

Chapter Seven

Preparing for Proximity Talks

The October 5 agreements on a cease-fire and proximity talks gave the U.S. government less than a month to prepare for what it hoped would be the final stage of the Bosnian peace process. Not only did American officials need to locate the site and make the considerable logistical and diplomatic arrangements for the peace talks, but they had to draft the texts that would be the basis for negotiations. Fortunately, many of these efforts were already in progress by early October. Inside the U.S. Government, detailed planning for the structure and substance of a possible settlement had been underway for several weeks. However, with the conference only three weeks away, this drafting effort would have to intensify. In addition, more work needed to be done in both Washington and European capitals to create the arrangements for implementing the peace. Much of this latter effort focused on the military implementation of an agreement, particularly the scope and structure of NATO's role.

NATO and IFOR

In mid-September, the U.S. began to push the negotiating process with its Allies on forming the parameters for NATO's role in military implementation. Since the beginning of the diplomatic initiative, Pentagon officials "had no doubt" that the U.S. would assume the lead in drafting the military component of a peace agreement. "Particularly after UNPROFOR, we wanted to make sure that there would be no question about the authority of a military force," Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Walter Slocombe recalled. "It had always been our position that we would write it."¹ But, as had been the case with the decisions to implement the "London rules" in July, the U.S. would have to work within the NAC to gain approval for a NATO deployment into an implementation force, or IFOR. In many ways, the debate on the scope and structure of IFOR transcended Bosnia; it would do much to set the course for the Alliance in the post-Cold War world. "As NATO prepares to implement a Bosnian Peace plan," NATO Ambassador Hunter cabled to Washington, "it faces some of the most consequential decisions of its history, especially in terms of how it is organized and how it operates."² Such decisions involved, for example, the UN role in a NATO-led implementation force, the latitude afforded to theater commanders to make tactical decisions and, crucially, the relationship between NATO and non-NATO countries -- such as Russia -- participating in IFOR.

¹ Slocombe interview, January 6, 1997.

² "Planning for Peace Implementation in the Former Yugoslavia," Cable, U.S.NATO 3626, September 15, 1995.

Russia wanted to be involved in military implementation; but just how was not certain. From Secretary Christopher's perspective, Russia's "principal goal was to be a major player and not excluded from the [implementation] process." As of the middle of September, the Yeltsin government had not offered any specific ideas on how they might be involved, yet remained "clearly discomfited by the prospect of being left out of a U.S. or NATO-led IFOR." Not wanting to create another UNPROFOR, the U.S. insisted that IFOR be led by NATO.

The problem was, however, that the Russians were in the grip of their "chronic allergy to NATO," flaring most acutely around talk of expanding the Alliance to include former Warsaw Pact nations.³ Russia wanted to be a part of the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia, but not under NATO command. "The big problem was that NATO's activism in Bosnia would exacerbate Russian concerns about NATO power," Strobe Talbott reflected.⁴ Accordingly, U.S. planners at the Pentagon and State Department began to devise models for Russian participation that might mollify such worries. These models differed on the extent of Russia's integration into NATO command -- ranging from complete independence (with Russian forces performing "parallel tasks" not assigned to IFOR) to Russian acceptance of full operational control (or OPCON) by NATO command, to Russian participation under a U.S. commander.⁵ Since the IFOR issue promised to be a very difficult one -- with a fundamental impact on the U.S.-Russia bilateral relationship -- it would be treated on a separate track from the rest of the IFOR negotiations. Thus, as the U.S. began to engage the Russians, negotiations intensified among NATO Allies in Brussels.

During the week of September 24, while most U.S. officials focused on the New York meetings and Christopher and Holbrooke's efforts to secure the "further agreed principles," Slocombe joined Wes Clark and John Kornblum in Europe to begin high-level consultations with NATO Allies on IFOR. On September 20, NATO military leaders had officially begun the planning process, and were scheduled to deliver an initial report to the NAC on September 29.⁶ The Slocombe-Clark-Kornblum delegation planned to use their trip to consult with key Allies individually on these issues as well as to present a full briefing to the NAC on the status of Holbrooke's peace negotiations.

Discussions with the British, French and Italians revealed broad agreement on the basic organization and mission for IFOR. The main differences between the U.S. and its Allies concerned 1) the UN's overall role in civilian and military implementation and, 2) the level of decision-making coordination between political and military officials within NATO itself. All sides concurred that there should be a civilian coordinator to supervise non-military components of a peace settlement, such as elections and refugee return. The

³ See memorandum for Deputy Secretary Talbott and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Tarnoff from Andrew Weiss (S/P), "Engaging the Russians on Bosnia Settlement Implementation," September 13, 1995.

⁴ Talbott interview, July 30, 1996; see also Perry interview; Slocombe interview.

⁵ See, for example, Weiss memorandum; memorandum from Assistant Secretary of Defense Edward Warner, III to Strobe Talbott, "Russians and IFOR," September 13, 1995; and "Russian Participation in IFOR," Joint Chiefs of Staff Position Paper, September 23, 1995.

⁶ "NATO launches Planning Process for Implementation of Peace Settlement in the Former Yugoslavia," Cable, U.S.NATO 3709, September 21, 1995.

civilian coordinator's authority would not interfere with any military decision-making, as had been the case with UNPROFOR. There would be no dual-key.⁷ However, the French, backed to a certain degree by the British, were adamant that IFOR and the civilian coordinator "wear a highly-visible UN hat," and be designated by the UN Secretary General.⁸ The U.S. believed that the civilian coordinator, like the NATO commander of IFOR, should only be "validated" by the UN Security Council, remaining independent of the international body. In this way, the civilian coordinator would lead an autonomous multilateral coalition of volunteer participants. "The U.S. accepts the necessity of NATO authority," Slocombe told British and French representatives in Paris on September 26, "but if there is even a whiff of UN oversight of NATO, congressional approval [for an IFOR mission] would be extremely difficult to win."⁹

Moreover, U.S. officials believed, keeping implementation operationally independent of the UN would bolster the overall peace process. Rather than have the UN manage peace implementation -- as had been the case with UNPROFOR -- the U.S. argued that the implementation structure (both military and civilian aspects) should be built into the peace agreement itself. In this sense, an agreement would have the parties "request" that NATO and the international community enforce its terms. Kornblum explained that while much of this was nuance, "it is important for the authority of peace implementation to come from parties and from the peace process -- and not imposed from above." Nevertheless, European Allies remained concerned that they be guaranteed political oversight of IFOR operations. Citing the lack of political coordination within NATO during the air campaign (as shown, they argued, by the dispute about the Tomahawk strike), the British suggested appointing a special political representative of the NATO Secretary General to work alongside the IFOR military commander in Bosnia. The U.S. opposed this, countering that arrangements for political-military coordination already existed in NATO -- the NAC -- and that establishing any new arrangement amounted to creating another chain of command, leading to competition between civilian and military decision-making channels.¹⁰

On September 27, the Slocombe delegation visited the NAC. For the past few days, NATO military planners in Brussels had been working on an IFOR decision sheet

⁷ In consultation with the Europeans, U.S. planners soon began devising the possible function of a "Senior Implementation Coordinator," or SICOR. The office later took on the more European title of "high representative." See, for example, "SICOR Structure," October 19, 1995 draft; no author, U.S. UN files.

⁸ As a State Department assessment explained, "The French emphasize an expanded UN role... [their] effort seems to dilute the NATO military command structure as much as possible. The proposal to position Janvier as overall Deputy CINC with control of all ground operations (including U.S. forces) and all previous UN forces will be very controversial. This would effectively provide a French 'dual key' for the all-important NATO ground operation." See "French Proposals on IFOR," EUR/RPM (Dale Waters) files, no date (though based on translation of September 11 French paper circulated at NATO).

⁹ "French-Hosted Trilateral on Bosnia Peace Implementation Force -- September 26," Cable, Paris 23323, September 29, 1995.

¹⁰ For details of these discussions, see Paris 23323; "U.S.-UK Senior Level Consultations on IFOR," Cable, London 13401, September 27, 1995; and "U.S.DP Slocombe Delegation Meeting With Italian CHOD Venturoni -- September 26," Cable, Rome 13287, September 27, 1995.

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for the September 29 NAC meeting.¹¹ In a briefing before an informal NAC session on the 27th, Wes Clark summarized the status of Holbrooke's negotiations. Time was of the essence, the General explained. Since there could be a peace conference as early as mid-October, NATO needed to make some decisions soon. Reiterating what he had said in a similar briefing to the group earlier that month, Clark explained the importance all parties, "Milosevic, the Bosnians, and Tudjman -- attach to NATO -- not UN -- implementation." NATO Secretary General Claes emphasized that the U.S. had the full support of the Alliance. When the time came, Claes promised, NATO would be ready to implement a settlement.¹²

When the NAC met on September 29, it approved the fundamental components of an IFOR mission and asked that military planners begin organizing for possible deployment. The most significant disagreements, as before, concerned the level of UN involvement in civilian implementation and the structure of political-military decision-making within NATO. On the former, the main difference remained between the French and British (who wanted a more active UN role) and the U.S. (who did not). In a compromise, the NAC agreed that the civilian implementation coordinator would have authority granted by the UN Security Council, but would not be a "UN representative." On the latter issue of political decision-making within NATO, the NAC decided that political guidance would be conducted through the existing chain of command, not a special representative.¹³

Based on these consultations and the broad parameters that had already been established by the U.S. government's inter-agency deliberations, Slocombe, Clark and Kornblum began to draw up the rough draft of a military "annex" for a comprehensive peace settlement. On the flight home from Brussels, they began to edit a draft that had been sketched out by Clark's staff. When they returned to Washington, most of the drafting was turned over to officials on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They completed a preliminary cut by October 3, which was then circulated inter-agency.¹⁴ State Department officials felt that while the document was raw, it was an important start. With at least a few weeks before the start of a peace conference, NATO was well on its way to formulating a plan for implementing a settlement.¹⁵

The next step was a two-day meeting during October 5-6 of NATO Defense Ministers held in Williamsburg, Virginia. During the first day of talks, President Clinton made the announcement that the cease-fire agreement had been reached in Bosnia. This news, Secretary of Defense Perry reported to the President, "added urgency" to the

¹¹ For reports of these deliberations, see "September 25 SPC/R Discussion of Draft Decision Sheet for September 29 NAC," Cable, U.S.NATO 3765, September 26, 1995; and "September 26 SPC/R (AM Session) on Draft Decision Sheet on NATO's Role in Implementing a Peace Agreement," Cable, U.S.NATO 3767, September 26, 1995.

¹² See "September 27 Informal NAC: LTG Clark Briefs on Negotiations and Implications for Implementation," Cable, State 230519, September 27, 1995; "September 27 NAC -- Former Yugoslavia Topics (Except LTGEN Clark Briefing)," Cable, U.S.NATO 3784, September 27, 1995.

¹³ See "September 29 NAC Authorizes NMA's to Develop Concept of Operations for Peace Implementation," Cable, U.S.NATO 3822, September 30, 1995; and "Council Decisions on NATO's Role in Implementing a Peace Agreement," DOD Document, Pardew Notebook, Shuttle 5.

¹⁴ Bosnia Peace Implementation Agreement (Draft), Joint Staff Document, October 3, 1995.

¹⁵ See Kornblum interview, Clark interview.

Williamsburg discussions. Building on the NAC's decisions of late September, the meetings went very well, and were marked "by a strong sense of unity and purpose." To Perry, the NATO ministers conveyed that the Alliance had "emerged from a long dark tunnel of indecision and irresolution. The cure was American leadership."¹⁶

NATO commander General George Joulwan briefed the ministers on the status of military planning for the IFOR operation.¹⁷ While the planning had gone well thus far, Joulwan emphasized that they "seize the moment" and commit to troop and financial numbers soon. Joulwan's concept for IFOR entailed a force of 50-60,000 ground troops in Bosnia, deployed into three geographic zones led by separate American, French, and British divisions. Almost all sixteen NATO nations wanted to contribute to the force, leading Perry to note that "it is amazing what American leadership has done to bring in other countries." In terms of U.S. commitments, Joulwan explained that the American military would provide roughly one-third of the total troops, at an estimated cost of \$1.5 billion.

To Perry's surprise, the discussion on Bosnia at Williamsburg was relatively brief. As he explained to the President, this fact seemed to reflect the "sense that the time for discussion and debate has passed. The ministers want to get on with the operation."

