On the morning of the 16th, the Holbrooke delegation, joined by the U.S. Ambassador to Croatia Peter Galbraith, met with Croatian President Franjo Tudjman. Tudjman, a former General in the Yugoslav Army, was clearly energized by recent Croat military successes in the Krajina. Frasure commented that the Croat President was "flush with victory." Ambassador Galbraith remarked to the American delegation that he had not seen Tudjman so ebullient in eighteen months. The Croatian President responded positively but vaguely to the American peace initiative, sharing the U.S. view that recent Croat gains on the battlefield offered "favorable conditions" for a peaceful solution. He stressed that Croatia's priorities lay with the situation in Eastern Slavonia (or as the Croats called it, the "occupied territories"), and that he wanted to reintegrate the area into Croatia. On the Bosniac-Croat federation, Tudjman professed a desire to strengthen it but expressed that it was "a heavy cross to bear" -- there was considerable resistance from Bosnian Croats to cooperate with Bosnian Muslims.

Tudjman also asserted that the only lasting solution in Bosnia was territorial partition, alluding to his infamous "menu map" of three months earlier as the only solution in the mutual interest of both sides.[14] Holbrooke firmly rejected this statement, asserting that "no involuntary dismemberment [of Bosnia] was acceptable to the U.S.." Joseph Kruzel reiterated that the purpose of the U.S. plan was to provide Bosnia a chance to decide its own future. Backtracking a bit, Tudjman said that he supported that idea "for the time being," but reminded the delegation that they must keep in mind the "strategic realities of the future" in drawing the boundaries between the "eastern" and "western" worlds.[15] Tudjman's fatalism concerned the U.S. negotiators. They knew they

[13] "Muratovic Says US Plan Won't Work: It's Time For Partition," Cable, Belgrade 44104, August 18, 1995.

[14] It had been widely reported that Tudjman had foretold these intentions during a May 6, 1995 V-E anniversary dinner in London, where he drew up a rough sketch of his plans on a table menu. The map he drew partitioned Bosnia in two, between the Serbs and the Croats. Holbrooke explains that to this day, Tudjman claims that he was merely drawing a hand-written version of an old French map showing the territorial divisions between Catholicism and Islam. See Holbrooke interview with author (notes), October 17, 1996; and Thomas Friedman, "Whose Balkan Menu?," *New York Times*, September 27, 1996.

[15] This comment reflected Tudjman's nationalist idea that the "west" (meaning Croatia) and the "east" (Muslims and Serbs) could never coexist, and that eventually, these worlds would have to be divided.

[redacted]

needed to make clear to the Croats that such views were not conducive to the peace process.[16]

Following a luncheon with Tudjman, the American delegation split up, with Holbrooke and Clark meeting with Yasusi Akashi, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) and Frasure, Galbraith, Kruzel and Drew meeting with Granic, Zuzul, and Deputy Minister Ivo Sanader. Following up on the earlier discussion with Tudjman, Granic said he agreed with the main points of the U.S. proposal, particularly the language on Eastern Slavonia, sanctions lifting, and mutual recognition. Frasure told Granic that Tudjman's "historically deterministic" approach toward Bosnia was counterproductive. Backing Frasure, Kruzel posed a simple choice to Granic: play ball or lose. "Croatia must decide if it wishes to be viewed as a Western nation, with Western values and respectful of democratic processes," Kruzel said, "or Croatia can forego such Western political, military and economic support should it decide to take advantage of short-term gains and carve up Bosnia based on fears of an Islamic state in Europe." Kruzel's threats registered with the Foreign Minister -- while Tudjman truly believed that his own solution (outlined by the "menu map") presented the best result for the West, Granic said Croatia understood the "realities of the situation." Galbraith characterized this comment as evidence that Granic and Zuzul were "clearly uncomfortable with Tudjman's grandiose strategic designs, recognized the potential difficulty this could cause, and implied that Tudjman's views were not GOC (Government of Croatia) policy."[17]

As the Holbrooke team left Zagreb for Belgrade, they were a bit disconcerted by what they had seen and heard from the Croatians. Tudjman's boastful performance, clearly inspired by his military victories, was at best very problematic for the U.S. initiative, and at worst a foreshadowing of renewed Croat-Serb, and possibly Croat-Muslim conflict. Dizzy with success, the Croat President might push things too far. This performance seemed to be the return of the "old Tudjman" -- the "Red Queen" from *Alice in Wonderland*, the chauvinistic, aggressive Tudjman of the 1993 Croat-Muslim war.[18] In Galbraith's view, "with the success of Krajina and his belief that the U.S. is Croatia's best friend favoring it over all other Balkan parties, the old Tudjman has reemerged with even greater vigor." Galbraith felt, along with Holbrooke and particularly Frasure, that Tudjman's recent display was precisely the type of behavior that caused the Muslim-Croat war. While the U.S. considered it unlikely that he would act to capture a slice of Bosnia in the near future, Tudjman's behavior could bring grave consequences to the fledgling Muslim-Croat Federation. This potential Tudjman problem, Galbraith cabled Washington, "needs to be nipped in the bud."[19] Despite these

[16] For Frasure's readout of the meeting, see "Frasure Readout of Holbrooke-Tudjman Discussion, August 16, 1995," notes taken by Kornblum (EUR); for Galbraith's report, see "Tudjman Hears US Proposal, Agrees 'In Principle' But Sees the Opportunities Differently," Cable, Zagreb 3146, August 17, 1995; and Galbraith's Diplomatic Diary, pp41-42.

[17] "Granic Accepts Main Points of US Regional Peace Proposal," Cable, Zagreb 3150, August 17, 1995; and Galbraith Diplomatic Diary, p42.

[18] In a August 16 memorandum to Secretary Christopher reviewing the Zagreb talks, Kornblum characterized Tudjman as "chauvinistic and war-happy." For a vivid portrait of Tudjman, see Glenny, p63.

[19] "The 'Old' Tudjman Resurfaces in Anti-Muslim Tirade, New Map for B-H," Cable, Zagreb 3151, August 17, 1995.

very real concerns, the Holbrooke team had to deal with the more immediate problem at hand: Slobodan Milosevic.

To the Table With "The Gambler"

Milosevic, considered by many analysts the leader most responsible for the Balkans' bloodshed, would need to be the linchpin in any peace agreement. Milosevic was the Balkan version of Syria's Assad -- a keen, relentless negotiator and ruthless dictator averse to compromise, but critical to comprehensive peace in the region. The U.S. charge in Belgrade, Rudolph Perina, aptly characterized Milosevic as a "gambler" -- a leader desperately wanting a deal to "transform his hand into real winnings," but willing to up the ante and wait if the deal proved unacceptable. "Milosevic the gambler is also Milosevic the wily rug merchant," Perina pointed out in a cable to Holbrooke. "If [Milosevic] does not get his bottom price, he will pass on the deal and move to limit his political damage." Milosevic was prone to behavior captured in the Serb word "*inat*" -- a word that Serbs use to self-describe their proud, stubborn, all-or-nothing attitude. Perina noted that while "Milosevic is more cunning and realistic than most Serb leaders in coping with pressure, he is not immune to the '*inat*' syndrome... after all he has gambled over the past year, [he] will be looking for a deal that he can portray as a win, not just an easing of punishment."[20]

Despite his proclivity for "*inat*," U.S. analysts felt that in the wake of Krajina and crippling international sanctions, Milosevic would be ripe for a bargain. He had worked for the past year, first through talks with Frasure and most recently with Bildt, to negotiate an agreement to get the sanctions lifted. As the State Department's "gameplan" memorandum observed, "there is really only one issue [with Milosevic], the same one that we have been discussing for months: sanctions."

[redacted] B1

As they arrived in Belgrade, the Holbrooke delegation felt that the U.S. now had the cards to call his bluff.

For Holbrooke, this was a pivotal meeting. He had never met the Serbian leader (Frasure and Perina were perhaps the two U.S. officials who knew Milosevic best), and this first encounter would allow Holbrooke to show that there had been a new departure in U.S. diplomacy. Milosevic had been described by former Secretary of State James Baker as a "tough," a person who only understood the language of power. Holbrooke, himself a formidable negotiator, knew that he had to deal with him firmly.

One way to play "hardball" with Milosevic, as Perina later suggested, would be to use tactics "that play upon Milosevic's inherent prejudices, fears, and emotions." Chief among these were his hatred of Tudjman and Karadzic, two men "he considers far inferior to himself and yet perceived as successful in defying and upstaging him. His personification of this conflict is key to his mindset and tactics." Accordingly, Perina advised Holbrooke to warn Milosevic that any delay on his part would prolong circumstances "that allow Tudjman to circumvent the arms embargo," and leave open the threat that Karadzic could be rehabilitated if he proved more forthcoming than Milosevic.

[20] "Milosevic the Gambler," Cable, Belgrade 4039, August 15, 1995.

