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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000



21 July 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: SPICAL DEFENSE REPORT -- LONDON CONFERENCE

Chris, Shali and I have come away from the London meeting with a significant agreement that will, if carried through, change the dynamic under which UNPROFOR operates. Whether it will have the desired effect of deterring the Serbs from attacking Bosnia and thwart an actual attack are large questions. However, it will make the price for their success far higher and thus could influence other events in Bosnia.

The agreement is essentially a US-British initiative that the French have reluctantly joined after first broodfully pushing their own proposal to have the US help ferry French troops into Gorazde. If Gorazde is attacked, or if we see an imminent attack, we will begin an air campaign that inflicts enough pain to make the Serbs cease the action that provoked the attack. The first phase would be close air support, plus strikes on targets that support the attack. Unlike past use of air power, the NATO air arm under CINCSOUTH will not be limited to off-and-on-again pin pricks, but will undertake a campaign against a pre-approved set of significant targets over a broad area around Gorazde. We will design them to inflict pain well beyond the immediate issue -- shelling, mortars, heavy weapons threats, etc. If that fails to stop the Serbs, we will expand the campaign to military relevant targets all over Bosnia.



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Attending the meeting were Foreign Ministers, Defense Ministers and Chiefs of Defense Staff from 16 countries, including Russia, members of the Contact Group, countries with troops on the ground, NATO, EU, and UN. To say there were a lot of different perspectives is a gross understatement. The French in our pre-meetings argued passionately for their ground troop insertion proposal. They blew hot and cold on the use of air power despite the fact that their own plan was heavily dependent on it. I came away convinced that their proposal was not a bluff, as we half suspected, but they may still have calculated that it would be domestically popular even if rejected.

Our proposal has the virtue of changing how UNPROFOR operates from the air. The advantage of the French belligerency is that it could change how UNPROFOR operates on the ground. We should encourage them in their plans to open routes to Sarajevo where a ground fight, should the Serbs provoke one, makes more sense.

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The Russians were not as distant from our position as I feared. They oppose air strikes, but did not try to block the consensus and even offered Russian efforts to lean on the Serbs. Unlike past discussions Grochev argued the case against air strikes more on military grounds, instead of centering on the political problem for Russia if fellow Serbs were bombed. However, he still sees them as being designed to achieve political rather than military ends. This is a man clearly sobered by his experience in Chechnya. He also proposed the idea of a "standing consultative commission," which would be a permanent consultative body for the military representatives and military experts of the countries involved. We have been looking for new ways to play a Russian card with the Serbs and this may be one. Further help keeping them involved might be through Grochev to Mladic and Yeltsin to Karadzic channels. You may want to encourage this when you call to inquire about Yeltsin's help.

The most problematic issue at the conference was whether all would agree to sustain an air campaign in the face of hostage taking, one among a number of options the Serbs have to try to break our resolve. I was confident that each of the leaders understands in principle the necessity of not allowing the policies and actions of the international community to become hostage to terror. However, I was concerned that we would become diverted onto charges that the US is hypocritical since it has the fewest people at risk. The group figuratively swallowed hard, but we will need to watch carefully for signs of wavering resolve.

Lack of resolve in the face of hostage taking is only one of many possibilities that could derail this effort. We must quickly move the agreement, essentially a US-British-French accord endorsed by attendees, through the NAC, which must approve the idea of attacking targets outside the 20 km exclusion zone and also pre-approve a broader campaign covering all of B-H, if necessary. Should such a campaign become necessary it will be necessary to return to the NAC for re-confirmation due to the magnitude of the decision, but it is important to get them on the record now and conditioned for that later decision. While we are working that NAC process, the Serbs could launch an expedited attack, leaving us scrambling. They might not be successful because of lack of preparations, but much depends on the resistance by the Bosnian government forces. Even if we fully implement our plan, we will still depend on the government forces to put up a vigorous defense. Part of our public exposure is the potential for the government to blame their failures on any lack of success in our effort to knock out specific heavy weapons. The potential for the French playing "I told you so" is also high.



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These and other scenarios are but some of the possible difficulties we face. If we fail to respond to a provocation this time with the resolve we have asserted, we can and should forget about UNPROFOR. On the other hand, even success in deterring attack on Gorazde, or repelling it, does not guarantee the survival of UNPROFOR. This is the only feasible plan to salvage UNPROFOR's credibility and effectiveness, but it is not a long term answer for Bosnia. I fear we are sailing a course between Scylla and Charybdis. We may have avoided disaster for the moment, but we are lurching toward another. Our hope is that the momentum from this course change will carry us into a period of calm where we can bring diplomatic efforts to play.

cc: Vice President Gore & Leon Panetta
State: Sec. Christopher & Strobe Talbott
CIA: DCI Deutch
White House: Chief of Staff Podesta, Asst. to President Lick, Study Berger
JCS: CJCS Shalikaivili & VCJCS Owens

Bill Perry

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