Russia and IFOR

While negotiations with European Allies on IFOR were well on track, there was still much to be done to work out the role Russia might play. The NAC had agreed that the Alliance should prepare to include non-NATO forces into IFOR, but to defer decisions on specifics to U.S. and Russian negotiators. The issue would be engaged at the highest levels. In a September 27 telephone conversation with President Clinton, President Yeltsin stressed energetically the importance his government put on NATO issues, including IFOR. While discussing the agenda for the upcoming U.S.-Russia presidential summit in Hyde Park, New York, Yeltsin abruptly interrupted the interpreter to stammer "NATO, NATO, NATO, NATO! This is one of the most difficult issues we will have to discuss!"¹⁸

The critical issue was not Russian participation *per se*, but devising a way in which Russia could participate without appearing subservient to NATO. This challenge was particularly acute given the upcoming parliamentary elections in Russia. In a September 28 meeting at the White House, Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev told President Clinton that a NATO-only force would create great internal pressures for the Yeltsin government. "We can't put our troops under NATO command," Kozyrev said. "President Yeltsin would be under great pressure." President Clinton explained that while he realized that NATO command and control was problematic for Russia, the U.S. could not recreate the conditions of more recent -- and less successful -- military operations. "We had some problems in Somalia with ambiguous command and control,"

¹⁶ Memorandum for the President from Secretary Perry, "Special Defense Report," October 10, 1995. All details from this meeting are from this report, unless otherwise noted.

¹⁷ For document on which Joulwan briefed, see "SACEUR Concept of Operations for Peace Implementation in the Former Yugoslavia," October 6, 1995.

¹⁸ "President's Discussion with Yeltsin on Bosnia, CFE, Hyde Park and a Vice Presidential Meeting with Chernomyrdin, September 27, 1995," NSC memorandum, September 28, 1995.

the President said. "I believe that in part due to this 18 American soldiers died there... I am sensitive to Russian concerns, but we need to ensure that we have a practical arrangement, so that we don't get kids killed." Agreeing to work with the U.S., Kozyrev said that "what's important is a nod toward Russian public opinion." The President agreed. "I know the last couple of months have been tough for you and that our actions haven't helped," he said. "We want to help you now as we make peace in Bosnia. I want to help your situation."¹⁹

U.S. officials viewed Russian participation in IFOR not only as a problem to be managed, but an opportunity to be seized. If the coordination problem was solved, it might help soothe bilateral relations more generally. IFOR could become an example of the benefits of U.S.-Russian partnership. "Really the principal motivation for bringing [Russia] into Bosnia was so that we would have something practical from which to build on this priority relationship," Secretary of Defense Perry explained. To Strobe Talbott, the way to "jujitsu" this difficult issue was "to make NATO's activism in Bosnia proof of the proposition that NATO and Russia could cooperate and that we could turn the Bosnian experience into a reassurance as far as the Russians were concerned."²⁰

In addition to salvaging bilateral ties, including Russia in IFOR would be a way for the West to integrate its former global adversary into the security architecture of Europe. "We saw that IFOR was a metaphor for solving difficult security problems in Europe," Perry recalled, "and we wanted to have Russia as part of the solution... not as a nation creating problems [or] standing outside and watching." If NATO and Russia couldn't cooperate on Bosnia, Perry believed, "you couldn't do it in the rest of Europe." In this sense, a Russian role in IFOR was more about Bosnia alone; it would have profound implications for the future of European security relations. U.S. officials felt strongly that success in structuring such a role could contribute to an atmosphere conducive to resolving other key issues on the U.S.-Russian agenda -- such as NATO enlargement, revisions to the CFE treaty, and de-nuclearization throughout the former Soviet states.²¹

At this point, the Administration was heavily engaged in three parallel negotiations: while the Holbrooke team continued to negotiate with the Balkan parties, the Slocombe-Clark-Kornblum delegation consulted with NATO Allies, and Talbott and Perry handled the Russia portfolio.²² On October 8 in Geneva, Perry discussed the IFOR issue with his counterpart, Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev.²³ While it had

¹⁹ "Meeting with Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, September 28, 1995" NSC memorandum of conversation, September 29, 1995.

²⁰ Perry interview; Talbott interview.

²¹ Perry interview; Talbott interview; Slocombe interview. Secretary Christopher made a similar point to British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind during their September 26 meeting at the UN. See "Secretary's Meeting with UK Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, September 26, 1995, New York," Cable, State 233721, September 30, 1995.

²² The Russians also pursued mid-level discussions with European members of NATO. Such talks were largely inconclusive, as specifics were rarely discussed. See, for example, "Russians Meet in Paris on IFOR; GOF Official Reviews Bosnia Reconstruction," Cable, Paris 23877, October 4, 1995.

²³ The U.S. parameters for the Russian role in IFOR on which Perry negotiated had been cleared by the Deputies Committee on October 6. In sum, these parameters were: that IFOR be NATO-led with no dual key, all other options would be characterized simply as "cooperation with" IFOR; that Russia could work within IFOR, but not have its own separate zone of operations; that Russian troops could only be under

appeared that Russia was willing to work with the U.S. on IFOR, recent discussions had led Perry and Talbott to believe that Russian military officials -- notably Grachev -- did not want to expend scarce military resources in Bosnia, and were pressuring Yeltsin against participation. Thus, along with finding a mutually acceptable formulation for Russia's participation, Secretary Perry was in the odd position of having to convince Grachev that the cause was even worth the effort.²⁴

According to Perry's report to the President, the meeting with Grachev was "surprisingly positive even if it did not resolve the essential issues." Grachev signaled a willingness to subordinate Russian troops to a U.S. General, but was opposed taking orders from NATO. Again, Russian domestic politics was the underlying factor. "[Grachev] was emphatic that it would be political dynamite for Yeltsin to agree to political subordination under the NAC," explaining that such an arrangement "might well produce a communist victory in the coming elections," Perry reported. "This would set Russia back seventy years, and we'll be back in the Cold War," Grachev had explained. The Russian Defense minister emphasized that "optics" were important: To avoid even the appearance that Russian forces were under NATO, he urged the U.S. not to refer to IFOR as a "NATO force" but rather an "International Implementation Force."²⁵ Grachev's comments confirmed U.S. officials' suspicions -- a perception of equality was all Russia really needed. As a Pentagon strategy memorandum explained, "a good cosmetics job... could tip the balance" toward Russian acceptance.²⁶

Talbott, who also attended these Geneva discussions, had a more sanguine outlook on the prospects for success. As he told Secretary Christopher over the phone and in a follow-up memorandum, the talks in Geneva showed that "there is a significant chance that we can't get there from here -- that is, it may simply be too hard for the Russians to participate in, or even cooperate with, a NATO-led IFOR." Once again, Talbott saw the internal divisions of the Kremlin leadership at work. "I suspect that what Bill [Perry] saw in Geneva was Grachev's own bottom-line [against a NATO-led IFOR]. What's not so clear is whether it's Yeltsin's. It's certainly not Kozyrev's: he's got in mind a much more modest (and realistic, and to us acceptable) Russian force that could fit alongside IFOR in a non-combat capacity." Most of the final decisions, both Talbott

Russian national command only for "non-core functional" IFOR tasks; that the NAC would be the sole decision-making body for IFOR; that any *ad hoc* planning group established to include non-allied participants would only consult the NAC but not make decisions without or for it; and that NATO meetings at a 16-plus-Russia would be utilized as a forum for consultation. See "Summary of Conclusions for Meeting of the NSC Deputies Committee, October 6, 1995," NSC memorandum, October 12, 1995.

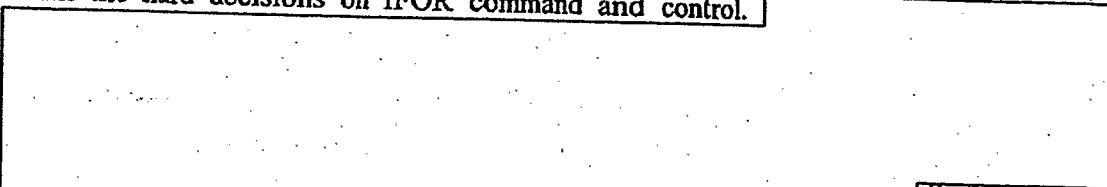
²⁴ Talbott had learned of this problem during an October 3 meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Mamedov. Apparently, the Russian Foreign Ministry, led by Kozyrev, was pressing Yeltsin to cooperate with the U.S., but was meeting resistance from Grachev and others. See "Talbott-Mamedov meeting: October 3, 1995," undated notes, EUR files.

²⁵ See Perry to Clinton, "Special Defense Report." For extensive details of meeting, see Secretary Perry's "Trip Report: Meeting with Russian MOD Pavel Grachev, Geneva, 8 Oct 95," October 8, 1995; and "Discussions During 8 Oct Perry-Grachev Meetings," DoD memorandum (draft), October 8, 1995. For Perry's talking points, see "SecDef Talkers for 1-on-1 w/ Grachev," Strobe Talbott draft, October 7, 1995. See also "Options for Russian Relationship with IFOR," no author, no date, D files; and "Two options [on IFOR] from Perry-Grachev Trip," no date, D files.

²⁶ See "Russian Participation in the Bosnia IFOR: Strategy for SECDEF-MOD Grachev Meeting, 8 October 1995," DoD memorandum, October 5, 1995.

and Perry reported, would have to be taken up by Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin when they met on October 23 in Hyde Park. The key, Talbott felt, was "to ascertain whether Yeltsin's going to stick with Grachev's position or take a deep breath and go with Kozyrev, and we've got to try to do that before Hyde Park."²⁷

As Talbott had surmised, the bureaucratic infighting in Moscow intensified in the days following Geneva. After meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Mamedov on October 10, U.S. Ambassador to Russia Thomas Pickering reported that Grachev and the Russian Ministry of Defense were trying "to saddle" Kozyrev and the Foreign Ministry with the hard decisions on IFOR command and control.



Despite these problems, Mamedov suggested that as long as Russia could say it was being treated as an equal, they could come to an agreement on IFOR. "The important thing is that Russia can be portrayed for a Russian audience as being more or less on the same footing as NATO, under the blessing of the UN," he emphasized to Pickering. "The rest is negotiable."²⁸

Part of the problem with this negotiating process was that the Russians felt they had been neglected by Holbrooke.²⁹ Indeed, several Contact Group partners had begun to voice their concerns about the lack of consultation. Holbrooke's strategy of controlling the Contact Group by limiting the information it received about his negotiations was beginning to rub the Europeans' nerves.³⁰ There was growing concern that the U.S. would cut a deal on Bosnia without properly consulting Europe.³¹ In a conversation with

²⁷ Talbott "private" letter to Christopher, attached to Perry October 8 trip report.

²⁸ "Mamedov on Bosnia," Cable, Moscow 32623, October 11, 1995.

²⁹ The Russians had even begun to argue that such neglect would hurt the peace process. For example, Ivanov had passed word to Holbrooke that Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic had told him that the only way the Bosnian Serbs would accept a final map was if the U.S. and Russia "are together on the details and make it clear to him that he has no alternative but to accept what we have agreed on." See "Bosnia Map," Cable, Moscow 32626, October 11, 1995.

³⁰ Holbrooke did recognize that the Europeans -- particularly the Russians -- were angry. At the beginning of his third Balkan shuttle of September 28, Holbrooke wrote a conspicuously complimentary letter to Ivanov, updating him on the status of the talks, and praising the Russian Federation's contribution as "key to continued momentum and progress... your counsel and support have been critical to the success we have achieved thus far. I am profoundly grateful for your efforts during this arduous negotiating process." See State 232176, September 29, 1995.