[21] [redacted] B1

While the U.S. didn't want to deal with the Bosnian Serb leader, Perina explained that leaving this option open would cause Milosevic to worry about being sidelined by Karadzic. Finally, Perina suggested that Milosevic be put on notice that economic sanctions would remain in place until he compromised. "Milosevic should be aware that he is not out of the woods on becoming another Saddam Hussein or Colonel Qadhafi if he fails to deliver when needed."[22]

The nearly six-hour August 17 meeting at the Presidency building in Belgrade has been described as an important "get to know you session" between Holbrooke and Milosevic. Talking over dinner, there was a lot of banter about New York City and the banking world (Milosevic had once had a brief experience in the New York banking community, as had Holbrooke). Substantively, Milosevic told the U.S. team that he could not recognize Croatia after what had happened in Krajina and, to no one's surprise, he demanded a full lifting of sanctions against Serbia.[23] Milosevic also argued that any agreement should be put to a referendum of all Serbs as a way to convince Pale to accept it. He tried to distance himself from the Bosnian Serbs, agreeing with a military assessment provided by Lt. General Wes Clark on the deteriorating situation of the Bosnian Serb army, repeatedly railing against Karadzic as a "crazy, dumb maniac." Holbrooke bluntly told Milosevic that he had to prove he could handle Karadzic by overtaking him -- proving that he alone would speak for the Bosnian Serbs: "We will not talk to you until you make a deal with the Bosnian Serbs," Holbrooke said. Further, he warned Milosevic that if the negotiating effort failed, the U.S. would implement certain "sticks," such as lift-and-strike, that would not be beneficial to Serbia.[24]

The Holbrooke delegation reported back to Washington that this first meeting with the Serb leader was "inconclusive." Milosevic had said virtually nothing new, instead focusing on his referendum proposal, about which Holbrooke was skeptical.[25] Milosevic's tirade against the Bosnian Serbs was a classic piece of empty showmanship -- well known to those with experience dealing with him. Since he had already broken with Karadzic over the Contact Group plan a year earlier, it was very easy for him to disparage the Bosnian Serb leader. That night, Holbrooke and Frasure stayed at the Ambassadorial residence with Perina, where they discussed the fact that not much had changed since Frasure and Perina had last met the Serbian leader in June.

Holbrooke was discouraged that little headway had been made with Milosevic. "Our August 17 meeting depressed me," Holbrooke wrote in his draft memoirs. "It provided no indication that Milosevic had changed any of his positions since Frasure's last visit [in June]... I thought he was playing games with us -- minor word games devoid of substantive or serious content."[26] The morning of August 18, the American negotiator

[22] Memorandum for Holbrooke from Perina, "Playing Hardball with Milosevic," no date, EUR/SCE files.

[23] It would be over a year later, August 23, 1996, that Croatia and the FRY finally signed a treaty of normalization and recognition.

[24] For details on meeting, see Perina interview; "Readout of Holbrooke-Milosevic Discussions, August 17, 1995 (notes from Holbrooke phone report); General Clark's "Daily Update" to CJCS/VCJCS, August 17, 1995; and Holbrooke comment, Dayton History Seminar.

[25] Holbrooke interview, Dayton History Seminar. Following the larger meeting, Frasure and Drew met with FRY Foreign Minister Milutinovic to discuss this proposal further. Milosevic had initially raised this with Frasure during their talks in the spring. The proposal had changed a bit since then: rather than simply a ratification of the full package, such a vote would be held at the beginning of the negotiating process as a way to gain leverage over Pale.

[26] Quote from preliminary draft of Holbrooke memoirs, Chapter 1 (July 6, 1996), p4.

awoke angry and determined. "Listen you guys," Holbrooke said flatly to Perina and Frasure, "I'm going back to see Slobo and I'm going to throw a God damn fit this morning." The three then met in Perina's garden, where Holbrooke explained that he needed to lay down a marker with Milosevic, to "scare the hell out of him, to tell him that what he was doing was totally unacceptable."[27] Holbrooke felt that the large group meeting had been too unwieldy, and he wanted to establish a more direct relationship with the Serb leader, reducing the number of people in the room "to create an impression of greater intensity and intimacy." Holbrooke decided that only Frasure and the NSC's Drew would accompany him.[28]

The three-hour meeting went according to plan. After Milosevic delivered his standard positions, Holbrooke lit into him with his planned tirade. He told Milosevic that there was no time for long bargaining, and that the U.S. needed something more than his tired demands. The Serb leader seemed unmoved; he only stared back at Holbrooke with his "penetrating gaze." To the rest of the delegation awaiting in the anteroom, only shouts could be heard from behind the closed doors.[29]

Holbrooke also demanded that Milosevic secure a route through which the American team could safely travel to Sarajevo. He said that "it was disgraceful, as well as time-consuming and dangerous to continue to travel from Belgrade to Sarajevo by the current method -- flying on a USAF plane to Split, conducting a complicated sub-negotiation with the UN and French for helicopters, taking the choppers over tough terrain in uncertain weather to ever-changing drop-off points, and then driving in armored cars and APC's over Mt. Igman." Holbrooke believed that if Milosevic could secure such a route, it would be seen as a confidence-building measure and create "a public sense of progress" toward peace. Milosevic had said that he was willing to work for peace, and Holbrooke wanted him to prove it.

Holbrooke asked whether a Belgrade-Sarajevo air route would be possible, and Milosevic immediately, and surprisingly, sent an aide to contact Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic to find out. Despite his claims that he had no control over the Bosnian Serbs, this action proved that Milosevic at least had the credibility to try. As Holbrooke later reflected, "it was the first time we had seen what was later to become a recurring pattern in our negotiations -- a direct line between Milosevic... and Mladic. Sometimes it produced results, sometimes not." This day it failed. Mladic replied that he could not guarantee the safety of air transport, but that he could assure safety on a shorter route over the Bosnian Serb-protected Kisiljak road. EU envoy Carl Bildt had recently used this route, as had Holbrooke himself during a trip to Sarajevo as a private citizen in 1992. Holbrooke now felt that an official U.S. delegation could not be subjected to numerous Bosnian Serb checkpoints along Kisiljak. He asked Milosevic to provide his own personal guarantee (not Mladic's) that the delegation would not be stopped en route to Sarajevo. Milosevic refused, and the Holbrooke team decided that they must take the Mt. Igman route. The delegation would return to Zagreb to brief the Croats that night, and attempt to travel to Sarajevo on Saturday, August 19. They told Milosevic they would be back to see him on the 20th.[30]

---

[27] Perina interview.

[28] Holbrooke memoirs, Chapter 1 (July 6, 1996), pp5-6.

[29] Ibid., Perina interview; Clark interview, September 18, 1996.

[30] This account from Holbrooke's report of the meeting, "The Road to Sarajevo," undated document. In this account, he says that he did not expect Milosevic to agree to this proposal, but rather sought to start the

Although the Milosevic meetings had been largely discouraging, the team left Belgrade feeling that there had been some substantive movement. All three parties had now been briefed on the initiative's points, and the diplomatic effort was heading forward, if slowly. No one was quite sure yet where negotiations would lead, but all three parties seemed to understand that the West's patience had run out. Most important, perhaps, Holbrooke and his colleagues had established a clear marker with the parties: the U.S. finally meant business and was willing to use "sticks" -- economic, political, and military -- if the parties refused to cooperate.

The Mt. Igman Tragedy

The shuttle continued with the team's arrival in Zagreb to discuss the Milosevic talks with the Croats and Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Siladjzic, who by coincidence was in the Croat capital on his way to the Middle East. Holbrooke reported to Tudjman Milosevic's unwillingness to recognize Croatia in the aftermath of Krajina, and reiterated the need for Croat military restraint in Eastern Slavonia.[31] The delegation also voiced their concerns about whether the Croats were sincere in supporting the territorial integrity of Bosnia. In response, Tudjman returned to the fatalism shown two days before. He even went so far as to quote back to the American delegation a view attributed to Henry Kissinger: "If you couldn't hold together Yugoslavia, you can't hold together Bosnia-Herzegovina."[32]

In many ways, the Croats were responsible for creating the environment that made the U.S. initiative possible -- their successful lightning strike against Krajina provided the final push that convinced U.S. decision-makers to move forth with the mission. With the Serbs on the run and the battlefield a bit more level militarily, the situation had become much more amenable to negotiations. With that, the fears of many in Washington had been proved wrong. "In fact," Holbrooke later reflected, "the Croatian gamble had succeeded. When the local Serbs in the Krajina failed to protect their ill-gotten gains, Zagreb won an easy, almost uncontested victory which affected the balance of power in the region. Moreover, the unexpected abandonment of the Croatian Serbs by Milosevic dramatically eliminated one of our greatest fears -- that Belgrade would send its regulars back into the war to save fellow Serbs in Croatia."[33] Nevertheless, the Croats' own success had left them excessively emboldened, and the U.S. delegation was concerned that Croat hubris could scuttle this rare diplomatic opportunity.

In a report to Secretary of Defense Perry, Joe Kruzel elaborated on these concerns. During the talks in Zagreb, Kruzel had had a long discussion with Croat Defense Minister Gojko Susak as they walked around the grounds of Tudjman's villa. The Croat military gains in Western Bosnia, Kruzel reported, would allow the Muslim-Croat Federation to hold roughly 51 per cent of the territory in Bosnia. This new reality brought both good

---

process of creating a safer route and learn more about how much control the Serb leader had over events in Bosnia. See also Holbrooke, "The Road to Sarajevo"; and draft Chapter 1 (July 6, 1996) of his memoirs. The other account of this meeting from notes of Frasure phone call with Komblum, "Report on Holbrooke meeting with Milosevic, August 18, 1995, 9:00am."

[31] On August 17, Washington cabled Moscow to inform the Russians that the US was working to urge Croat military restraint, and asked if Russian diplomats could do the same with the Serbs in Belgrade. See "USG Call for Zagreb's Restraint: Informing Moscow," Cable, State 195800, August 17, 1995.

