

Chapter Five

Force and Diplomacy: NATO Bombing Ends, the Western Offensive Heats Up

As the Holbrooke team regrouped in Washington over the weekend of September 9-10, UN military leaders on the ground in Bosnia began to question the duration and scope of the NATO air campaign against the Bosnian Serbs. Lt. General Bernard Janvier, who had reluctantly agreed less than a week earlier to turn the airstrikes back on, remained skeptical about their effectiveness and worth. Seeing that the Bosnian Serbs had still yet to comply with NATO's demands, the French General believed that the bombing thus far had produced little tactical or psychological value. As conveyed to the U.S. team earlier that week, Janvier still doubted that the Bosnian Serbs would succumb to NATO under the current "Option Two" targeting scheme. He argued that the air campaign should continue at a "modulated intensity," but ultimately, in order to make a difference, NATO would likely have to escalate to "Option Three," the broadest targeting range approved by the NAC. Janvier doubted that political authorities would authorize such escalation, but believed that they should be prepared to do so "despite international criticism." The UN military commander in Sarajevo, British General Rupert Smith, also worried that NATO was running out of Option Two targets. However, he was more concerned that the political advantages of bombing were waning, arguing that if the Bosnian Serbs perceived that "Holbrooke doesn't have his hand on the [bombing] lever, they will refuse to talk." Smith recommended that the bombing campaign pause a second time to organize the political-military strategy.¹

Similar concerns were relayed to the U.S. Secretary of Defense by his Under Secretary for Policy, Walter Slocombe. Following meetings with NATO air commanders in Aviano, Italy, Slocombe emphasized the lack of political-military coordination in a September 8 memorandum to Perry. Slocombe felt that the air campaign's "fundamental problem" was the lack of a clear policy objective. "We clearly have moved beyond retaliation for the market attacks and even beyond stopping the shelling of Sarajevo," he explained. "Our explicit demands are weapons withdrawal [from around Sarajevo] and full access [to Sarajevo], but these take Bosnian Serb agreement; it is dubious whether this will be forthcoming." With the air campaign's initial objectives achieved, there seemed to be confusion about how long bombing should last, and to what end. "Is it then

¹ See, respectively, [redacted]

and "General Smith: What Does Holbrooke Want Us to Do?," Cable, Sarajevo 555, September 10, 1995.

our intention for bombing to continue indefinitely?" Slocombe asked. "Until we get agreement on this, it will be difficult to make decisions on the future of the campaign."²

On September 10, Janvier again met with Mladic to try to persuade the Bosnian Serb General to withdraw his weapons from around Sarajevo. This meeting, held in the Bosnian Serb border town of Mali Zvornic, was arranged by French President Chirac and Milosevic, both of whom supported a second pause in the air campaign. The Bosnian Serbs were supposed to provide Janvier with details of how they intended to withdraw their weapons from around Sarajevo. However, by all reports, the meeting did not go any differently than the others between these two generals. Mladic, unrepentant and bullish as ever, threatened to unleash all of the BSA forces against the remaining enclaves. He asserted that the Bosnian Serbs would only continue negotiations after airstrikes ended, not before. Janvier rejected his arguments, and left the general after the short meeting with a promise that the campaign would continue.³

With Mladic continuing to defy NATO, it appeared that Milosevic's hold on the Bosnian Serbs had not improved much since Holbrooke had last asked him to apply pressure on them September 5. According to Milosevic's Foreign Minister Milan Milutinovic, the Serb president had pushed for the Janvier-Mladic meeting because, in his view, the resumption of bombing had only emboldened the Bosnian Serbs. Milutinovic had told U.S. Ambassador to Bosnia John Menzies that on the day of the Janvier meeting, Milosevic had had a "very heated" discussion with the Bosnian Serb general, who refused to cave-in to NATO. In addition, he noted that the air campaign was proving counter-productive, claiming that "they [the BSA] like it, they are in their element." Milosevic and Milutinovic argued that in the siege environment created by the air campaign, their Bosnian colleagues would not cooperate. Accordingly, Milutinovic recommended another pause to allow discussions with Mladic in a "calmer environment... before the stand-off escalates and damages the peace process."⁴