³¹ For example, in a September 22 meeting with American embassy officials in London, British officials described that they did not feel adequately briefed on U.S. negotiations with the parties. "While they recognize the need to keep our cards 'close to the chest,' they do not want to be in the position of learning about agreements on the constitutional arrangements and a map -- which they would have a role in implementing -- only after the fact," an embassy report noted. These officials suggested that the British government, "absent a better understanding of the negotiations, would begin to reserve its position on its role in implementation." See "September 25 U.S.-UK Bilateral on Implementation of a Bosnia Peace Settlement," Cable, London 13181, September 22, 1995. In his September 27 meeting with Holbrooke at the UN, French Foreign Minister de Charette angrily stressed that "it was important that the U.S. better coordinate its efforts with its Contact Group partners... it is very important that the U.S. keep its European

Pickering on October 12, Yeltsin aide Viktor Ilyushin stressed the importance the "Russian leadership" (i.e., Yeltsin) attached to "avoiding situations in which decisions on Bosnia or European Security issues are taken without the participation of Russia."³²

To carve out a more prominent role in the Bosnian peace process, Yeltsin proposed summoning the three Balkan presidents to Moscow before proximity talks to "set the stage" for detailed negotiations. Such a meeting, the Russians argued, would "bind" the parties to negotiate in good faith. Moreover, it would provide Yeltsin an important boost politically. The U.S. initially was opposed -- officials worried that bringing the Balkan leaders together in an "uncontrolled" environment could cause an explosion that would derail the peace initiative. Publicly, however, the U.S. remained non-committal. Washington strove to meet the Russians concerns while stressing the need to avoid a media circus that would complicate proximity talks. In any event, Yeltsin planned to take the issue up with Clinton in Hyde Park.³³ The Russian leadership also hoped that prior to Hyde Park, officials could devise "workable mechanisms" for Russian participation in IFOR which the two presidents could bless.³⁴

With only a week to go before Hyde Park, the U.S. intensely engaged the Russians both on IFOR and the peace process. Following meetings in Paris with French, British and German leaders on October 16, the Holbrooke team traveled to Moscow to meet with the Contact Group.³⁵ Holbrooke walked the Contact Group through an outline of the draft peace agreement, describing for his counterparts how the process was proceeding and what a final proposal might look like. He also promised that the drafts would be shared with the Contact Group before the conference convened. During the meeting, the British and the French jointly announced their support for Carl Bildt to become the senior civilian coordinator in Bosnia if there was a peace agreement. Although some American officials had misgivings about Bildt, Holbrooke agreed to his

Contact partners informed as quickly as possible about developments as they occur rather than after." De Charette explained that "[the] French media was claiming that the U.S. had taken over the negotiations and France was standing on the sidelines. This situation did not contribute to good relations and France hoped the U.S. would do something about this." Holbrooke replied that the problem of coordination was not as bad as de Charette claimed, but that "any mistakes in the past were unintentional and that we will double our efforts to coordinate better with our European Allies." See State 233374. The UN leadership was also upset about not being properly informed of negotiating progress, although their complaints were less problematic because the UN would not be as critical in implementation. See "SYG's Letter to the Secretary Expressing Disappointment at Stoltenberg's Exclusion From the September 8 Geneva Meeting," Cable, U.S.UN 3451, September 11, 1995; and "Bosnia/Croatia: UKUN Convenes a Meeting of U.S., French and German Permreps to Discuss Next Steps Re Bosnia in New York," Cable, U.S.UN 3537, September 16, 1995.

³² "Viktor Ilyushin Emphasizes Russian Role in Decision-making on Bosnia," Cable, Moscow 32778, October 12, 1995. Ilyushin went on to explain that while the Russian political landscape was dominated by the upcoming parliamentary elections -- which created rhetoric "that is sharper than it might otherwise be" -- Yeltsin was seized with the NATO issue and wanted to see it solved.

³³ The message was conveyed in a letter to the President from Yeltsin. See memorandum for EUR/SCE from John Klekas (P), "Russian Ambassador Vorontsov's Call on U/S Tamoff -- Yeltsin's proposal for a meeting in Moscow by Izetbegovic, Tadjman and Milosevic before the Proximity Talks," October 13, 1995. For letter, see Yeltsin to Clinton, October 12, 1995.

³⁴ Cable, Moscow 32778.

³⁵ For details of the Paris meetings -- with Chirac, de Charette and British, French and German officials -- see Kerrick notes, October 16, 1995.

nomination, feeling that "to do otherwise would provoke a huge breach with all the other members of the Contact Group."³⁶

To the Holbrooke delegation, the Moscow Contact Group meeting was notable in that the members reflected a "general agreement... on the need for a bold, comprehensive approach to a settlement."³⁷ Holbrooke explained to the group that they should follow such an ambitious agenda because "what is not agreed on during proximity talks will never be agreed." While they discussed possible scenarios for various follow-on implementation conferences after proximity talks, Holbrooke stressed that "we are a long way from peace." And peace, he explained, is what the parties and Contact Group needed to be most concerned about at the moment. "If there is peace," he said, "we will work on how to implement [it] together." While the upcoming talks would undoubtedly be tough, Holbrooke said that his team had a mandate "to go for broke." They hoped that Europe was prepared to respond in kind.³⁸

That afternoon, a delegation led by Strobe Talbott and Walt Slocombe joined the Holbrooke team in Moscow for bilateral discussions with the Russians. The main topic was IFOR. The talks were described as cordial but unproductive, with both sides merely repeating their standard positions. As a small step forward, Russian Foreign Ministry officials asked the U.S. to provide it with four assurances concerning IFOR: 1) that Russia be involved in planning for its role in IFOR; 2) that Russia be able to approve the plan prior to NAC approval; 3) that there be an official "memorandum of understanding" between Russia and NATO on Russian participation; and 4) that there be a mechanism for on-going consultations between the two sides. All four were consistent with current U.S. planning, and Talbott and Slocombe approved them.³⁹

In a later meeting with Russian military leaders, General Clark discussed possible Russian integration into the NATO command and the size of a Russian troop deployment.⁴⁰ Grachev had been pushing for a entire division of Russian troops, while the U.S. felt a more a modest size would be sufficient. To Clark's surprise, however, the Russian officers responded favorably to his suggestion that a smaller force -- such as a

³⁶ See Holbrooke interview with author (notes), January 9, 1997; and Kerrick notes, October 17, 1995.

³⁷ As described by Wes Clark in his report to the Pentagon. See Memorandum for the CJCS/VCJCS, "Daily Negotiations Update, 17 October 1995," October 17, 1995.

³⁸ For details of this meeting, see Kerrick notes, October 17, 1995; and "Contact Group Press Conference Transcript, Moscow, October 17," Cable, Moscow 33454, October 18, 1995.

³⁹ After the Moscow meetings, the U.S. developed a draft statement outlining these four assurances for possible release at Hyde Park. See "Ivanov's Four Questions (with U.S. responses)," October 18, 1995; D files.

⁴⁰ At that time, there was still considerable debate within the Clinton Administration about what possible compromise command structures could be. For example, one option considered was a "UN hybrid" structure, in which Russian troops would answer to a NATO General who would also wear a UN hat. The Joint Chiefs of Staff strongly resisted this, however, arguing that such an arrangement provided UN officials (specifically, General Janvier) an opening to meddle in the NATO operation. In other possible arrangements, officials considered establishing a "senior military council" to consult the NAC on IFOR or have Russian troops work under the Commander of Allied Forces in Europe (or SACEUR), General Joulwan. By the time for these talks in Moscow, however, a final decision in the inter-agency process had not yet been made. See "Official-Informal No: 203, Dated 10/16/95; from Kornblum to Talbott, Holbrooke and Jim Collins (S/NIS)," Cable, State 245887, October 17, 1995; and "Bosnia: Russian Role in IFOR," drafted by George Glass (EUR/RPM) for Talbott, October 2, 1995.

brigade -- might be better. "May your remark be a whisper in the ear of God," they said, urging him to stress the same points to Grachev.⁴¹

These meetings made clear that Russia's position on IFOR had developed little since the Perry-Grachev meeting in Geneva. "Clearly the Russians want to be part of the operation," Slocombe wrote Perry, "but they have not yet really changed their position on political control, independence of action, and a [Russia-only] geographical sector."⁴² As Talbott told the NAC on October 19, it was now "much clearer how unclear the situation is... no decisions have been made." Russian attitudes and policies toward a possible IFOR remained very much in flux, still riddled by bureaucratic infighting. While consultations should continue, Talbott explained, it seemed as though things would remain static until Hyde Park.⁴³ "President Yeltsin is reserving for himself the final say on what has been an extremely contentious issue both within his Administration and in the legislature," Talbott said. A large part of the problem was the landscape of Russian domestic politics. "Virtually every contentious issue [in Russia]," Talbott told the NAC, "is the subject of intense debate and exploitation by the government's opponents as further proof of Yeltsin's selling out Russia's interests."⁴⁴ Although this was an understandable excuse for indecision, Talbott had made clear to the Russians that the U.S. would not support Yeltsin's proposed summit of the three Balkan leaders unless the IFOR issue was settled.⁴⁵

In the wake of these meetings, U.S. officials saw three possible options for a Russian role in IFOR. First, that Russia participate as a full member of IFOR, with "political advice" given to NAC by an *ad hoc* council of IFOR nations. Second, that Russia participate in functional, non-combat roles, such as military construction, transport and engineering. And finally, that Russia not participate in military implementation at all.⁴⁶ The U.S. position, Talbott explained to the NAC, was to have Russia involved -- either as a full participant or in a non-combat role -- as long as the fundamental policy of having a NATO-led IFOR remained intact.⁴⁷ "Russian participation is extremely

⁴¹ For details of these meetings, see memorandum for Secretary Perry and Deputy Secretary of Defense John White from Walter Slocombe, "Moscow Meeting: 17 Oct 95," October 18, 1995; "Deputy Secretary's 10/17-18 Meetings with DFM Ivanov and Afanasyevskiy," Cable, Moscow 33943, October 23, 1995; Clark report to CJCS/VCJCS, October 17, 1995; and Kerrick notes, October 17, 1995.

⁴² Slocombe to Perry and White, October 18, 1995.

⁴³ Consultation did continue. Almost immediately after the U.S. team finished their briefing, the NAC met in a special "16-plus-1" session with Russian Ambassador Churkin. While this meeting did open the dialogue somewhat, "it provided no answers on the flexibility of Russia's position." See "NAC 10 October 95: '16-plus-1 With Russia,'" Cable, U.S.NATO 4137, October 20, 1995.

⁴⁴ Slocombe and Wes Clark, who were with Talbott that day, also briefed the NAC. See "Deputy Secretary Talbott and Under Secretary Slocombe Brief the NAC on Talks in Moscow," Cable, U.S.NATO 4171, October 25, 1995.

⁴⁵ Clark report to CJCS/VCJCS, October 17, 1995.

⁴⁶ For an explanation of these options, see "IFOR and Russia," undated document, no author, P files.

⁴⁷ In an October 12 memorandum, John Kornblum outlined for Talbott the fundamental objectives for U.S. policy: 1) complete autonomy for NATO as the organizer of the IFOR; 2) an indirect link to the United Nations, without requirements for UN oversight of either the military or civilian components; 3) a means of integrating non-NATO participants, especially Russia, into the IFOR, on the basis of NATO command and control; and 4) a credible central civilian implementation structure which does not become embroiled in the

desirable but not necessary," Talbott said. Of the three possible options -- "in, with, or not in" -- he said that the U.S. considered the first most desirable and the second most likely.⁴⁸

Holbrooke's Fifth Balkan Shuttle

After the first plenary meeting with Talbott and the Russians in Moscow, the Holbrooke team (minus Wes Clark) left for Belgrade. To present the parties a united Contact Group front -- and, no doubt, to ease intra-Contact Group tensions -- Holbrooke invited Carl Bildt and Igor Ivanov, who would co-chair the proximity talks along with Holbrooke, to travel with the U.S. team during this fifth and last shuttle. This trip would be the shortest of Holbrooke's efforts thus far; lasting only 48 hours, it was only meant to be a "final systems check" with the three parties before negotiations resumed at the proximity talks.⁴⁹

During the two stops in Belgrade (October 17 and 19), the U.S.-Contact Group delegation encountered a feisty Milosevic. The Serb leader spent much of his time complaining -- about Muslim-Croat cease-fire violations, the site for proximity talks, and sanctions. Over the past week, Milosevic said, Federation forces had violated the cease-fire, continuing offensive actions in northwest Bosnia. He had recently quipped to Rudy Perina that it was "now Holbrooke's turn to discipline Izetbegovic and Tudjman."⁵⁰ Repeating this line to Holbrooke, Bildt and Ivanov, the Serb leader said that since recent Federation violations far outweighed anything the Serbs had done, the international community should be "even-handed" when assessing cease-fire implementation. Holbrooke told Milosevic that the U.S. was "extremely unhappy" with Tudjman, and had made this very clear to him. In a meeting in Zagreb on October 18, the Croat leader pledged that he would not press the BSA any further in Western Bosnia.⁵¹

The team also informed the three parties of the site for proximity talks. After a week reviewing possible facilities, the State Department had chosen Wright-Patterson Air Force Base outside of Dayton, Ohio.⁵² While Tudjman was agnostic about the choice, Izetbegovic and Milosevic seemed disappointed. Izetbegovic and Sacirbey left the clear impression that they wanted easier access to the American media to drum up public pressure on their behalf. Upon hearing that the talks would be held not in bustling midtown Manhattan but sleepy mid-America, Milosevic said "you can't confine us to a

politics of the UN, the EU or other organization. See "A Multilateral Framework for Bosnian Peace Implementation," October 12, 1995.