[32] "Tudjman reacts to brief on Milosevic meetings," Cable, Zagreb 6977, August 18, 1995.

[33] Draft Holbrooke memoirs, Chapter 2 (September 21, 1996), p13.

and bad news. "The good news is that the Federation is finally at 51% [the Contact Group plan's goal]. The bad news is that the territory held by the Federation will be overwhelmingly Bosnian Croat land. The Muslims are severely shortchanged." Susak had implied that the "Croats were not about to swap 'their' territory within the 51% for increases in Muslim territory." Kruzel saw that "the Croats are now, or will soon be, a status quo power in the region, delighted with what they have and willing to fight to hold onto it."

In terms of implications for the U.S. initiative, Kruzel was convinced that Croatia's posture caused big problems for the "lift-and-leave" option if talks failed. If the idea would be to provide weapons and training to the Federation to balance the Serbs, "that's not possible, because the Croats won't fight the Serbs over the Muslims, [nor] will they let the Muslims acquire enough weapons to be in a position to pose any sort of challenge to Zagreb." Kruzel saw that the potential for infighting within the Federation was a "fundamental conceptual flaw" of the U.S. proposal. In this light, facilitating Muslim-Croat cooperation would be crucial to any agreement's success. This memorandum, dated August 18, was Kruzel's last. By the time Pentagon officials found it on their desks the morning of August 19, all of Washington was focused on reports of a tragedy on Mt. Igman.[34]

After an overnight stop in Split, Holbrooke, Clark, Frasure, Kruzel, Drew, and Clark's aide Lt. Col. Daniel Gerstein set off via helicopter for the Mt. Igman road, which they would take into Sarajevo.[35] They began to travel up Mt. Igman at 10am Sarajevo time (4am EST) in two French military vehicles: Holbrooke and Clark in a Humvee, and Frasure, Kruzel, Drew, Gerstein and U.S. Diplomatic Security Agent Peter Hargreaves in an Armored Personnel Carrier (APC).

At 6:15am Washington time the morning of August 19, John Menzies, the U.S. Ambassador-designate in Sarajevo, telephoned the State Department Operations Center to inform them of reports he received about an accident involving Holbrooke's convoy on Mt. Igman. In trying to maneuver around a French truck on a narrow mountain bend, the APC with Frasure, Kruzel, Drew, Gerstein and Hargreaves slipped off a cliff and rolled several hundred yards down the Igman slope. Frasure, Kruzel, and Drew were killed.[36]

Almost immediately after Menzies' phone call, officials at the State Department went into action to respond to the Igman tragedy. Chris Hill, Frasure's deputy in the European Bureau, called Menzies to get a full read-out of the situation, and then called Deputy Secretary of State Talbott and Deputy National Security Advisor Samuel "Sandy" Berger (both Christopher and Perry were on vacation). Holbrooke first talked to the officials in Washington almost two hours later in a call with Talbott, Lake, Berger, and General Shalikashvili on the line. Later, he spoke with the President.[37] Speaking in a calm, controlled voice, Holbrooke told the President that "we must suspend the mission long enough to bring our fallen comrades home... you sent us here as a team. We'll come back as a team, and then we're anxious to resume our mission."

---

[34] "Trip Update" from Kruzel to Secretary Perry, August 18, 1995. The memorandum also went to senior Pentagon officials Jan Lodal and Joseph Nye. At the top of the memorandum, Kruzel handwrote: "Please deliver to addresses at Saturday [August 19] opening of business."

[35] See Holbrooke draft memoir, Chapter 1 (July 6, 1996), pp11-12.

[36] A French soldier was also killed in the accident.

[37] Calls detailed in State Department Operations Center Phone Logs, August 19, 1995, Shifts I and II.

"That's fine," the President said. "Come home as soon as you can, but make it clear that our commitment to the peace effort will continue and that you will lead it."

After a short and somber meeting with Bosnian President Izetbegovic in Sarajevo, the delegation departed for Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany. On August 21, the Holbrooke team returned to Washington to bury the bodies of their colleagues, and the U.S. government began to regroup.[38]

Putting the Pieces Back Together

Following the accident, U.S. officials had to decide what the next steps would be. Ironically, the tragedy forced the Administration to consider more deeply the fundamental goals of and prospects for its initiative. In this way, the process of regrouping also allowed an opportunity to assess the status and sharpen the goals of the mission. Had the Holbrooke trip accomplished enough to warrant continuing the diplomatic effort? If so, what should the next U.S. move be? Who should replace the three lost on Mt. Igman?

The U.S. had lost three officials whose efforts had been integral to its policy and diplomacy throughout 1995. Bob Frasure had been a key player in the State Department's policy toward the Balkans, serving throughout 1995 as Christopher and Holbrooke's point-man for the region. More important, he had had an established negotiating rapport with Milosevic, whose cooperation would be central to any agreement.[39] Joe Kruzel, for his part, was Perry's point-man for the region. He had had a good relationship with Croat Defense Minister Susak and understood acutely the brewing problems with the Federation. Nelson Drew, who had worked closely with Lake, Berger, and Vershbow on devising the "endgame strategy" was the NSC's only link to the initiative it had launched. While negotiators like Frasure, Kruzel, and Drew could never be replaced, new people would have to be found to fill their roles.

There was no debate that the U.S. should continue its diplomatic effort with a newly constituted team. If anything, the accident seemed to embolden U.S. leaders to push forward.[40] In a phone call with French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette only hours after the Mt. Igman accident, Secretary Christopher said that while there would be a pause to bring the bodies home to the U.S., the accident "would cause us to redouble our efforts and sharpen our resolve to see peace in the region."[41] President Clinton himself reiterated publicly what he had already told Christopher and Holbrooke privately: "I think the thing that they [Frasure, Kruzel and Drew] would want us to do is press ahead, and that's what we intend to do."[42] Indeed, while negotiators had been meeting in the region, officials in Washington had already started working on the structure and content

---

[38] Details from Holbrooke memoirs, preliminary draft Chapter 1; "The Road to Sarajevo," *The New Yorker*; Roger Cohen, "Taming the Bullies of Bosnia," *The New York Times Magazine*, December 17, 1995; and Holbrooke interview on the PBS television program, *Charlie Rose*, December 15, 1995, Transcript #1531.

[39] According to Holbrooke, this was the only shuttle Frasure was to have been on. After introducing Holbrooke and the team to Milosevic, Frasure was to remain in Washington to be the "backstop" for the shuttle team. Christopher Hill, Frasure's Deputy, was slotted to replace him.

[40] Clark interview, September 18, 1996; Bass Interview; John Price interview, September 19, 1996.

[41] "Secretary's Conversation with de Charette: August 19, 1995," Cable, State 198590, August 21, 1995. Deputy Secretary Talbott expressed the same during a meeting with UK Ambassador Renwick at the State Department, see "Deputy Secretary and UK Ambassador on Bosnia," Cable, State 20278, August 25, 1995.

[42] See John Pomfret, "Three US Peace Negotiators Die in Car Wreck Near Sarajevo," *Washington Post*, August 20, 1995. Christopher recalled that in a phone conversation with the President the morning of the accident, "it was clear that he wanted us to continue this effort." Christopher interview, October 22, 1996.

of a future agreement. Although the Holbrooke mission had revealed some problem areas (with the Croats, for example), there was no reason to believe that it would be futile to press ahead. In terms of overall strategy, "once people got themselves together [from the tragedy of the accident], there was not much question about going forward."[43]

With the "if" question answered quickly and easily, the next step was to determine how to press ahead. Holbrooke reported to Christopher that the talks thus far had been productive though inconclusive in details. He saw that among the first U.S. challenges on the next shuttle would be slowing the Croatian war machine before it sparked a conflict with Belgrade or even rekindled tensions with Sarajevo, as well as convincing the Bosnians of the need for territorial compromise.[44] Regarding the Serbs, Holbrooke told the Secretary that between Milosevic's desire to see sanctions lifted and the Bosnian Serbs' apparent understanding that time is running out, "for the first time in four years, real pressure may be building." Pale could either negotiate on the basis of the U.S. plan which allowed for ties with Belgrade and a reasonable division of land, or face the wrath of Zagreb and NATO. These issues, in addition to the situation in Gorazde and sanctions against Serbia, were discussed at an August 22 Principals Committee (PC) meeting.[45]

Domestically, the accident quelled criticism that had been bubbling up against the Administration, particularly from Capitol Hill. On August 11, President Clinton -- in only the second veto of his Presidency -- blocked passage of the Dole-Lieberman bill that would have unilaterally lifted the American arms embargo against Bosnia. On August 18, Senator Dole wrote to Clinton to express his concerns about the U.S. initiative, particularly concerning the sanctions "carrots" being offered to Milosevic. In an August 28 reply letter, President Clinton wrote that in the aftermath of the Mt. Igman tragedy, "we intend to persevere in our efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Balkans and are exploring with the parties ideas that include both carrots and sticks." On sanctions, Clinton reassured the Senator that "we are proposing suspension of a broad range of sanctions -- not full lifting as your letter states -- only if there is agreement on a political settlement in Bosnia." The President wrote that while he disagreed with Dole's position toward the arms embargo, he understood that the ultimate purpose was to restore a balance of power that would hopefully bring peace. Yet, President Clinton concluded, "I believe we must seize this moment to see if we can achieve a fair and durable settlement now (underlined in letter), without another year of fighting. I hope that you will give that effort a full and unencumbered opportunity to be tested and your strong support if it is successful."[46]

Along with the more immediate tactical concerns that the next shuttle would have to tackle, the Administration began to think more actively about what the shape of a future agreement might look like. The initiative, as sketched out in Lake's talking points,

---

[43] Steinberg interview.

[44] On August 18, Izetbegovic had produced a twelve point peace program for Bosnia, which included points on the territorial integrity of Bosnia, adherence to the Contact Group plan, a solution to Sarajevo, war reconstruction, and war crimes, among others. It also said that Milosevic should be the negotiator for the Bosnian Serbs. See "OSCE Rep Announces Izetbegovic's Peace Program," Cable, USVienna 2335, August 25, 1995.

[45] See memorandum to Secretary Christopher from Holbrooke, "Principals Committee Meeting on the Balkan Crisis, August 22, 1995," August 22, 1995.

[46] See Todd Purdum, "Clinton Vetoes Lifting Bosnia Arms Embargo," *New York Times*, August 12, 1995. Letter from Dole to Clinton, August 17, 1995; Letter from Clinton to Dole, August 28, 1995.

envisioned a Bosnian end-state largely consistent with the principles the Contact Group endorsed the previous year: Bosnia would remain a single state, divided into two autonomous entities, with a special relationship allowed to form between the Bosnian Serbs and the FRY and the Muslim-Croat Federation and Croatia, respectively. Holbrooke's first shuttle had focused primarily on broader issues, as negotiators sought to convince the parties on the mere principle of pursuing a diplomatic settlement.

The opening steps to flesh out the original Contact Group principles began with the decision to make Roberts Owen a part of the reconstituted shuttle team. For some time, many officials, most notably Christopher, felt that if the U.S. was going to try to mediate this conflict and help create a new Bosnian constitution, an experienced attorney should be part of the negotiating team. "It seemed to me," Christopher recalled, "that we lacked anyone who had had significant experience in drafting international documents, anyone who was basically an international lawyer." The Secretary felt that "the things that [would be] put to paper on the shuttles were going to have a profound affect on the governing structures of Bosnia."[47] On August 20, the day after the Mt. Igman accident, Christopher called Owen (then on vacation in Maine) to discuss joining the new team. Christopher and Owen were longtime professional associates and personal friends; they had worked together in the State Department under President Carter (Christopher as Deputy Secretary, Owen as Legal Advisor), and Owen had played a key role under Christopher in negotiating the release of the American hostages in Iran during 1979-80. Christopher believed that Owen's experience with Iran uniquely suited him for what promised to be a long and arduous negotiating process. "I think it will keep you busy for a couple of months, " the Secretary told his friend. Owen, a highly respected Washington lawyer at Dean Acheson's old law firm Covington & Burling, had been the lead arbitrator for the Muslim-Croat Federation, and thus was already familiar with the key issues. After discussing his appointment with Holbrooke on August 22, Owen agreed to join the team and returned to Washington.[48]

Meeting at Fort Myer

On August 23, over 300 people gathered at the yellow-brick chapel of Fort Myer, an Army base across the Potomac River from Washington, to pay tribute to Robert Frasure, Joseph Kruzel, and Nelson Drew. President Clinton, who had interrupted his Wyoming vacation to preside over the ceremony, eulogized the three fallen officials as "quiet American heroes who gave their lives so that others might know a future of hope and a land at peace." Following the 25-minute ceremony, the President revealed the new team of envoys Holbrooke would lead to the region -- Clark; Owen; Brigadier General Don Kerrick, a military intelligence specialist at the NSC; James Pardew, a former Army colonel who was now director of the Pentagon's Balkan Task Force; and Christopher Hill, Frasure's deputy at State who was head of the office of South Central European Affairs.

Following this emotional memorial service, the President and his senior foreign policy advisors -- Christopher, Perry, Lake, Albright, Deutsch, Shalikashvili, Berger, and Leon Feurth -- joined Holbrooke and his new shuttle team in a back-room of the chapel to

[47] Christopher interview, October 22, 1996.
[48] Details on Owen appointment from Owen interview, September 11, 1996; Owen/Holbrooke interview; Steinberg interview; Sapiro/O'Brien interview.

discuss the future of the initiative. Holbrooke presented these officials with a status report on each of Lake's seven points. According to his draft memoirs, Holbrooke's report went as follows:[49] First, on the point that the diplomatic initiative seek an "ambitious, comprehensive settlement," Holbrooke said that everyone in the region understood that "this effort would be different, an all-out attempt to reach this ambitious goal." Second, on seeking three-way mutual recognition and a cease-fire, Holbrooke reported that agreement on the former was unlikely until the end of the negotiating process, and that, in his view, pushing the parties toward a cease-fire would be premature as long as the trend on the battlefield was helpful to the Bosnians. On the third point, seeking more viable borders, Holbrooke repeated what he had told Lake and Sacirbey during his last trip: the U.S. should not press Sarajevo to give up their remaining enclaves. To do so would be, Holbrooke argued, "politically and morally unjustifiable." On the fourth and fifth points, concerning, respectively, constitutional arrangements and sanctions relief, work had not yet begun. On solving Eastern Slavonia, the sixth of Lake's points, Holbrooke said that while too early to address, the issue would have to be completed for a comprehensive settlement to succeed.

Most of the presentation provoked little conversation. But the seventh and final point, regarding economic reconstruction for Bosnia, proved the most controversial. Holbrooke felt -- and argued strenuously that day -- that economic aid to Bosnia would be critical to implementing any settlement. Bosnia was not only a state destroyed by three years of war, but one standing alone after years of dependence on Yugoslavia. Holbrooke believed that the U.S. would have to bare a substantial part of the financial burden in this aid effort.

The problem was, as Holbrooke later reflected, the political atmosphere in Washington created by the "Gingrich earthquake." Congress was typically hostile to foreign aid, but in those budget-cutting times, the issue had become politically lethal. Because of these domestic political implications, neither Lake nor Holbrooke had been authorized to discuss specific financial numbers with the Europeans or Balkan parties. However, since this component of the U.S. initiative would be a crucial carrot, Holbrooke wanted to get the Administration to pledge some assistance soon. "I felt strongly that this [indecision] reduced our chances of success in the negotiations, and weakened us with our European Allies [who would also be expected to shoulder a significant financial burden]."[50]

At Fort Myer, Holbrooke suggested that $500 million would be an appropriate amount for the first year, with Perry recommending that a more suitable figure would be $1 billion. The President initially seemed amenable to the higher number. "If we get peace, we should be prepared to put up a billion dollars," Holbrooke recalls him saying.[51] Others in the room added their views, and the sentiment slowly slipped away from Holbrooke's argument. With a budget crisis looming, the Administration was in no position to request additional expenditures, such advisors as Chief of Staff Leon Panetta explained. To those present, the message seemed clear: the Europeans would have to take the lead financially.

[49] Unless noted otherwise, details of this discussion from draft Holbrooke memoirs, Chapter 2 (September 21, 1996), pp24-33.
[50] Ibid, p30.
[51] Ibid, p32.

[redacted]

After the meeting, Holbrooke was disappointed. "As the discussion ended," he wrote in retrospect, "I knew we were going to have to fight for any specific number at all, and that the final amount of American assistance would be far less that I thought desirable for maximum negotiating value." Nevertheless, in three weeks, the Administration began to lobby Congress for $500 million in aid -- the figure Holbrooke had initially proposed.[52]

Laying the Groundwork for Peace

With only four days until they entered the Balkan maelstrom, the new envoys prepared furiously. Roberts Owen immediately joined discussions on fleshing out the Contact Group principles and preparing basic constitutional points to negotiate with parties during the next shuttle. The U.S. effort not only aimed to end the bloodshed, but establish political and legal structures for a lasting democratic settlement. On August 23, Owen met with Holbrooke, EUR Principal DAS John Kornblum, Washington attorney Lloyd Cutler, and Miriam Sapiro, a lawyer on the State Department's Policy Planning Staff.[53] Holbrooke and Kornblum had decided that an *ad hoc* working group of legal experts should be created to work with Owen and the shuttle team as they negotiated the political and legal principles of a future Bosnian state. They felt that rather than try to broker something from nothing, the U.S. should draw up proposals for the parties to build upon. In the early stages, this *ad hoc* group supported Owen informally as basic principles were established with the parties; later, they began to translate them into draft terms of a comprehensive settlement. Kornblum led the group, which, to avoid the pitfalls of bureaucratic haggling and inertia, existed outside regular State Department channels and the inter-agency process.[54]

Also that day, Secretary Christopher met with Bosnian Foreign Minister Sacirbey, who had come to Washington to attend the Fort Myer memorial service. This was the Secretary's first meeting with a Balkan official since the diplomatic initiative was launched. Christopher emphasized to Sacirbey that the negotiations needed to progress as rapidly as possible, and that the Bosnians had to end their haphazard negotiating style. He suggested that they "organize a team that we can negotiate with on a regular basis, so we don't have to understand the differing views within the Bosnian government." As far as the substance of the talks were concerned, Christopher noted that the U.S. approached the initiative on the same basis as before: a 51-49 division of territory without radical changes to the map. However, the Secretary urged that the Bosnians think about ways to make their territory more compact and defensible. Although this seemed to be a

---

[52] Ibid, p33. The start of the administration's lobbying effort was briefly mentioned in a newspaper article concerning the broader aspects of the negotiations. See Elaine Sciolino, "US Envoy Highlights Fine Print on Bosnia," *New York Times*, September 13, 1995.