⁴⁸ U.S.NATO 4171,

⁴⁹ As described by Pardew in his trip report to Perry. See "Peace Initiative in the Balkans -- Round V," October 19, 1995.

⁵⁰ For Serb complaints about cease-fire violations, see "Discussion with Milosevic about Cease-fire Violations and Banja Luka Ethnic Cleansing," Cable, Belgrade 5030, October 12, 1995; and "Milutinovic Says 'Everything is Threatened by Continued Muslim-Croat Offensive,'" Cable, Belgrade 5045, October 13, 1995.

⁵¹ Holbrooke also had told Milosevic that U.S. intelligence supported Milosevic's claim that Croatia had been deploying troops into the cease-fire area, but that they "didn't know why" Tudjman was doing so. See "First Joint Meeting of Proximity-Talks Co-Chairmen with Milosevic," Cable, Belgrade 5122, October 18, 1995; Kerrick notes, October 17-18, 1995; and Pardew report, October 19, 1995.

⁵² For details on the choice of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, see discussion below.

military base."⁵³ The Serb leader wanted to be closer to New York and Washington, where he could enjoy the high-life and, no doubt, also play to the media. "I want to smell the air of New York again," the one-time Manhattan banker had once remarked to Holbrooke.⁵⁴ He also insisted on meeting President Clinton.⁵⁵ Milosevic believed that a Clinton meeting was an important component of mending his image. As Pardew had observed, "if [Milosevic] can be rehabilitated as a peacemaker, he potentially gains the international respectability he seeks."⁵⁶ Recognizing that this motivation could provide useful leverage for the U.S., Holbrooke kept the carrot dangling. "The President will not be involved in the talks," Holbrooke responded. However, if agreement was reached, the U.S. would "consider" having Clinton participate in a signing ceremony.⁵⁷

Milosevic pressed the Americans the hardest on sanctions relief since his first meeting with Holbrooke in August. "On sanctions, Milosevic has finally taken the gloves off," Pardew reported to Perry. Calling this the "question of all questions," the Serb leader stressed that they were unjustified given his country's cooperation in the peace process. He argued that sanctions should be suspended before proximity talks convened, and then fully lifted once an agreement was signed. Holbrooke, according to Pardew, rejected this demand, explaining that the issue could only be decided by the UN. "We're not the UN sanctions committee," Holbrooke said.⁵⁸

Holbrooke also returned to the issue of Serb human rights abuses in Bosnia. While Croatia had its share of violations, such as not allowing the return of Krajina Serb refugees, human rights were a particular problem with Belgrade.⁵⁹ Once again, the major problem was Arkan. U.S. intelligence reported that the Serb terrorist was brutalizing civilians and detaining thousands of Muslim men near Banja Luka at the behest of Milosevic. Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck had returned to the region, reporting to Holbrooke that "several thousand lives" were now at stake in the area. Holbrooke warned Milosevic that Arkan's activities "raised the specter of Srebrenica. It is essential that Arkan be stopped and these people released."⁶⁰

To no one's surprise, Milosevic responded defensively, arguing that Arkan was not responsible for the dire situation. He refused to acknowledge Arkan or Serb war crimes generally as legitimate issues, "countering with lectures on crimes committed by

⁵³ When Milosevic heard the news, he exclaimed: "What, you're going to keep me locked up in Dayton, Ohio? I'm not a monk you know!" Chris Hill interview with author (notes); also see Roger Cohen, "U.S. Envoy in Bosnia Helps to Free Colleague (From an Ally)," *New York Times*, October 19, 1995.

⁵⁴ See Pardew memorandum to Perry and Slocombe, "Motivation of the Parties in Bosnia," October 11, 1995; Holbrooke interview with author, (notes), December 20, 1996.

⁵⁵ Kerrick notes, October 17-18, 1995.

⁵⁶ Pardew memorandum, October 11, 1995.

⁵⁷ Kerrick notes, October 17-18, 1995.

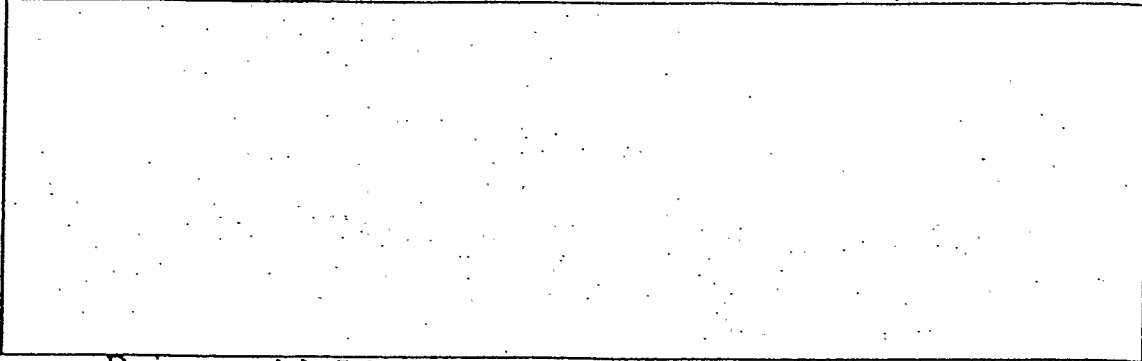
⁵⁸ For details, see Pardew report, October 19, 1995; Kerrick notes, October 17-18, 1995; and Belgrade 5122.

⁵⁹ When the Holbrooke team visited Tudjman on October 19, they delivered to him over 3000 refugee forms filled out by Krajina Serb refugees who wished to return to their homes. See "Krajina Serb Refugee Forms Delivered to Zagreb," Belgrade 5135, October 19, 1995.

⁶⁰ See Belgrade 5122; "Arkan said to be Charged with Keeping the Population from Fleeing a Chaotic Banja Luka," Cable, Belgrade 5125, October 18, 1995; and Shattuck interview, July 30, 1996.

Muslims and Croats and the impact of sanctions on his people."⁶¹ Milosevic also denied that he had any control over Arkan. Anticipating this line of argument, the U.S. team had asked [redacted] to prepare a memorandum outlining Arkan's activities and his links to the Serbian Internal Affairs Ministry.

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During a meal in Belgrade the evening of October 19, Holbrooke pressed the Arkan issue again, eliciting the same response from the Serb leader: "No, no, no," Milosevic chuckled, the U.S. had it all wrong. With this cue, Holbrooke said that Pardew had a piece of paper -- [redacted] -- outlining how the U.S. had it right.

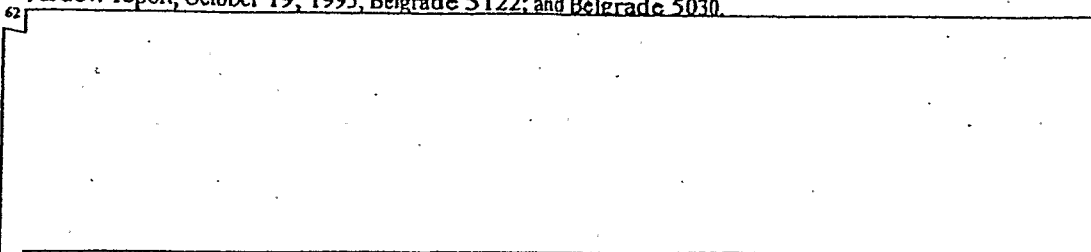
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When Pardew, as planned, placed the folded paper on the table next to Milosevic, the result was revealing. The Serb leader refused to look at it or touch it. His body language leaned away from it. As the U.S. team reflected afterward, this choreographed act was truly revealing. It seemed as though Milosevic saw the paper itself as the "smoking gun that connected him to all of this. And that, of course, is his greatest fear." If Milosevic was connected to war crimes, his entire strategy of rehabilitation and international acceptance would be completely undermined.⁶³ After the meal, Pardew left the paper at Milosevic's place. A Serb aide told the American negotiator that he had forgotten something. "No, I didn't forget it," Pardew said. "It's for [Milosevic]. He can have it."⁶⁴

Hyde Park

On October 23, Clinton and Yeltsin met at Franklin D. Roosevelt's estate in Hyde Park, New York. Going into this long-anticipated summit, the atmosphere was a bit tense; in a speech before the United Nations the day before, Yeltsin had said that Russia was concerned that the UN Security Council had been "put on this sidelines" in decision-

⁶¹ Pardew report, October 19, 1995; Belgrade 5122; and Belgrade 5030.



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⁶² Pardew interview, June 27, 1995.

making on IFOR. Moreover, recent press reports stated that Yeltsin was preparing to sack Foreign Minister Kozyrev, one of the West's best friends in the Kremlin.⁶⁵

Despite these ominous signals, the Clinton-Yeltsin talks that day were jovial. Reflecting on the meeting, Talbott (who was the notetaker for the presidents' one-on-one meetings) felt that the meeting was "one of the best between these two presidents, both atmospherically and psychologically, despite expectations that it would be one of the worst."⁶⁶

On IFOR, Yeltsin agreed that, at a minimum, two battalions of Russian troops -- up to 2000 soldiers -- would participate in various non-combat roles, such as mine-clearing, reconstruction, and airlift. He had apparently lobbied for a more substantial Russian role, but Clinton explained that it could only be done under NATO command. Clinton outlined this option -- the second of the "in, with, or not in" possibilities Talbott had earlier described -- as the best compromise. In this way, Russia could work "with" NATO, but not "in" NATO. The proposal fell between the two "red lines": Russia's desired autonomy from NATO command and the U.S. desire for unified NATO control.⁶⁷

This was the critical breakthrough on the IFOR issue. After weeks of stalling, the Russians had agreed to the size and function of its contribution to IFOR, as well as its broad relationship with NATO. Despite this welcome development, the two leaders did not reach a decision on the specific command structure for IFOR. These thorny operational decisions could still threaten Russian participation, but with the goodwill generated from the presidential summit, it seemed unlikely that the Russians would renege.⁶⁸ Clinton and Yeltsin decided to leave these details up to Perry and Grachev, who were scheduled to meet at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas at the end of the week.⁶⁹

Clinton had done his best to talk the Russian leader out of his wish for a pre-Dayton summit. Milosevic, Tadjman and Izetbegovic all opposed the meeting, and the U.S., especially Holbrooke, feared that the distraction would further complicate the peace

⁶⁵ Yeltsin was at the United Nations as part of the organization's 50th anniversary celebration. See, respectively, Barbara Crossette, "The UN at 50: The Overview; Hope and Disappointment Mingle at UN Celebration," *New York Times*, October 23, 1995; and David Hoffman, "Yeltsin Plans to Replace Kozyrev; Foreign Minister Drew Firs for Pro-West Views," *Washington Post*, October 20, 1995. In a recent meeting with French President Chirac, Yeltsin had also hinted that Russia would send a large force to IFOR -- possibly as much as 20-25,000 troops. This led Chirac to decide that Russia deserved its own zone, something that the U.S. government vigorously opposed. See "Yeltsin/Chirac Summit," Cable, Paris 25639, October 21, 1995.

⁶⁶ Talbott expressed this to the German Foreign Ministry's Political Director Ischinger during an October 24 phone call. See "The Acting Secretary and German Foreign Ministry Political Director Ischinger," Cable, State 253723, October 27, 1995.

⁶⁷ As outlined in Clinton's talking points for the summit. See "Proposed TP's on Russia/IFOR for POTU.S./Yeltsin," Pardew notebook, Shuttle 5; and State 25723.

⁶⁸ In subsequent talks, however, some foreign ministry officials did try to backtrack on some of their President's commitments. But Talbott, who sat in on the Clinton-Yeltsin one-on-one meeting, quickly quashed this attempts. See Perry interview.