[53] Cutler, a former White House Counsel to both Presidents Carter and Clinton, had consulted with Holbrooke periodically throughout the year on legal issues in Bosnia, and was asked by Holbrooke to join these informal consultations. He served as a valuable sounding board for Owen throughout the negotiating process. Lloyd Cutler interview, October 8, 1996; Owen interview, September 11, 1995; Kornblum interview, July 26, 1996; Sapiro/O'Brien interview; Price interview.

[54] The *ad hoc* working group usually comprised Cutler; Sapiro; James O'Brien, an Albright aide in the State Department's USUN office; Tim Ramish of the Legal Advisor's office; with the assistance of Laurel Miller, an associate with Covington and Burling; and either Chris Hoh, Phil Goldberg, or John Burley, the State Department desk officers for Croatia, Bosnia, or the FRY, respectively. Details of legal working group from Kornblum interview; Sapiro/O'Brien interview; Owen interview.

[redacted]

complete reversal of the line Holbrooke had just pushed -- that the Bosnians not be forced to give up Gorazde -- Christopher assured Sacirbey that it was not intended as such. Sacirbey also stressed his support of the Dole-Lieberman bill and the idea of convening an economic donor's conference, to which the Secretary replied that they should first focus on securing a settlement.[55]

Sacirbey and Bosnian Ambassador Kasim Trnka also opened informal discussions with Owen, Kornblum, and the legal experts at State. Meeting in Bob Frasure's old office, these open-ended meetings aimed to provide the foundation for a more detailed political and legal settlement. The parties began the talks by agreeing to the basic concepts for a constitution -- preserving a Bosnian state comprised of two entities, the Federation and Bosnian Serb, with internationally recognized borders and a government able to conduct foreign relations with other states -- and then outlined the "open" issues that remained. More specifically, the group discussed issues concerning the future relationship between the Federation and the Bosnian Serb entities. These talks concluded on August 25 with no firm decisions, but with US participants focusing on four models for developing a constitutional framework.[56]

Following these meetings, Owen drafted a rather detailed proposal for the structure of a Bosnian state to submit to the working group. Owen viewed the drafting as an initial exercise, a way "of getting something started... to get ideas organized on paper and get people talking."[57] The document reflected a variant of a "superstructure" approach in which the Federation and Bosnian Serb entities would be joined at the top by a Federal Government "superstructure" composed of a weak three-person Presidency and temporary Governing Council (designated by the Contact Group) to conduct foreign affairs and defense. The members of the Presidency would be democratically elected, as would local representatives to each "Federation Assembly" -- thus establishing a process to democratic elections, to be monitored by international observers. Owen also recommended that the Governing Council establish commissions on Reparations and Arms Reductions.[58] It was with these ideas in mind that Owen took off on his first shuttle mission with Holbrooke.

Also on August 24, senior Washington officials had to make another trip out to Fort Myer. Between the funerals of Nelson Drew and Joe Kruzel, Holbrooke asked the reconstituted shuttle team to have lunch together at the Officers Club. Although intended primarily as a get-to-know-you session for the new team members, Holbrooke had asked

---

[55] In a press conference after the meeting, Sacirbey suggested that the Bosnians would give the American initiative "a month to two months to succeed," after which the US would have to take "more forceful measures to compel the Serbs to accept peace." Also present at this meeting were Holbrooke, UN Ambassador Albright, and Sandy Vershbow of the NSC. See "Meeting Between Secretary Christopher and Bosnian Foreign Minister Sacirbey," NSC memorandum, August 23, 1995.

[56] The four models, which differed primarily in the degree of integration between the Bosnian Serbs and the Federation, were: 1) an "Enlarged Federation" including the Serbs, 2) a super-autonomous Serb entity lacking any role in the foreign or defense policy of Bosnia, 3) a "holding company" central government with a loose superstructure linking the Federation to the Bosnian Serbs, with the Federation as the dominant entity, and 4) the above superstructure approach modified along the lines of the Contact Group's December 1994 draft Bosnian constitution, recognizing formal equality between the two. A review of these discussions and such options is contained in a "non-paper" drafted by Sapiro. See "Non-Paper on August 23-25, 1995 Discussions for US delegation."

[57] Owen interview, September 11, 1995.

[58] Owen draft document, "A Proposal Re the Political Structure of a Bosnian State," August 27, 1995.

Leon Fuerth, Vice President Gore's National Security Advisor and somewhat intimidating "sanctions czar" of the Administration, to join and brief them on the status of economic sanctions against Serbia.

Sanctions were perhaps the key ingredient in U.S. bargaining leverage over Milosevic. Sanctions relief had been the main component of the earlier Frasure and Bildt negotiations, and would no doubt be important to the current initiative. The sanctions against Serbia – comprised of an international trade embargo and freezing of assets -- had been in place since May 1992, when the UN voted to impose them in retaliation for Serbia's role in the outbreak of the Bosnian war. During these years, this sanctions regime had helped Serbia's economic output plummet by nearly half, with hyper-inflation peaking at 313 per cent a month.

B1

Finally, sanctions were having the pinch intended: Milosevic was clearly upset and wanted them lifted. His complaints about them had become a constant refrain in his meetings with U.S. and European diplomats. Indeed, to U.S. officials, the prospect of Milosevic becoming another Saddam Hussein was one of his "biggest nightmares."[59]

Despite such success, the future existence of the sanctions regime remained uncertain. The Europeans – particularly the Russians -- were opposed to sanctions. In Holbrooke's view, if the Europeans were "left to their own resources... they would have lifted all or most of the sanctions [in] return for almost nothing."[60] The Clinton Administration, led by Fuerth and Madeleine Albright, was steadfastly opposed to lifting sanctions absent Serbian flexibility in negotiations. To Albright, sanctions provided "one of the few times we managed to get the upper-hand and it was a lever I felt was important... [I tried] to maintain them so that we would get the most out of them."[61]

However, as international support for sanctions waned, it became increasingly difficult for the Administration to ward off European opposition. Indeed, intra-Contact Group relations on this issue were deteriorating so rapidly that some, even including the stalwart Fuerth, felt that they would have to end soon. Fuerth explained that there was probably a small window of time – possibly closing as soon as the end of 1995 -- during which sanctions could stay in place. Ironically, the problem with the sanctions wasn't their effectiveness in inflicting pain on Milosevic but with maintaining them. Fuerth had the "sense that sanctions were becoming a wasted asset... [as] they were beginning to decay because as time dragged on, [the costs] were increasing for the Allies." To Holbrooke, the issue threatened to open a wide fissure in U.S.-European relations. "No issue in recent memory has caused greater tension in our relations with our European Allies."[62]

[59]

B1

[60] Holbrooke draft memoirs, Chapter 2 (September 21, 1996), p38.
[61] Albright interview.
[62] Leon Fuerth interview, October 23, 1996; Holbrooke draft memoirs, Chapter 2 (September 21, 1996), p38.

At the Officers Club lunch, Fuerth and the Holbrooke team discussed all of these realities as well as the suggested sanctions strategy for the upcoming negotiations. Although Fuerth sensed that Holbrooke wished to have some flexibility in negotiating sanctions relief with Milosevic (possibly providing some relief in exchange for negotiating concessions), he urged that the U.S. hold tight to get the most out of sanctions.[63] Fuerth believed that the U.S. should maximize the time it had left before maintaining the sanctions regime became too difficult. Holbrooke later acknowledged that he had "tactical differences" with Fuerth, but in the end he agreed not to stray from the Administration's hard-line.[64]

Meanwhile, other aspects of a possible agreement also continued to be fleshed out, particularly on the military side. In an August 18 meeting at the White House, the Deputies Committee (DC) had begun reviewing planning papers on military implementation and the "equip-and-train" proposal. These planning papers were already sketching out the rules of a future "peace implementation force" (PIF), including rules of engagement, mission specifics, exit strategy, and length of deployment. The DC met again on August 23 to follow-up on the implementation proposals, and officials moved ahead on drafting detailed memoranda.[65]

While the DC discussed PIF plans and Owen and State Department lawyers worked on the legal and political specifics, others began laying the more strategic groundwork for the next shuttle -- namely, signaling to the Bosnian Serbs and Milosevic that the U.S. and NATO were prepared to act to end any siege on the safe areas. On August 22, in response to a Bosnian Serb mortar attack around Sarajevo that killed six people and wounded 38 (including six Egyptian UN troops), French troops who were part of the UN's newly constituted Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) fired 155mm howitzers upon Bosnian Serb positions.[66] By August 24, the situation around Gorazde deteriorated further. As the violence in Bosnia escalated, U.S. officials responded publicly that they wanted to give their peace initiative a chance. Privately, tension was mounting for a possible NATO military response.

In a meeting with Sacirbey at the State Department on August 25, Holbrooke reiterated the U.S. and NATO pledge to protect UN safe areas under the "Gorazde rules," and said so after the meeting in a press conference. The situation in the safe areas was becoming so desperate, U.S. officials were concerned that the Bosnian military would act

---

[63] In his August 22 memorandum to Christopher, Holbrooke advised that while sanctions were important, "we must not lose sight that sanctions are a means to the end of a negotiated settlement, not an end in their own right."