⁶⁹ Yeltsin also insisted that Russia's participation not be referred to as "auxiliary operations," as the U.S. had proposed, but "special operations." For details, see "Lunch with Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, October 23, 1995," NSC memorandum, November 1, 1995. A memcon from the two-hour one-on-one meeting could not be located.

talks.⁷⁰ Clinton explained that the Moscow talks presented tremendous logistical difficulties and that any missteps could pose serious risks to success in Dayton. Nevertheless, the American president said that he realized how important such an event would be for Yeltsin politically, and that if he insisted, the U.S. would try to help make them work. Yeltsin asked that it do so.⁷¹

Clinton, Tudjman, and Izetbegovic

Following the success in Hyde Park, Clinton met on October 24 with Tudjman and Izetbegovic together in New York.⁷² With only seven days to go before proximity talks opened, this was intended to be more of a pep-talk than a negotiating session. "This meeting provides the needed opportunity to firm up Bosnia's and Croatia's commitment to our peace process," Secretary Christopher explained to the President in a briefing memorandum. "We start with a large degree of credibility with Tudjman and Izetbegovic, whose unlikely alliance is largely U.S. made." Despite such leverage, Christopher pointed out, getting to peace would be a tougher job. "Our two regional partners have not always acted wisely, and they have difficult decisions ahead. Only a skillful combination of U.S. pressure and reassurance can keep them on the right road." One of the most critical issues, Christopher explained, was shoring up the dangerously frail Muslim-Croat Federation.⁷³

Joining the two Balkan presidents in a suite at the Waldorf-Astoria, President Clinton sought to frame Bosnian peace in an historic context. "We have seen things in the last few years that we never expected to see," he said. "Israel and the PLO sitting down after 30 years of fighting; the IRA laying down its arms... but what the world wants more than anything else is for a resolution of the war in Bosnia." As Christopher had recommended, Clinton raised the Federation, praising their successful cooperation thus far: "The significant strengthening of the Croatian and Bosnian armies has helped make a decent peace possible. Without that I am not sure that the NATO bombing or Dick Holbrooke's diplomacy would have worked; the differences might have been too great."⁷⁴

Both Izetbegovic and Tudjman stressed their commitment to the peace process and hope for success in Dayton. However, tensions between the two leaders were evident. Izetbegovic raised his concerns about the Muslim-Croat Federation. While "all the parties present here support the Federation in words," Izetbegovic explained, "the process of implementation [such as allowing freedom of movement and return of refugees] has not taken place as it should have." Tudjman didn't take the bait, choosing instead to make a pitch for including resolution of Eastern Slavonia -- the last Serb

⁷⁰ See Pardew report, October 19, 1995.

⁷¹ State 25723. For a press report on the outcome of Hyde Park, see John Harris, "Clinton, Yeltsin Huddle on Bosnia; Determined Good Cheer Produces Little," *Washington Post*, October 24, 1995; and Elaine Sciolino, "Russians May Get Supporting Role For Bosnia Peace," *New York Times*, October 26, 1995.

⁷² Clinton was joined by Lake, Christopher, Albright, Holbrooke and the NSC's Sandy Vershbow.

⁷³ Memorandum for the President from Secretary Christopher, "Meeting with Presidents Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia and Franjo Tudjman of Croatia," October 24, 1995.

⁷⁴ "Meeting with Presidents Alija Izetbegovic of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Franjo Tudjman of the Republic of Croatia, October 24, 1995," NSC memorandum, October 30, 1995. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from this conversation are from this memcon.

occupied area of Croatia -- on the negotiating agenda in Dayton. Agreeing with Tudjman on that point, Clinton reiterated the importance the U.S. placed on a strong Federation. The two leaders' comments on the issue "illustrate my point," Clinton said. "We need more personal contacts between your representatives to make the Federation work on the ground. Getting a settlement will depend on the two of you having trust. Strength lies in genuine unity."

Following this large-group meeting, President Clinton took Izetbegovic and Tudjman aside for a private discussion. Clinton told them that he had had a very positive meeting with Yeltsin at Hyde Park, and that the Russian President was very supportive of the peace process. What Yeltsin needed, though, was an event to show Russia was an integral part of the negotiations.⁷⁵ "He is under pressure at home over the NATO issue and because of your recent gains on the battlefield. To help him strengthen his political base and make sure his opponents don't interfere with the peace process and with implementation, Yeltsin proposes holding this meeting in Moscow," the President said. Moreover, he added, Yeltsin might be able to put more pressure on the Serbs to cooperate.

Clinton asked the two presidents to travel to Moscow for a brief meeting before talks began in Dayton. This would merely be a photo-op for Yeltsin; nothing substantive would be discussed. "I think it would be best to get the Moscow visit over with," Clinton stressed. "If we do not go before the Duma elections -- that is, before the first week of December -- we could be inviting the Russians to screw up the peace process or the implementation of a settlement." There were some "bad guys" in Russia who wanted to scuttle any chance for peace. "We don't want those forces to win the Duma elections on December 17."

Both Izetbegovic and Tudjman accepted the President's request, agreeing to go to Moscow on October 31.⁷⁶ Holbrooke, who the President had asked to join the discussion, reiterated that the Moscow meeting was for show, not substance. Ambassador Pickering would represent the U.S., and there would be no joint statement released. The sole purpose of the meeting, President Clinton concluded, was "to enable Yeltsin to send a signal to the Serbs and for Russia to be seen to be involved in the process."

Two days later, October 27, Perry and Grachev announced a preliminary agreement on Russian participation in IFOR.⁷⁷ Two-thousand Russian soldiers would participate in a "special operations unit" under the command of U.S. General George Joulwan and a Russian military deputy. The *jujitsuing* here, as Talbott would say, was in the "hats" Joulwan wore. As the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe, Joulwan would be the NATO commander of IFOR. But to rationalize their position under him, the Russians would only recognize his position as the head of U.S. forces. Perry had initially thought that offering to put Russian troops under Joulwan's command

⁷⁵ On his October 24 memorandum to the President, Christopher hand-wrote that "We need to press them about an October 30 session in Moscow -- W.C."

⁷⁶ In order to assure quick travel -- and deal with Izetbegovic's claim that he could not go to Moscow because of the toll such a trip would have on his poor health -- Clinton offered to transport the two presidents in U.S. military jets.

⁷⁷ According to Igor Ivanov, Grachev got his "marching orders" directly from Yeltsin. See "10/25 Meeting with DFM Ivanov on Bosnia," Cable, Moscow 34260, October 25, 1995.

would have been a "complete nonstarter," but surprisingly, it worked. "The Russians were unbelievably, surprisingly, sanguine about being under American command," Talbott recalled. "It was being under NATO command -- NATO being a four-letter word in Russia -- that bothered them." For the first time since World War II, Russian and U.S. troops would conduct operations together under a single command structure.⁷⁸

But that day, the most important news coming out of Russia was not about Bosnia, but Yeltsin's health. Shortly after returning from the U.S., Yeltsin had been hospitalized -- for the second time in three months -- for severe heart trouble. Details of his problems were ambiguous, but his condition was indeed serious.⁷⁹ Since Yeltsin's doctors insisted that he be under "close medical supervision" for at least six weeks, the Moscow "pre-proximity talks" summit was canceled. Much to the relief of the American negotiators and Balkan parties alike, Moscow was off.⁸⁰

Washington at Work: Preparing for Proximity Talks

With proximity talks scheduled to begin at the end of October, the U.S. government scrambled to prepare. This was both a substantive and logistical challenge.

⁷⁸ See Perry interview; Talbott interview. That afternoon, Talbott called Kozyrev to tell him of the successful outcome of the Perry-Grachev talks. See "The Deputy Secretary and Russian FM Kozyrev, October 27, 1995" Cable, State 256907, October 31, 1995. For press reports of the meeting, see Bradley Graham, "U.S., Russia To Set Up Bosnia Unit; NATO Command Role Remains To Be Settled," *Washington Post*, October 28, 1995; and James Brooke, "Stalemate Ends Over Russia's Role in Bosnia," *New York Times*, October 28, 1995.

⁷⁹ For press accounts of Yeltsin's condition, see Steven Erlanger, "Yeltsin in Hospital After New Bout of Chest Pains," *New York Times*, October 27, 1995; and Erlanger, "Doctors Say Yeltsin Will Need at Least 6 Weeks to Recover," *New York Times*, October 28, 1995.

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As Holbrooke and Kornblum had decided in September, the U.S. would push an ambitious agenda -- rather than having the parties negotiate a short, basic agreement, the goal would be a detailed, comprehensive settlement. As he had explained to the Contact Group in Moscow, Holbrooke felt that they had one good shot at getting an agreement; those issues not handled at proximity talks would never be resolved. In this way, Holbrooke believed it better to try to get everything -- expecting some failure -- rather than not try at all. "We knew we wouldn't be able to solve everything," he reflected, "but we knew that we had no chance [to reach agreement] on issues if they weren't even proposed."⁸¹ With these marching orders, Administration officials intensified their efforts to produce draft documents reflecting such a comprehensive agreement.

Since mid-September, the small legal working group at the State Department had been working on draft documents. They proposed starting with the "framework agreement," which would be the "chapeau" document of the package of annexes which would deal with varying issues and parties involved. By early October, work began on drafting details of the various annexes. At that point, in Roberts Owen's view, "the most daunting problem [was] the amount of concrete drafting work that need[ed] to be done." As a way to get started, the group produced annexes fleshing out commitments made in the Geneva and New York principles -- such as a constitution, elections provisions,⁸² commissions on human rights and refugees, an arbitration system, and map rules.⁸³ They also considered other issues that would have to part of a comprehensive settlement, such as Eastern Slavonia, economic reconstruction, arms reductions, and lifting of economic sanctions. The drafting of these documents was initially handled within this closely-knit, *ad hoc* State Department group.

The only annex handled separately was the first one, which concerned IFOR. From the Pentagon's perspective, the IFOR annex had to be handled differently. "Broadly speaking," Slocombe later explained, "anything Holbrooke could get the parties to agree to was OK, but on IFOR, we had a big interest in how this came out. We would write it, and the parties would agree to it." After the JCS reworked the initial draft that had been edited by Slocombe, Clark and Kornblum during their September trip to Europe, Kornblum had asked that a Pentagon staffer temporarily move to the State Department to assist in drafting the IFOR annex. Unlike most of the other annexes, this one was regularly vetted by the DC or PC.⁸⁴

To support this drafting effort, Holbrooke and Kornblum decided to create a special Balkan peace "task force." that would temporarily function outside the normal

⁸¹ Holbrooke comment, Dayton History Seminar.

⁸² To help draft elections provisions for a peace agreement, Holbrooke had asked Tim Carney, the U.S. Ambassador to Sudan, to come to Washington. Carney was considered an elections expert, and had been involved with setting up the Cambodian election process that the UN had administered. For an example of his advice, see "Bosnia Election: UNTAC Lessons," State.234195, October 2, 1995.

⁸³ On October 4, Owen faxed to the State Department his thoughts on what annex documents would be necessary for a settlement. See fax to Jack Zetkovic (EUR/SCE) from Chris Hill (sent from Sarajevo embassy), October 4, 1995. For another example of the "open issues" left from Geneva and New York that would have to be resolved in these annexes, see "Checklist of Unresolved Issues Under Further Agreed Basic Principles," October 2, 1995, Sapiro files.

⁸⁴ Slocombe interview; Sapiro/O'Brien interview; Kornblum interview, July 26, 1995.

bureaucratic structures of the State Department's European Bureau.⁸⁵ Kornblum oversaw this effort, managing the work through an executive secretary in control of document production. The "task force" aspect of this was that the executive secretary was empowered to maintain control of the paper flow.⁸⁶ It also provided another senior official who could represent Holbrooke at the proliferating number of meetings on Bosnia, and could ensure quick, definitive answers to particular questions from senior Administration officials. Explicitly part of the Holbrooke-Kornblum strategy for "managing up," such a system helped reassure NSC and Seventh Floor State Department officials about preparation efforts. In this way, the "task force" was really not a new, independent bureaucratic organ -- it was simply a mechanism to keep control of things outside the normal process.