[64] See Fuerth interview; Holbrooke draft memoirs, Chapter 2 (September 21, 1996), p39.

[65] The DC agreed that the PIF would be deployed largely in Federation territory, would have a full mandate to use force in self-defense, and would be under full NATO control. DoD suggested that the duration of the mission should be nine months. See "Summary of Conclusions of DC meeting on Bosnia," August 18, 1995. The European Bureau at State had also begun thinking about a PIF, although their focus was on what the US would need to do to develop and execute a strategy for building international political support for such an initiative. An August 22 memorandum from Holbrooke to Christopher outlines what such a force needs (and the political costs of getting it) and suggests creating a combined joint task force, with a distinct NATO identity but using both NATO and non-NATO assets. The memorandum also lays out military contingencies for a range of diplomatic scenarios. See memorandum to Christopher from Holbrooke, "Questions at Issue in Organizing a Strategy for the Military Implementation of a Balkan Peace Settlement," August 22, 1995.

[66] The attack was a part of increased fighting between Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Muslim troops around Sarajevo. See State Department Press Guidance (EUR), August 23, 1995.

[redacted]

to come to the city's rescue, thus escalating the bloodshed. Holbrooke and others hoped that they could avoid this by sending unambiguous public signals that the U.S. and NATO were committed to protect the safe areas. Holbrooke personally was becoming more and more angry about the continued intransigence of the Bosnian Serbs. In an August 27 interview on NBC's "Meet The Press," Holbrooke's frustration was on full display. He suggested repeatedly that the Bosnian Serbs may face NATO airstrikes if there was no progress soon toward peace. As he recalled later, he was purposely trying to convey his extreme displeasure with the stalemate in the peace process, and had discussed making such a comment with Christopher's Chief of Staff Tom Donilon and Under Secretary Peter Tarnoff that weekend.[67]

Shortly after his "Meet the Press" interview, Holbrooke and his colleagues departed for Paris, where they would meet with French officials and Izetbegovic. In less than a week, the U.S. had reconstituted its team and sustained the momentum left after the initial Lake and Holbrooke missions. Significant groundwork had been laid on the specifics of a possible settlement, from basic political and legal relationships to the shape of military implementation. The first shuttle had fulfilled a basic aspect of prenegotiation: to probe each side's interests and intentions. The next shuttle would need to dive deeply into the specifics, hopefully producing a tangible result.

In addition to the numerous negotiating topics packaged in Lake's seven points,[68] perhaps the key issue on the upcoming shuttle was procedural: how to deal with the Bosnian Serbs. There was evidence that the Bosnian Serb leaders were largely in the dark about the U.S. initiative, which raised concerns about both Milosevic's reliability to keep them informed and ability to deliver them in any agreement. This was compounded by the fact that Milosevic had been unable to get them to agree to the Contact Group plan, which he had agreed to over a year earlier.[69]

Since the spring of 1995, the U.S. government's position was that the Bosnian Serbs should be isolated out of the negotiating process. Instead, the argument went, all pressure should be brought to bear on Milosevic to "deliver" the Bosnian Serbs. This position, referred to as the "Milosevic strategy," was devised and championed by Robert Frasure, who had first implemented it during his negotiations that spring. After seeing how Milosevic and the Bosnian Serb leaders would exploit their own differences to

---

[67] Holbrooke interview with author (notes), October 18, 1996. Holbrooke's message received wide press attention, as the reports stated that "the threats are clearly intended to ratchet up pressure on the Bosnian Serbs before peace talks resume in Europe this week." See Steven Greenhouse, "US Officials Say Bosnian Serbs Face NATO Attack if Talks Stall," *New York Times*, August 28, 1995. See also Holbrooke draft chapter 2 (September 21, 1996), pp44-48.

[68] On August 22, the State Department produced a document outlining the status of the endgame strategy's seven points after the Lake and Holbrooke shuttles. On the subject of the map (the 2nd point), the document states that while discussions are in the early stages, the US would seek to steer both parties toward a solution that would trade Gorazde for substantial Serb concessions, yet "we have not pushed this because of the press play and because... all Bosnians stated they were politically unable to give up Gorazde... however, we will continue to steer in this direction." On Eastern Slavonia (6th point), all sides agreed to the endgame proposal "in principle," and while the US recognized the issue vitally important, yet not necessary to resolve immediately as long as peace prevails. Milosevic had said that he recognized that Eastern Slavonia is part of Croatia, but would say the opposite if pressed in public. See State Department memorandum, "Status Report on Tony's Seven Points," August 22, 1995. Although this document appears to be for the shuttle team, Holbrooke does not remember it and quarrels with its recommendations -- particularly concerning Gorazde. Holbrooke interview with author (notes), October 17, 1996.

[69] Clark comment, Dayton History Seminar.

[redacted]

[redacted]

scuttle an agreement, Frasure had come to the conclusion that the best strategy would be to force the two sides together -- linking sanctions relief for Milosevic with cooperation by the Bosnian Serbs. Moreover, the July indictments of Karadzic and Mladic -- the two most powerful Bosnian Serb leaders -- for war crimes made the prospect of negotiating with them almost impossible. Holbrooke fully agreed with Frasure's approach, but others, including the Secretary of State, were concerned about relying solely on Milosevic. As a party to the conflict, the Bosnian Serbs somehow had to be brought into the negotiations. If the Milosevic strategy proved ineffective over the long term, the U.S. would have to consider other ways to include the Bosnian Serbs, possibly by establishing a second channel. In the short term, though, Holbrooke decided to press the Milosevic strategy full-throttle, forcing the Serb leader to demonstrate he could deliver.[70]

Opening the Second Shuttle: Terror Brings Action

As the Holbrooke team traveled to Paris early the morning of August 28, first reports were coming in of another horrific tragedy on the streets of Sarajevo. After the commitments made by NATO at the London conference and after, the constant shelling and sniper fire that had kept Sarajevans underground for the better part of three years had ebbed somewhat. Many people had begun returning to the shops and coffee houses that had made the city famous before the war and, on that sunny Monday morning, the Markale market was particularly crowded. At 11:10am, five mortar shells from the hills above rained on the bustling marketplace, wounding 85 and killing 37. It was the same spot where 68 people had been murdered in a similar attack on February 5, 1994. A year-and-a-half later, this nightmarish encore seemed to symbolize the emptiness of Western threats -- as the press characterized it, the carnage of August 28 "demonstrated how Western attempts to end the war have gone around in circles, drifting from threats to new peace proposals as the killing has continued."[71]

The immediate response from the U.S. and Allies was outrage, and determining blame was the Allies' first priority.[72] In the 1994 attack, the UN's inability to prove conclusively that the Bosnian Serbs' had fired the shell sowed division among the Allies and ultimately prevented a NATO response.[73] Haunted by this failure, UN investigators and Bosnian police specialists arrived at the market twenty minutes after the blast to

[70] The Bosnian Serb problem was best illustrated by an August 22 meeting between British Lt. General Rupert Smith, the UNPROFOR head, and Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic. Smith reported to US officials in Sarajevo that Mladic clearly "had little understanding of the Holbrooke initiative," and expressed that the US had to open a channel to the Bosnian Serbs. Smith suggested that possibly the US could set up another channel, at the very least to pass on reliable information and "to tell them what is at stake." Smith recommended either himself, UNPROFOR Bosnia Chief of Mission Antonio Peduaye, or Carl Bildt -- and highlighted the advantages of Bildt (not a potential hostage, well-versed on the issues, strong support staff, and little to lose in terms of relations with the Bosnians or Croats). See "Mladic: Talking to the Bosnian Serbs," Draft Cable, Sarajevo (no number), August 22, 1995, and "Official-Informal" from John Menzies, charge in Sarajevo, to Chris Hill and Phil Goldberg, EUR, Cable, Sarajevo 485, August 22, 1995.

[redacted]

B1

[71] Roger Cohen, "Shelling Kills Dozens in Sarajevo; US Urges NATO to Strike Serbs," *New York Times*, August 29, 1995. For background on shelling, see "Investigation of Sarajevo Market Attack: 28 August 1995," USUN document (IO/UNP files), September 13, 1995; and "Horror again fills Sarajevo's Market," *New York Times*, August 29, 1995.

[72] Hunter interview, Bass interview.

[73] See Silber and Little, pp309-311; 365.

[redacted]

[redacted]

begin their analysis. Investigators had every reason to believe that the shells were fired by Bosnian Serbs, but needed to attain UN confirmation before a response could be made.[74]

The Holbrooke team had learned of the shelling upon arrival in Paris and, confident the Bosnian Serbs were responsible, believed there was no question that NATO should strike. "You couldn't let [the bombing go by], General Clark recalled. "All that mattered," Holbrooke has written, "was whether the U.S. would take a decisive leadership role and persuade its NATO Allies to join in a meaningful military response -- the sort of massive air campaign that we had so often talked about but never come close to conducting." The attack inescapably became an immediate test of Western resolve -- if the Allies allowed such terror against civilians to go unanswered, as they had in 1994, the commitments agreed to at London would prove meaningless. Holbrooke got in touch immediately with Strobe Talbott to press for airstrikes. Talbott, who was then Acting Secretary of State in Christopher's absence, felt that a military response was "absolutely critical," but questioned whether an air campaign might negatively affect the negotiations. Holbrooke, who had long been an advocate of deploying NATO air power against the Bosnian Serbs, "did not have to think about" his reply. He stressed to Talbott that it "was better to risk negotiating failure with bombing rather than try for progress without it... simple justice required such a response."[75]

In terms of NATO decision-making, the guidelines for how to respond were clear. The August 1 NAC decision to extend the "Gorazde rules" allowed for a military response to such an act.[76] By the evening of August 28 (EDT), U.S. officials confirmed that a NATO strike against the Bosnian Serbs was required. The Secretary of Defense felt that "we [had to] act immediately. We [had to] carry out the threat we made." President Clinton, then back on vacation in Wyoming, had long phone conversations with Tony Lake and Perry in which he approved that the U.S. ask the UN and NATO to act. "We have to hit 'em hard," the President said.[77]

While confident that NATO would turn its 'bombing-key,' the Administration was unsure whether the UN military leaders would turn theirs to act with decisive force. Fortunately for the negotiators, there had been a marked shift in the UN since it last faced such a decision during the Srebrenica and Zepa crises in mid-July. Following the Serb's capture of these cities, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, John Shattuck, conducted a 4-day investigation in the region, collecting

---

[74] By studying the shell's crater and fragments, investigators were able to determine that the weapon was a 120mm mortar, typical of those used by Bosnian Serbs. In addition, UN radar had not picked up the incoming shells, indicating that they would have been fired below radar range from a trajectory originating in Bosnian Serb territory. For a summary, see "Bosnia-Croatia: Summary of UNPROFOR's Investigation of Sarajevo Market Bombing," Cable, USUN 3492, September 14, 1995.

[75] Holbrooke interview, July 10, 1996; Holbrooke interview with author (notes), October 18, 1996; Holbrooke draft memoirs, Chapter 2 (September 21, 1996), pp50-51; Clark interview, Owen interview; Talbott interview. According to State Department Operations Center Telephone Logs, Holbrooke called Talbott at 7:44am, only ninety minutes after initial reports of the shelling. See Shift I, August 28, 1995.

[76] In an August 14 letter, UNPROFOR Commander Lt. General Janvier officially informed Bosnian Serb General Mladic of the August 1 NAC decision to take "all necessary means to deter attacks against the safe areas." Janvier explained that "air operations could be initiated by a variety of possible threats of attack or attacks themselves, including shelling." This was reiterated to Mladic by Janvier in a August 30 letter informing him of the decision to begin airstrikes.

[77] Perry interview; Bass interview.

[redacted]

conclusive evidence of Serb atrocities. On August 10, Ambassador Albright presented this evidence, along with detailed aerial-reconnaissance photography, to the UN Security Council. As she later recalled, the Council members were "genuinely shocked.... There was accumulating evidence of all kinds of horrors that made people face the realities--even those who were the most dubious." The revelations helped overcome most of the residual UN resistance to bombing and would ease their military leader's decision to turn their key when the time came.[78]

The brutal mortar attack dominated the U.S. delegation's discussions in Paris that day. Yet, ironically in light of the terror in Sarajevo, talks were also colored that day by reports of a possible opening with the Bosnian Serbs through Jimmy Carter. On August 28, Bosnian Serb leader and indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic sent Carter a letter stating that he welcomed the new U.S. peace initiative and was prepared to begin negotiations which could lead to a union of the Federation and Bosnian Serbs. Carter and Karadzic had negotiated before -- Carter's trip to Pale in December 1994 was instrumental in bringing about the four-month cease-fire that ended in May 1995. Karadzic's letter implicitly accepted the 51-49 territorial division, and mentioned human rights. At a press conference in Atlanta, Carter stated that this "important statement" should be "put to the test."[79] The Holbrooke delegation, unsure of how strong Karadzic's current position was among the Pale Serbs, felt the letter was "mildly positive," but wanted to see what kind of value it had in the coming days. A Carter aide, Harry Barnes, had told Holbrooke in a phone call that the former President did not want to launch his own regional mission, so the U.S. team was not too concerned that Carter would scuttle their own efforts. If anything, this new development exemplified the importance of solving the negotiating problem with the Bosnian Serbs.[80]

The Holbrooke delegation's first meeting in Paris was with Carl Bildt. Returning to the drawing board after his unsuccessful Washington visit in early August, Bildt's negotiations had brought little movement, and he was apparently pessimistic about the prospects for achieving a settlement. Unlike U.S. negotiators, Bildt had been talking to Bosnian Serbs leaders (predominantly Bosnian Serb Assembly President Momcilo Krajisnik), and had pursued discussions with them on his own constitutional and map proposals. Although he had opened a channel to Pale, Bildt also understood that a major problem for any peace process was that there was no credible figure who could agree to and implement a solution on behalf of the Bosnian Serbs[81]

---

[78] Albright interview, October 28, 1996. Shattuck recounts the details of his investigation into the Srebrenica and Zepa atrocities in his July 25, 1996 interview and how this evidence led to the August 10 revelations in the UN Security Council in his July 30, 1996 interview.

[79] On August 28, the letter was faxed to Holbrooke in Paris from Harry Barnes, an aide to the former President at the Carter Center. Carter's comments from Carter Center press release, August 29, 1995.

[80] For readout on the delegation's views of the Carter-Karadzic letter, see Jim Pardew's report to Walter Slocombe, "Peace Initiative in the Former Yugoslavia -- Paris," August 29, 1995; Holbrooke interview with author, September 19, 1996 (notes); and State Department Operations Center Telephone Logs, 11:44am Holbrooke-Barnes call, Shift II, August 28, 1995. See also Holbrooke draft memoirs, Chapter 7 (December 12, 1996) pp13-15.

[81] For Bildt's talks with the Bosnian Serbs, see: "Bildt: Contacts with Pale," Cable, Belgrade Telno 540, August 15, 1995; "Bildt Offering His Own Map in the Balkans," Cable, London 11587, August 16, 1995; "Readout of Bildt-Krajisnik Meeting in London," Memorandum to S/S-O files, August 26, 1995. His pessimistic assessment of the prospects for peace were conveyed to the Germans, see "Bildt Paints Gloomy Picture of Balkan Settlement Prospects for Germans," Cable, Bonn 16751, August 18, 1995. For a good

U.S. officials were somewhat skeptical of Bildt, a possible reflection of their own views about the inability of the Europeans to handle such negotiations. Nevertheless, Holbrooke had agreed to meet with the former Swede Prime Minister to coordinate approaches and discuss their respective proposals.[82] The meeting was unremarkable, as the group only compared notes and shared general thoughts about the prospects for peace. Some delegation members realized that Bildt's channel to Pale could provide a potential solution to their negotiating problem, but Holbrooke favored concentrating on Milosevic.[83]

Following the Bildt meeting, the team went to the Quai d'Orsay to meet with French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette. Despite recent press reports to the contrary, de Charette expressed strong French support for the U.S. initiative.[84] On the marketplace massacre, the Foreign Minister argued that NATO needed to undertake a "stiff response," preferably by UN RRF artillery (the same French artillery that had acted days before). Holbrooke and de Charette also discussed the Pale Serb problem, with Holbrooke explaining that the U.S. would hold out the carrot of sanctions relief to get Milosevic to "deliver a Bosnian Serb entity to the table."[85]

Next, the delegation met at the American embassy with Alija Izetbegovic, who had considered canceling the trip to Paris in the wake of the massacre.[86] For the Bosnian President, the marketplace shelling brought back to life the three-year nightmare his country had endured. Izetbegovic, a quiet and frail man, was uneasy with public leadership and almost monastic in his demeanor. Informally referred to by U.S. negotiators as "Izzy," the Bosnian leader has been described by former Ambassador Warren Zimmermann as a man who "seemed diminished, rather than inflated" by the trappings of Presidential power.[87] A devout Muslim who had been jailed twice by the Yugoslav Communist regime, Izetbegovic was a reluctant negotiator. The Bosnian

---

biographical overview of Bildt by the US embassy in Stockholm, see "Carl Bildt as Mediator in Former Yugoslavia: The 'Besserweisser Moves to the World Scene," Cable, Stockholm 4874, August 15, 1995.

[82] Bildt had called Holbrooke on August 25, asking if they could meet when Holbrooke traveled to Paris.

[83] Pardew saw the possible benefits of Bildt's role, as reflected in his August 29 report to Slocombe. Holbrooke felt that any contacts other than Milosevic with the Bosnian Serbs would do too much damage to US credibility with Sarajevo, even through an intermediary like Bildt. For Holbrooke, the Milosevic strategy avoided this problem, since the Bosnian Serbs' would not have an independent voice. In a meeting August 29, Bildt approved the American team's idea to propose to Milosevic that the Pale Serbs be included in the talks only as part of a delegation in Belgrade; See Clark interview.

[84] The French press had characterized the French leadership as sour to the US initiative, explaining that France had been marginalized by recent events. French officials had denied this, yet argued that the American plan had to be folded into a Contact Group approach. See "Scenesetter for Assistant Secretary Holbrooke's Visit," Cable, Paris 20153, August 24, 1995.

[85] See "A/S Holbrooke's August 28 Meeting with French Foreign Minister Herve De Charette," Cable, Paris 20536, August 29, 1995. Much the same was also said to Holbrooke in his meeting that day with Bruno Racine, French Prime Minister Juppe's senior diplomatic advisor. See "A/S Holbrooke's August 28 meeting with Matignon Diplomatic Adviser Racine," Cable, Paris 20539, August 29, 1995. In separate meetings, with his French counterparts, General Clark also began to discuss PIF options; see Clark interview.