As the negotiations became more complicated, this organization helped "back-stop" the shuttle team. Now, with proximity talks scheduled, it helped organize the drafting process, mainly by establishing small working groups to draft the various annexes. Thus, as document production expanded outside the core legal team -- as staffers from EUR/SCE, EUR/RPM, the Human Rights Bureau (DRL), the office of the Legal Advisor, and other State Department bureaus got involved -- this system assured that tasks were getting completed and that the necessary clearances were attained. An organizational timeline was created to set goals and keep track of the process.⁸⁷ Holbrooke and Kornblum controlled this system tightly and personally, shepherding the process with what Holbrooke later admitted was sheer "bureaucratic brutality." Most of the organizational meetings were held in Holbrooke's conference room on the State Department's sixth floor. The invitation list to these events served as a way to limit the number of officials involved -- for those not invited (even from within the State Department itself), it was very difficult to see how the process unfolded. Remarkably, not only was the drafting itself restricted to this system, but few outside agencies even had an opportunity to clear these preliminary annexes (IFOR being the major exception). The NSC was usually represented at these meetings, but was not actively involved in the detailed drafting.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ This idea was first presented to Secretary Christopher in mid-September. See memorandum to Christopher from Holbrooke, "Organizing for the Balkan Peace Initiative," September 14, 1995; and memorandum to Richard Moose (M) from Kornblum, "Staffing for Bosnia Peace Task Force," September 20, 1995.

⁸⁶ The first executive secretary was Elizabeth Jones, who was awaiting Senate confirmation to become Ambassador to Kazakhstan. She was replaced by Nancy Ely-Raphel. See Kornblum interview, July 26, 1996; and notes from October 5, 1995 meeting (no author), L files.

⁸⁷ The first timeline was created to map events from October 11 to the start of the talks, originally scheduled for October 31. It outlined tasks for nine working groups: site selection/preparation; peace treaty; constitution; elections; IFOR; economic reconstruction; refugees and humanitarian assistance; congressional consultations; and Federation building. See "Working Group Timeline," EUR/SCE Chris Hoh files; for a more recent copy, see Pardew notebook, Shuttle V.

⁸⁸ The only exception was Robert Malley, an NSC staffer who helped on human rights. See Holbrooke interview with author (notes), January 9, 1997; Miriam Sapiro conversation with author, February 23, 1997. Also see, respectively, "Legal Working Group," no date, EUR/SCE-Zetkovic files; "Proximity Talks Roadmap: Tasking Checklist," October 1995, L files; and "Outline of a Peace Settlement," October 1995, L files.

Drafting work proceeded during the first two weeks of October, with most of the annexes being produced by their respective working groups. Then, on Sunday, October 15, word came that the lead negotiator wanted to see the agreement as a complete package. Holbrooke and his team had just departed for Paris on their fifth shuttle, and he wanted to see the documents in Paris by Monday morning. Working late into Sunday night at the State Department, the core legal team -- Jim O'Brien, Miriam Sapiro and Tim Ramish -- edited the annexes into a draft peace agreement and faxed it to the U.S. embassy in Paris.⁸⁹

This 38-page Bosnian peace agreement -- comprised of the framework agreement and 7 annexes -- was the first rough draft of what would be negotiated at the proximity talks.⁹⁰ Whereas the framework agreement was cast as an agreement between three independent states (Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia), the annexes were written as commitments between the Bosnian parties -- the Federation and Srpska. The U.S. and the Contact Group would sign the Framework document as "witnesses." Holbrooke and the team were reportedly pleased with the progress thus far, save for some minor editorial changes. Still, much drafting remained, and the working groups continued their efforts, aiming to complete the text about a week before the start of the talks.⁹¹

Choosing a Site for the Talks

Shortly after the October 5 announcement that peace talks would occur in the U.S., Assistant Secretary of State for Administration Patrick Kennedy had begun the search for an appropriate site.⁹² He discussed possibilities with Holbrooke and other members of the Bosnia team, such as Wes Clark, Chris Hill and Rosemarie Pauli-Gikas, Holbrooke's logistician and right hand. The logistical challenge was even daunting for

⁸⁹ Sapiro/O'Brien interview; Ramish interview.

⁹⁰ See fax to Roberts Owen from Jim O'Brien, Miriam Sapiro and Tim Ramish, October 15, 1995 (package with cover memorandum attached). The seven annexes covered: 1) cessation of hostilities and disengagement; 2) constitutional structure; 3) arbitration tribunal; 4) commission on human rights; 5) commission on refugees and displaced persons; 6) commission to preserve national monuments; and 7) political implementation of a peace settlement. The annexes not contained in this package (but to be included eventually) concerned IFOR, elections, public corporations, and new constitutional provisions for the Federation and Serb entities.

⁹¹ See Sapiro/O'Brien interview; and Sapiro, O'Brien, Ramish comments, October 31 group interview. For the Holbrooke team's response and suggested edits, see "The Wisdom of Holbrooke," O'Brien computer e-mail, October 18, 1995. For an update on the progress of preparations from Washington to the Holbrooke team, see "Official-Informal," Cable, State 245826, October 17, 1995.

⁹² For press reports of the search, see Elaine Sciolino, "Wanted: A Hideaway To Hatch a Peace," *New York Times*, October 12, 1995. When it was announced that talks would be held in the U.S., the State Department Legal Adviser's office prepared several memoranda outlining the legal issues raised. For example, they looked into the possibility that some of the delegates -- particularly the Bosnian Serbs and Milosevic -- were at risk of litigation once they were in the U.S. Milosevic's presence risked action by plaintiffs (such as Bosnian refugees or human rights groups) seeking an opportunity to initiate litigation against him personally or the FRY government. These risks would be significantly reduced -- although not entirely eliminated -- if Milosevic confined his travel to Wright-Patterson. See memorandum to Kornblum from Jonathan B. Schwartz (L), "Legal Issues Raised by Proximity Talks in the U.S.," October 6, 1995; and memorandum for Roberts Owen from Schwartz, "Milosevic's Litigation Risk if He Flies to New York," October 21, 1995.

the highly experienced Kennedy, who had helped plan the 1991 Madrid Middle East Peace Conference. Not since Camp David had such an important peace conference taken place on U.S. soil. Given the desired parameters -- an isolated area; separate, identical quarters for each of the parties in close proximity to each other; ability to accommodate five delegations of up to 100 people each; an hour flight time to Washington; a relatively open-ended time frame; and, of course, low costs -- Kennedy and his staff were drawn toward U.S. military facilities. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had tasked a review all U.S. military sites, recommending that Langley Air Force Base in Virginia was the most appropriate.⁹³

Kennedy considered several other locales, including West Point in upstate New York, Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, Nebraska, and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base outside Dayton, Ohio. After visiting Langley and Wright-Patterson, he determined that the Dayton site was best suited to fit the requirements. The conference facility and sleeping quarters were close to one another and easily isolated, creating the closed environment that Holbrooke felt was necessary. The dormitory-like quarters were identical and set in a quadrangle -- an arrangement very conducive to proximity shuttling. Importantly, the media could be restricted to an entirely separate facility several miles away from the negotiating area. The flight time from Washington was a little over an hour, making "drop-by" visits by senior officials possible. After discussing Dayton with Holbrooke, Kennedy passed his recommendation to Secretary Christopher on October 16, who approved. Wright-Patterson was not "particularly pretty," Kennedy said, but "it comes closest to meeting our needs." The decision was made public on October 18.⁹⁴

During this time, negotiations continued with Contact Group Allies about the timing of the various European follow-on conferences. With four of the five Contact Group members planning to host some sort of Balkan peace conference (only Germany had not announced such plans), there was concern that the diplomatic effort could suffer from problem of "conference proliferation." Accordingly, each meeting needed to be carefully timed with a specific focus. "Otherwise," a State Department analysis suggested, "the governments and organizations involved will be tempted to put off necessary commitments because 'there's always the next conference.'" The State Department attempted to impose some order on the process, beginning to consider potential scenarios for conference scheduling.⁹⁵ The British initially wanted the Russians to host an arms control conference, but this had been overtaken by Yeltsin's proposal to hold the pre-Dayton summit.⁹⁶ The British continued to press the U.S. to set the timing for a London follow-on conference, which would focus on implementation and reconstruction. In two conversations with British Foreign Secretary Rifkind, Christopher

⁹³ See Patrick Kennedy interview, July 19, 1996.

⁹⁴ For Kennedy's recommendations, see memorandum to Secretary Christopher from Kennedy, "Proximity Talks -- Site Selection," October 16, 1995; and memorandum to Tom Donilon from Kennedy, "Proximity Talks -- Site Selection," October 16, 1995; see also Kennedy interview. For press reports, see Michael Dobbs, "Ohio Air Base Selected for Bosnia Talks," *Washington Post*, October 18, 1995.

⁹⁵ See "Gameplan for Balkan Peace Conference," drafted by Chris Hoh (EUR/SCE), October 16, 1995; D files.

⁹⁶ See message from British National Security Advisor Roderic Lyne to Anthony Lake, White House Situation Room Cable, October 6, 1995.

said that given the uncertainty surrounding the length and outcome of proximity talks, it would be "premature and unwise" to set dates for a London conference. First, the Secretary recommended, they should wait to see if there would even be an agreement to implement.⁹⁷

Finally, the French were rumbling about the U.S. promise to have an "international peace conference" in Paris to sign a peace agreement. In an October 16 letter to Secretary Christopher, U.S. Ambassador to France Pamela Harriman raised concerns that the Administration might choose to hold a signing ceremony in the U.S.. Even though the President had made a notional pledge to have a signing in Paris, Harriman said there were rumors that the U.S. wanted to renege. At the time, NSC officials, especially Tony Lake, remained opposed to committing to Paris; the President had publicly promised to have a "peace conference" in France, not necessarily a signing ceremony. At the very least, many White House officials felt, the U.S. should to hold on to the possibility of a Rose Garden event if an agreement was reached.⁹⁸

If this were indeed the case, Harriman warned, "we would experience a very negative political counter-reaction," which would throw into question French cooperation in implementation. Almost alone in Washington, Holbrooke agreed with his close friend in Paris. He felt that particularly "with a Republican Congress that would oppose almost any financial request for Bosnia," the U.S. needed Europe for civilian implementation. As Harriman wrote, "it is thus essential that we continue to co-opt the French and Europeans. We simply cannot expect them to 'buy in' if we are not willing to share with them the political limelight."⁹⁹ While the possibility of President Clinton visiting the proximity talks remained open, Holbrooke felt it necessary to give the French the theater they wanted. Finally, the Administration came to a conclusion. If an agreement was achieved, it would be initialed in Dayton, and formally signed in Paris.

IFOR and Sanctions

In the two weeks before talks began in Dayton, U.S. officials spent a great deal of time refining the U.S. role in IFOR. The military had devised IFOR's basic structure, but as was clear after high-level officials were briefed on the plan, "substantial issues of policy and practice" remained.¹⁰⁰ Military planners could determine the logistics, but

⁹⁷ See "The Secretary and British Foreign Secretary Rifkind, October 12, 1995," Cable, State 243428, October 13, 1995; and "The Secretary and Foreign Secretary Rifkind, October 16, 1995," Cable, State 245838, October 17, 1995. During October 17-18, National Security Adviser Lake visited London for further consultations on Bosnia and other European issues. On the timing of European conferences, Lake agreed that while they should await the outcome of peace talks, the conferences should come soon after conclusion so as to continue any momentum. See "National Security Adviser Lake's October 17 Meeting with Foreign Secretary Rifkind," Cable, London 14347, October 18, 1995; and "National Security Adviser Lake's October 18 Meeting with FCO Political Director Pauline Neville-Jones," Cable, London 14348, October 18, 1995.

⁹⁸ Vershbow interview, December 17, 1996.

⁹⁹ Letter to Secretary Christopher (and Tom Donilon), from Ambassador Pamela Harriman, October 16, 1995; Holbrooke interview with author (notes), January 9, 1997.

¹⁰⁰ This was raised, for example, after an October 12 briefing by the Joint Chiefs for Secretary Christopher, Talbott, Holbrooke, the NSC's Sandy Berger, and others. See "Memo for the Record: Notes from briefing of IFOR preliminary planning to Sec. Christopher," no author, October 13, 1995, D files.

needed more political guidance on the specific objectives and limits of IFOR. Many of these questions were very basic operational concerns -- what, for example, would IFOR's role be in elections security or refugee return? Would IFOR be involved in Eastern Slavonia? How would the civilian administrator and the IFOR commander interact? Will IFOR deploy into Serb areas?¹⁰¹

Other questions -- perhaps the most difficult ones -- addressed the level of commitment the Clinton Administration was willing to gamble on this very risky effort. How would IFOR avoid "mission creep," or becoming drawn deeper and deeper into a quagmire? What was the "exit strategy" for withdrawing forces? What constituted a "violation" of the peace agreement? Who would decide? What would IFOR's response be? How would IFOR be "even-handed" in dealing with Srpska and the Federation -- would there be a "threshold" of non-compliance after which IFOR would use force against the Muslim-Croat Federation?

Although such questions had been a frequent topic of conversation throughout the autumn, the Deputies Committee began to consider them formally only in late October.¹⁰² The State Department, NSC and JCS each put together lists of unresolved issues on IFOR which officials discussed. The papers addressed nine main areas of concern: mission, non-compliance, election security, deployment, area of operations, timing, exit, Congressional strategy, and public outreach.¹⁰³ After two DC meetings, a memorandum

¹⁰¹ In mid-October, Jim Pardew outlined his views on many of these issues in a four-page memorandum to Perry and Slocombe. "From my experiences in the negotiating process," Pardew wrote, "I see the functions of the IFOR are two-fold: 1) stop the killing and 2) stabilizing the security situation in Bosnia to enable peaceful political and military institutions to develop and to allow normal life to resume. All three populations are fearful, suspicious, and in many cases, guilty. These people will look to IFOR to do what UNPROFOR could not do -- provide the security necessary to lead normal lives." Pardew recommended that IFOR present an overwhelming force in size and scope. He also advised that IFOR not mount a comprehensive military defense of the internal Federation-Srpska border: "In fact, these borders should be politically acceptable, physically identifiable -- even defensible -- but they also should be as transparent as possible in other ways to promote a free travel of trade and travel throughout the country." He further recommended that IFOR be deployed throughout all of Bosnia, "which is required to provide an atmosphere of security for any non-Serb population still left in Srpska. Such a presence also will help to validate the recognized borders of Bosnia, and to avoid the image of partition." Finally, Pardew predicted that "force will prevail quickly in Bosnia. We can expect localized resistance on a limited scale to test the IFOR but not a major confrontation with the Serbs. The more difficult part of implementation will not be the combat tasks but the other requirements on the force. Existing and new political institutions will be weak, the populations exhausted and the UN is inefficient and mistrusted. Until these conditions are reversed, the IFOR will be the dominant institution in the area looked to for all solutions and to all problems -- and there are many." Pardew memorandum to Perry and Slocombe, "Military Roles in a Post-Settlement Bosnia," October 13, 1995.

¹⁰² See "Summary of Conclusions for October 18 Deputies Committee on Bosnia," NSC memorandum, October 26, 1995.

¹⁰³ For the respective lists, see NSC memorandum, "Revised List IFOR/Unresolved Issues (draft)," drafted by John Feeley, no date; JCS "Information Paper" on Bosnia, October 20, 1995, drafted by John Roberti; and State paper, attached to memorandum to Talbott from Kornblum, "Deputies Committee Meeting, October 20, 1995," October 20, 1995.

outlining the DC's conclusions and recommendations was prepared for consideration by the Principals.¹⁰⁴

The Deputies reached agreement on most of the key issues -- including how IFOR would avoid "mission creep," relate with civilian agencies, provide elections security, and handle war criminals. Several unresolved questions were left for the Principals Committee to debate. These primarily concerned such issues as: the area of IFOR's deployment, cantonment of Srpska and Federation forces, and IFOR's presence along Bosnia's external borders.¹⁰⁵ These last issues had to be decided soon. In Brussels, NATO planners were already suffering from a lack of guidance from Washington, and without a final decision, Komblum informed Christopher, "they will fall further behind the curve."¹⁰⁶

Meeting on October 25, the PC approved the conclusions the Deputies' had reached on the simpler questions.¹⁰⁷ Regarding the more difficult issues, the basic disagreements were between the State Department and the Pentagon. Specifically, the State Department wanted the parties *mandated* to accept cantonment of their forces and a 20km weapons exclusion zone along the Srpska-Federation border.¹⁰⁸ Arguing that IFOR would not have the forces sufficient to monitor and enforce such provisions, DOD wanted the parties to agree to these terms voluntarily. Merely asking the parties to cooperate was a recipe for disaster, Holbrooke and his team argued. "The parties have repeatedly shown reluctance to comply with agreements that are not mandatory," Secretary Christopher's briefing paper explained. "By requiring the parties to comply with the terms... rather than asking them, we keep IFOR from an ambiguous, possibly untenable position. If the settlement clearly lays out what the parties must do, IFOR will have a more flexible position, allowing it to respond fully to violations of the agreement."¹⁰⁹ The Pentagon

¹⁰⁴ For details of these DC meetings, see "Summary of Conclusion for October 20 Meeting of the Deputies Committee," NSC memorandum, November 3, 1995; Memorandum to Talbott from Komblum, "Deputies Committee Meeting, October 24, 1995," October 23, 1995; and "Summary of Conclusions for October 24 Meeting of the NSC Deputies Committee," NSC memorandum, November 2, 1995.

¹⁰⁵ See Memorandum for Principals from Sandy Berger, "IFOR Issues," October 24, 1995.

¹⁰⁶ As described in Memorandum for Christopher from Komblum, "Principals Committee Meeting, October 27, 1995," October 26, 1995. For an update on the status of NATO's planning, see "NATO: Permreps Lunch, October 24," Cable, U.S.NATO 4185, October 25, 1995. Although officials in Brussels were concerned about the IFOR issue, at that time they were more worried about the surprise resignation of NATO Secretary General Wily Claes as a result of a scandal.

¹⁰⁷ See "Summary of Conclusions for October 25 Meeting of the NSC Principals Committee," NSC Memorandum, November 9, 1995.

¹⁰⁸ "Cantonment" meant that the entities would redeploy forces to specified areas where they could be easily monitored by IFOR.

¹⁰⁹ Komblum to Christopher, October 26, 1995. Importantly, this view was shared by James Pardew, the DOD member of Holbrooke's shuttle team. "I understand prudent military planning," Pardew wrote, "but I side with State on this one. Withdrawal of heavy weapons is in our interest for troop protection, but I do not believe that voluntary withdrawal is practical in this environment. Further, the U.S. military position is worst-case planning which envisions a scenario of confrontation all along the border. We must be capable of reacting to violations, but violations are not likely to be pervasive. If they are, the entire peace agreement is invalidated. Finally, the peace settlement constitutes the act of volunteering to withdraw weapons. If we can get them to agree to that, enforcement is our issue and not subject to the terms of the agreement." See memorandum to Secretary Perry and Slocombe from Pardew, "IFOR Issues for PCL Breakfast and PC Tomorrow," October 26, 1995.

also resisted State's recommendation to place an IFOR presence on Bosnia's external border. The military was concerned that such a mission would make IFOR troops susceptible to hostage-taking. State's proposal was made at Izetbegovic's request; it assumed that DOD's fears were greatly exaggerated. Moreover, without IFOR protection of the external border, the Serbs would never allow Bosnian forces to regulate official border crossings into Srpska.¹¹⁰

On October 27, the PC took up these issues, and the results were a compromise between the DOD and State positions. On a weapons-free Federation-Srpska border, they agreed that, at a minimum, IFOR would require the parties adhere to a 4km zone. Reduced from the original 20km zone, a 4km zone was small enough to satisfy the military's concerns about having enough troops for enforcement. The PC tasked DOD and State to "study further" the possibility of having a 20km zone and cantonment system. On external border security, the PC decided to have IFOR provide "a presence" at crossings where heavy traffic in support of the IFOR mission occurs. Finally, the Principals discussed what a "clear and defensible" end-state IFOR would seek to achieve before departing. In other words, what should the expectations be for an end-state after one year of IFOR? Although they didn't reach a conclusion on the issue, they began to consider what "milestones" would have to take place to measure the "success" of the mission.¹¹¹

Despite these compromise decisions, some civilian officials, particularly Holbrooke, were deeply disturbed by the Pentagon's reluctance to accept more responsibility. He was worried that if military officials remained unwilling to take necessary -- and, in his view, reasonable -- risks, then it would be very difficult for a settlement to succeed.¹¹²

In addition to these decisions on IFOR, the Principals also had to decide what to do about economic sanctions against Serbia. Since the diplomatic initiative was launched, the Administration's policy on sanctions was simple: sanctions would be suspended if a peace agreement was signed, and permanently lifted once an agreement was implemented. After his last shuttle to the region, however, Holbrooke believed that this policy should be slightly modified. Milosevic had begun pushing publicly and privately for sanctions relief, claiming he already had a commitment to it.¹¹³ Although Holbrooke had told Milosevic that there was nothing he could do about sanctions, he was concerned that the Serb leader be less willing to compromise at Dayton if he did not receive some relief soon. The sanctions regime had been successful at getting Milosevic

¹¹⁰ See *Ibid.* On this issue, Pardew also concurred with the State Department's position.

¹¹¹ See "Summary of Conclusions for October 27 Principals Committee Meeting on Bosnia," NSC Memorandum, October 30, 1995.

¹¹² Holbrooke interview with author (notes), January 9, 1997.

¹¹³ In accepting the invitation to attend peace talks, Milosevic had written that it was "understood" that sanctions would be suspended at the beginning of peace talks and full lifted at the moment a plan was signed. This assertion puzzled U.S. officials, who were unaware of any such arrangement. In a comment sent to Peter Tamoff, Kornblum wrote that "EUR/SCE does not know what 'understanding,' if any, was reached by Holbrooke with Milosevic on sanctions relief. It could well be that Milosevic is making an assertion here that is not based on any fact." See Letter from Milosevic to Christopher, October 19, 1995.

to the peace talks, the argument went, but it now had to be reconfigured for maximum utility during the talks.¹¹⁴

Holbrooke proposed accelerating the timetable for sanctions relief, suspending sanctions at the beginning of Dayton. If a peace agreement was reached in Dayton, suspension would continue until implementation. Early suspension, Holbrooke argued, would help Milosevic domestically, allowing him to address dire humanitarian needs (exacerbated by the Krajina refugee crisis) while also strengthening him against domestic critics who opposed an agreement. Furthermore, the proposal would place more pressure on Milosevic to reach a deal. By this logic, letting him nibble on the carrot of sanctions relief would increase his desire to have the whole thing. For the Bosnians, the proposal would put them on notice that obstructionism on their part would mean that Serbian sanctions would not be reimposed.¹¹⁵ Suspending sanctions during the height of the U.S. mediating effort, Holbrooke argued, would create a more even-handed atmosphere, enhancing the U.S. role as honest broker. Finally, there was the concern that without sanctions relief, Milosevic might even refuse to attend the Dayton talks.¹¹⁶

Some in the Administration had serious doubts about Holbrooke's suggestion. Most adamant about adhering to the current policy were the two Administration officials perhaps most familiar with the sanctions issue -- UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright and Vice President Gore's National Security Advisor Leon Fuerth. Both felt that by giving in on sanctions, the U.S. would fritter away its leverage. "The [sanctions] lever was fully in our hand," Albright reflected, "and if we were to give it up, it had to be given up for something good."¹¹⁷ Moreover, they argued, sanctions would be tough to reimpose, and Serbia could blunt the effect of reimposition by stockpiling during the suspension period. Sanctions relief was not needed to "help" Milosevic compromise; U.S. intelligence assessed that the Serb leader faced "remarkably little" internal political pressure to achieve immediate sanctions relief, and it would not enhance his bargaining position over the Bosnian Serbs. Lastly, such a decision would have troublesome side-effects -- it would directly contradict the President Clinton's commitment to Congress that sanctions relief would come only with an agreement (made most prominently in his August 29 letter to Robert Dole), and damage relations with the Bosnians and Croats.¹¹⁸

At the October 27 PC, the Principals decided that sanctions relief should not be granted until an agreement was reached. Sensing formidable bureaucratic opposition,

¹¹⁴ See Kornblum to Christopher, October 26, 1995; and attached "Sanctions Relief Talking Points."

¹¹⁵ Moreover, there were hints that Izetbegovic would accept some forms of sanctions relief for Milosevic - particularly if Serbia guaranteed a road to the Goradze enclave. See Vershbow interview, December 17, 1996.