[86] Izetbegovic's consideration of skipping Paris was reported by Pardew in his August 29 report to Slocombe. Chirac had invited Izetbegovic to Paris during Holbrooke's first shuttle, apparently to send a signal of France's support for the Bosnian Government and that their opposition to Serb-Croat deal at Bosnia's expense. See "No French Green Light For Bosnian Military Actions; Chirac Invites Izetbegovic to Paris," Cable, Paris 19434, August 17, 1995.

[87] Origins of a Catastrophe, p173.

President was reportedly interested in the U.S. plan, but was less anxious to move toward a settlement than some of his top advisors.[88]

Joined by Sacirbey, the meeting with the Bosnian President lasted for almost three hours. The Bosnians were very upset about the marketplace shelling; Sacirbey had even threatened not to meet until the bombing started. Izetbegovic also demanded that that NATO act. The Bosnian President had had enough. "I don't want to negotiate further unless you start bombing," he told Holbrooke. "It's quite possible that this was deliberately done to disrupt the talks." The Americans agreed that the egregious action required a harsh and immediate response. Holbrooke felt that this horrible tragedy created a valuable opportunity to bolster U.S. credibility, but told Izetbegovic that he could not guarantee that the bombing would begin. Mindful of the possibility that the Bosnians might be more intrigued with the fruits of failure -- lift-and-strike -- rather than reaching a settlement in which they would have to compromise, the team worked to persuade Izetbegovic that Bosnia would be better off with an agreement than further bloodshed. Holbrooke emphasized the economic carrots that would be available to the Bosnians only if they cooperated. They could not stall, blame the Serbs, fail to get an agreement, and still expect unconditional U.S. support.[89] These points seemed to register with the Bosnian President.[90]

Despite Izetbegovic's threat to stall substantive talks until bombing began, the Paris meetings with the Bosnians were quite productive. Izetbegovic reacted positively toward the comprehensive nature of the U.S. initiative. On constitutional issues, the Bosnians surprised Owen and others with their own proposal, which went much further than anyone expected in granting autonomy to the Bosnian Serbs. It seemed that while the Sarajevo government did not want a divided state, it was equally unenthusiastic to share governmental powers with its Serb enemies. Moreover, they appeared to be willing to allow the Bosnian Serbs to have some social, cultural and economic ties to Belgrade in exchange for Milosevic concessions, such as sealing the Serb/Bosnian border and mutual recognition.[91] Thus, the Sarajevo government's proposal called for a sort of "loose" union, in which the Serbs would be essentially self-governing, enjoying such privileges as being able to station representatives abroad at Bosnian embassies. The Bosnians rejected most of the more specific ideas contained in Owen's draft document, instead seeking simplicity. This squared with Owen's own view that political and legal proposals would evolve, and that the U.S. should first get all sides to agree to rather simple

[redacted] B1

[89] Clark interview, July 15, 1996; Clark comment, Dayton History Seminar; Holbrooke interview 3 (notes); Holbrooke comments, Dayton History Seminar. On economic assistance for the Bosnians, Holbrooke had still wanted to give them specific figures for potential US help, yet he was again told not to pending a presidential decision. Nevertheless, Talbott had told him that he could be "expansive and assertive on the issue, emphasizing to the Bosnians that we are absolutely committed and serious on the issue." See "Official-Informal" (Message from Kornblum to Holbrooke), Cable, State 198023, August 19, 1995.

[90] After this initial discussion, the two sides agreed to meet later after a late-night dinner hosted by US Ambassador Pamela Harrimann. Much to the chagrin of several dinner guests (including the eminent French philosopher, Bernard-Henri Levy), the elegant French meal nearly devolved into chaos as Holbrooke, Clark and Kerrick continually left the room to talk to Washington concerning possible NATO responses. See Holbrooke comments, Dayton History Seminar. Levy recounted this event in his 1996 memoir, Le Lys et La Cendre. See pp464-470.

[91] [redacted] B1

principles that could be used as building blocks for a more detailed agreement. Owen wrote in long-hand a set of six principles based upon these discussions at the American embassy, which Izetbegovic approved. He then faxed these back to Washington for review by the legal working group.[92]

Territorial issues were not dealt with extensively in these early meetings, although enough was discussed to convince the U.S. team that territorial ownership would be among the most contentious parts of the negotiations. Izetbegovic himself predicted to Holbrooke -- as it turned out, prophetically -- that "the map" would be far more difficult to resolve than constitutional issues.[93] Concerning the Muslim-Croat Federation in Bosnia, the Izetbegovic and Sacirbey wanted it strengthened, and were willing to accept U.S. meditation between them and Croatia to help do so. They were cautiously optimistic about the Karadzic letter to Carter. The two Bosnian leaders felt that it might provide a new opportunity, but the details would have to be developed and defined with Belgrade. In terms of the more central issue of Bosnian Serb interlocutors, Izetbegovic agreed with Holbrooke's position that the U.S. could meet with Karadzic or Mladic only if they were part of a Milosevic-led delegation in Belgrade.[94]

On the military response to the Sarajevo massacre, conferring between UN and NATO commanders had begun almost immediately after the shelling. The night of August 28, UNPROFOR commander Lt. General Rupert Smith worked with representatives of U.S. and NATO forces to draw up operational and targeting plans. Key among these plans was the withdrawal of 92 UN troops stationed in Gorazde.[95] UN and NATO planners were determined to avoid the hostage crisis that had prevented airstrikes earlier that year.[96] By the 29th, the troops were out of danger, and the last hurdle to airstrikes was removed. By 5:45 that afternoon (Paris/Belgrade time; 11:45am EDT), UN Under Secretary Kofi Annan informed the USUN mission that UN commanders had turned their key to authorize NATO airstrikes. The military plan, known as "Operation Deliberate Force," would commence as soon as possible. The airstrikes, Annan assured, would be more than pinpricks.[97]

When the team finally left for Belgrade the morning of August 30, NATO planes were eight hours into their bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs.[98] Following

---

[92] Owen learned this "begin simple" approach from his experiences in dealing with negotiations to free the hostages during the Carter Administration. See Owen interview, September 11, 1996; and Owen fax to Laurel Miller, August 29, 1995. Pardew also faxed a draft back to the Pentagon. Details from Pardew August 29 trip report, Owen interview, September 11, 1996 and Holbrooke comment, Dayton History Seminar.

[93] Holbrooke draft memoir, Chapter 7 (December 12, 1996), p7.

[94] Details of meetings from Pardew's report, "Second Meeting with Izetbegovic," August 29, 1995; and Wes Clark's "Daily Update" to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 28, 1995. On the Federation, Izetbegovic and Sacirbey had told US Ambassador Menzies on August 27 that they wanted the US to mediate the integration of the Republic [of Bosnia] and the [Muslim-Croat] Federation, possibly doing so through semi-private talks US. See Cable (no title), Sarajevo 262, August 28, 1995 (EUR/Frasure electronic files).

[95] See "August 29 NATO Political Committee Meeting -- former Yugoslavia," Cable, USNATO 3409, August 29, 1995.

[96] See fax from Charles Skinner (USUN Brussels) to George Glass at the State Department (EUR/RPM), August 31, 1995; and Hunter interview.

[97] "Undersecretary General Annan Says UNPROFOR to Respond by Air to August 28 Shelling of Sarajevo Market," Cable, USUN New York 3295; August 29, 1995.

[98] The first wave of NATO planes left Aviano Air Force Base in Italy at 8pm EDT August 29 (2am, August 30 Paris/Belgrade time), hitting radar, artillery, and C3 targets. In addition to the US, Italy, France, The

[redacted]

forty months of inconsistent resolve, NATO had stepped squarely into the Bosnian conflict with the largest military action in the Alliance's history. Diplomatically, talks with the Bosnians had gone surprisingly well. Likely heartened by NATO's response, Izetbegovic and Sacirbey appeared to be convinced that the time to agree had come.[99] Members of the U.S. team were optimistic that "some sort of realistic deal" was achievable.[100] But more important, the Holbrooke delegation knew they would now arrive on Milosevic's doorstep with exactly what they felt they needed: bargaining leverage provided by the power to hurt.

Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, and the UK all contributed aircraft to these initial strikes. Augmenting the air campaign, French RRF heavy artillery launched a ninety minute barrage from atop Mt. Igman, hitting ammunition bunkers and weapons. See State Department Operations Center Spot Reports, "NATO Action in Bosnia," 0300 EDT and 0600 EDT, August 30, 1995. The bombing had almost stalled the negotiations - although not because of any adverse reactions among the Balkan parties. Rather, the problem was logistical: NATO military officials did not want the team flying into a war zone. Late the night of the August 29, Holbrooke had asked Clark to work out a route with NATO. After being up most of the night, Clark was able to do so. See Clark interview, September 18, 1996; and Holbrooke draft memoirs, Chapter 7 (December 12, 1996), pp25-26.

[99] In his own meeting with Izetbegovic on August 29, French President Chirac had also weighed in to convince the Bosnians to seize the current opportunity. See "Chirac Urges Izetbegovic to Take the Path to Peace," Paris 20672, August 30, 1995.

[100] As expressed by Pardew in his August 29 update to Slocombe.

[redacted]