¹¹⁶ See Kornblum to Christopher, October 26, 1996; and attached "Sanctions Relief Talking Points."

¹¹⁷ Albright interview; see also Fuerth interview.

¹¹⁸ The President had made this assurance to Congress in an August 28 letter to Senator Dole. On October 23, Tudjman stated that Croatia would be forced to attack Eastern Slavonia if a decision were made to ease sanctions on Belgrade before reaching an agreement. See Cable, U.S.UN 4140, October 23, 1995. For various interagency papers outlining the pros and cons of Holbrooke's proposal, see "Reimposition Mechanisms," State Department paper drafted by E. Bloom (L), October 26, 1995; "Options for Suspension of Sanctions on Serbia-Montenegro," State Department Sanctions Task Force paper drafted by Angel Rabasa (no date), and "Sanctions Relief," NSC memorandum, October 24, 1995.

Holbrooke himself had decided to let the issue rest. "In light of the situation," he told the PC, "I'm holding off on my recommendation. It's too much water to carry."¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, the Principals pledged that they would be prepared to revisit the issue if Holbrooke requested.¹²⁰

As expected, Milosevic was very angry with the decision. In a meeting with U.S. Charge Rudy Perina in Belgrade, his Foreign Minister said that now there "was absolutely no incentive for Milosevic" to negotiate further, and that therefore the Serb leader might not make the trip to Dayton. Thinking that Milosevic had too much to lose by not attending peace talks -- such an act would guarantee his international pariah status indefinitely -- U.S. officials were not concerned by such threats.¹²¹

The Last Push to Dayton

Five days before the Dayton talks were scheduled to begin, the working groups had produced a revised draft of a peace agreement. The document had been expanded to 92-pages and 9 annexes.¹²² To prepare internally for the upcoming talks -- and introduce other officials to the specifics of the draft agreement -- the State Department organized several large inter-agency meetings. On October 25, Holbrooke and lead members of the drafting team held a briefing for senior officials in Secretary Christopher's conference room at the State Department.¹²³ The next day, this group held a five-hour "off-site" meeting in Warrenton, Virginia, chaired by Secretary Christopher, to review the draft text and the general strategy for the talks.

The Warrenton meeting dealt with the logistical planning for Dayton as well as an annex-by-annex review of the proposed text. For many senior officials, this was the first opportunity to review the complete package. There was a discussion of the general framework agreement and annexes on the constitution, elections, and IFOR. To senior officials who were first being introduced to Holbrooke's self-described "iron-fisted" preparations for Dayton, Warrenton was not the venue to raise fundamental questions. Rather, the meeting provided the opportunity for officials to acquaint themselves with the results of the drafting process and "formally bless" the draft.¹²⁴

The Warrenton talks were also used as a dress rehearsal for Dayton. As the host, the U.S. would take the lead in presenting these annexes to the parties and shepherding through the negotiating process in Dayton. Holbrooke outlined the sequence of events for the first day: when Secretary Christopher would arrive, the plans for an opening

¹¹⁹ Vershbow interview, December 17, 1996.

¹²⁰ See "Summary of Conclusions" from October 27 PC. For press account of this decision, see Elaine Sciolino, "Administration Rejects Call to Lift Serbia Sanctions During Talks," *New York Times*, October 29, 1995.

¹²¹ Milosevic's Foreign Minister, Milan Milutinovic, complained about press reports that the proposal had not even reached Clinton's desk -- even after the President himself had met with Izetbegovic and Tudjman at the UN. See "FRY Foreign Minister Says Milosevic May Not Go To Dayton," Cable, Belgrade 5336, October 29, 1995.

¹²² In addition to the seven annexes contained in the October 15 draft, annexes had been added on elections; an international police task force; joint public corporations; and a map.

¹²³ Sapiro/O'Brien interview.

¹²⁴ See memorandum to Christopher from Holbrooke, "Bosnia Off-Site: An Annotated Agenda," October 24, 1995. See also Gallucci interview; Vershbow interview, December 17, 1996; John Price interview.

ceremony, and how negotiations would begin. The U.S. would lay out the whole package on day one. "The parties expect external leadership, and the European don't understand the need to lean on the parties," Holbrooke said.¹²⁵

That Saturday, October 28, Holbrooke met with Bosnian officials at the U.S. UN mission in New York. Joined by Roberts Owen, Jim O'Brien and Jack Zetkovic, the lead American negotiator went over the constitutional draft and elections annex with Mo Sacirbey and Paul Williams, an American lawyer hired by the Sarajevo government. Since early October, both the U.S. and EU had worked with Bosnian legal experts in an attempt to get the Bosnians prepared for Dayton. Rather than have the Bosnians simply reacting to outside proposals, "we wanted them to begin thinking more seriously about what they wanted out of an agreement," John Menzies recalled.¹²⁶ The UN meeting was intended to be a final push in this effort; a "desperate attempt," Holbrooke recalled, to get the Bosnians to "think more strategically" about these issues and make sure they were prepared for the talks.¹²⁷

Foremost on Sacirbey's mind, however, was the grave condition of the Muslim-Croat Federation. The Bosnian Foreign Minister insisted that the U.S. do something about this. Otherwise, he warned, the Bosnians would delay talks on other issues. Sacirbey's comments were only the most recent warning about the sorry state of this alliance; Izetbegovic himself had told President Clinton on October 24 that the Federation was in trouble. Both State Department and DOD assessments were very pessimistic about the entity's future viability. "A peace agreement in Bosnia removes the strong tactical basis for [the Federation's] continuance," a DIA analysis explained. "Even with moves to strengthen the Federation, I have doubts about its long-term prospects," a State Department planner warned.¹²⁸

In reality, little had changed since Joe Kruzal first outlined his concerns about the Federation during the initial Holbrooke shuttle. "The Federation is seen as a marriage of convenience," he had written. Now, on the eve of Dayton, it seemed that the "fundamental conceptual flaw" Kruzal had described — the Federation's weakness — could bring an agreement down in flames.¹²⁹ The peace being brokered by the U.S. relied

¹²⁵ Vershbow interview, December 17, 1996.

¹²⁶ Menzies had led this effort from Sarajevo. See Menzies interview; and "EU Prepared to Help Bosnians on Constitution," Cable, Brussels 10438, October 6, 1995.

¹²⁷ Holbrooke interview with author (notes), November 26, 1996.

¹²⁸ See [redacted]

[redacted] and memorandum to Holbrooke from Daniel Serwer (EUR), "The Bosnian Federation: Requirements for Survival in Dayton and beyond," October 30, 1995.

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¹²⁹ See Kruzal "Trip Report" to Perry, August 18, 1995.

upon a healthy, fully-functioning Federation. Yet at that point, no such entity existed. From Izetbegovic and Tudjman on down, the Muslims and Croats simply did not trust each other, and implementing Federation structures had been very slow. However, as long as their mutual needs were being met, the Muslims and Croats had proved they could work together. Holbrooke understood that to have any chance for success at Dayton, they would have to work immediately to rebuild this relationship. One of the first things the U.S. would do in Dayton, he decided, is negotiate an agreement committing the Bosnians and Croats to creating a viable, functioning Federation.¹³⁰

The last organizational events prior to Dayton were October 28-29 meetings with the Contact Group representatives at the State Department. Similar to the talks in Warrenton, these sessions were arranged to introduce the Europeans to the texts to be negotiated in Dayton.¹³¹ True to form, the Europeans were displeased with the drafting process thus far — they complained bitterly that they had been shut-out of drafting agreements to which they would be a party. They were particularly concerned with the IFOR annex. In discussions led by Wes Clark, the Europeans and Americans performed an exhaustive, line-by-line mark-up of the IFOR annex.¹³² Others went over the political and civilian implementation annexes, with the Europeans playing close attention to those concerning civilian implementation and an international police force. The Europeans wanted special annexes on these issues, and after a day of fierce debate, the U.S. agreed to work with them on these in Dayton. Although much was accomplished that weekend, it was clear to U.S. negotiators that more would need to be done in Dayton to assuage European concerns and, where necessary, bring them into the process.¹³³

The morning of October 31, the Holbrooke team joined the President and other Principals for a Foreign Policy Team meeting at the White House.¹³⁴ This was the final (and only) briefing session for the President before Dayton. Christopher began the meeting by laying out for the President the planned schedule for Dayton as well as the rules the negotiations would follow. "There will be radio silence after the opening ceremony," the Secretary said. Holbrooke urged the need to lower expectations for the conference. "We're on our own 30-yard line," he stressed. Although he didn't know how long the talks would last, there were "practical limits" to how long they could go. "We'll hit a wall by day ten," he said, explaining that they would use the upcoming travel of Clinton and Christopher (in mid-November, both were scheduled to attend an APEC Ministerial and state visit in Japan) to set benchmarks for progress. "Even if we fail," Holbrooke concluded, "the U.S. can be proud." The Geneva and New York principles provided a sound political foundation to build upon, Sarajevo was at peace, and a

¹³⁰ Holbrooke interview, November 18, 1996. For the Sarajevo embassy's reporting on the Federation, see "The Bosnian Federation: Of Critical Importance, Yet in Critical Condition," Cable, Sarajevo 666, October 14, 1995.

¹³¹ For drafts of annexes presented to the Europeans that weekend, see package of drafts from October 27-28, 1995; L/EUR files.

¹³² See Draft Annex 1: "Military Aspects of the Peace Agreement," Revision 15, October 29, 1995; L/EUR files.

¹³³ For details, see Pardew interview, June 26, 1996; Komblum interviews; Sapiro/O'Brien interview; Hoh, Goldberg, O'Brien comments, October 31, 1996 interview; and Vershbow interview, December 17, 1996.

¹³⁴ Details from this meeting, unless otherwise noted, are from Vershbow notes of meeting. See Vershbow interview, December 17, 1996.

country-wide cease-fire had been reached. "Dayton's a gamble, but the shuttle phase has been exhausted."

President Clinton expressed concern over IFOR. If Dayton was successful, Clinton faced a prospect that no president ever welcomed: sending thousands of American soldiers in a dangerous, possibly hostile environment. This decision weighed heavily on his mind, particularly considering events under similar circumstances earlier in his presidency. "Given Somalia, we must have a clear mission so there's no 'mission creep,'" he said. Moreover, Congress was becoming a real problem, and IFOR threatened to hurt the President politically. The day before, in a vote that House Speaker Newt Gingrich called "a referendum on this Administration's incapability of convincing anyone to trust them," the House passed overwhelmingly a non-binding resolution stating that the U.S. should not send troops to Bosnia without congressional approval.¹³⁵

On the substance of what would be negotiated in Dayton, the President said that he felt that Sarajevo should remain unified. "I have strong feelings about Sarajevo," he said. "It would be a mistake to divide the city. We don't want another Berlin." He also suggested that negotiators not feel constrained by artificial deadlines. He advised that they continue the stepping-stone approach utilized during the shuttles, assuring that at least some agreements were locked-in if talks failed. "If you can't get all the way to a final agreement, the credibility of an interim agreement will depend on whether there are concrete confidence-building measures without an aversion to slaughter and chaos." On Serbian sanctions, the President stated his view that the U.S. not provide relief unless they were sure Milosevic would honor a peace agreement. "But we can't ignore the negotiating dimension," Secretary Christopher responded. "We need to keep Milosevic on the reservation. We want to be able to say to him that when we initial [an agreement] we'll start a process of suspension." With Lake and Holbrooke supporting this viewpoint, the President agreed.

Following this briefing, Holbrooke and his delegation departed for Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. "This is the best chance we've had for peace since the war began," President Clinton said to the press that day. "It may be the last chance we have had for a very long time."¹³⁶ The time for preparation was over. After four long and bloody years in Bosnia, the eyes of the world turned to Dayton, Ohio.

¹³⁵ See Elaine Sciolino, "House Tells Clinton to Get Approval to Send Troops to Bosnia," *New York Times*, October 31, 1995; and John Yang, "House Votes to Limit Role of U.S. Troops in Balkans," *Washington Post*, October 31, 1995.

¹³⁶ "Statement by the President," October 31, 1995; White House Press Office. See also John Harris, "Clinton Asserts Role for U.S. Troops; Wishing Balkan Negotiators Well," *Washington Post*, November 1, 1995.