Despite these concerns about the political implications of the campaign, NATO pressed on, broadening the use of weapons available in its repertoire. Shortly after the discouraging meeting between Janvier and Mladic, the U.S. Navy cruiser Normandy fired thirteen Tomahawk cruise missiles at ten Bosnian Serb air defenses around Banja Luka in northwest Bosnia. Militarily, this attack represented two significant departures in the air campaign: it was the first outside the primary area of operations in eastern Bosnia, and it was the first time these radar-guided, \$1.3 million dollar weapons with 700-pound warheads had been fired at Bosnian Serb targets. General Shalikhvili had informed the President and his top advisors of such an operation during their September 7 Foreign Policy Team meeting, and NATO command had been planning the attack for several days.⁵ NATO commanders had officially approved the strike the day before, but decided to wait to inform other NATO Allies and await the outcome of the Janvier-Mladic talks.⁶

² See Slocombe interview, January 6, 1997. These quotes are from Slocombe's memorandum to Perry, "Trip Report: Vincenza," September 8, 1995, which he read aloud during interview.

³ See, respectively, "September 11 Meeting With FRY Foreign Minister Milutinovic," Cable, Belgrade 4442, September 11, 1995; "Janvier-Mladic Meeting Deemed Disappointing by UN," Cable, Zagreb 3499, September 11, 1995; and "Permreps Express Concern Over Possible Escalation in Air Strike Operation With Use of Cruise Missiles," Cable, U.S.NATO 3555, September 11, 1995.

⁴ See Belgrade 4442, September 11, 1995.

⁵ On September 8, Slocombe reported to Perry that the Banja Luka strike had been initially intended for September 7, but had been delayed at the request of Janvier. According to Slocombe, the French

The Tomahawk strike upset many American Allies. At a special NAC meeting the next day, several allied representatives complained that the attack represented an unauthorized escalation to "Option Three" targeting. U.S. and NATO military planners believed that the Tomahawks themselves were authorized by the current NAC decision, and that the targeting in northwest Bosnia was justified to destroy Bosnian Serb command and control.⁷ "We got criticized fairly heavily for [not checking] more carefully with our Allies," Perry recalled. "We figured that the authority that NATO had given to go ahead was a broad enough authority that we did not have to go back and check on every mission that we bombed."⁸ However, France, joined by Spain, Canada and Greece, argued that the attack "insidiously slid" the air campaign from Option Two to Option Three, and warned the U.S. against pursuing a strategy of creeping escalation.⁹

Although the U.S. military believed that they were authorized to conduct the Tomahawk strike, Perry did admit that the operation was "a significant escalation in the perception of what we were doing." In terms of destructive potential, the Tomahawks were less powerful than the hundreds of 2,000-pound bombs being dropped by U.S. planes. Nevertheless, Perry explained, the escalation perception was created by the "effectiveness" -- and technological superiority -- of these weapons.¹⁰

The NATO air campaign coincided with Federation advances on the ground. During this time, Bosnian Muslim and Croat military forces were on the move in western Bosnia, heading toward the key town of Donji Vakuf. The Bosnian Government had pledged that they would not take advantage of NATO air operations by attacking areas in and around NATO targets, but still pursued offensive operations in northwest Bosnia, away from the air campaign.¹¹ Nonetheless, such Bosnian gains, while relatively small thus far, fed another perception -- that NATO was acting on behalf of the Sarajevo government. NATO and UN officials admitted publicly that airstrikes "clearly play" to the Bosnian Government's advantage. Yet, they also recognized that such continued successes on the ground would complicate NATO's effort by fraying the already unstable

UNPROFOR commander had done so "ostensibly to avoid interference with the Mladic-Milosevic meeting, but I strongly think that Janvier's action reflects Paris' reluctance to see the geographic scope of the campaign widened even for air defense." Slocombe interview, January 6, 1997.

⁶ See U.S.AFE Chronology, p6; and Eric Schmitt, "NATO Shifts Focus of Its Air Attacks on Bosnian Serbs," *New York Times*, September 11, 1995. The decision had also leaked to the press by September 9, see "The Fighting: U.S. Officials Say Campaign Might Shift Bombing Targets," *New York Times*, September 9, 1995.

⁷ In his September 8 report to Perry, Slocombe explained that attacks on air defenses around Banja Luka "do not require additional political approval. Carrying them out would step up the pressure without a substantially greater risk of casualties, and [by removing Serb air defenses] would allow NATO planes to reach targets in the Sarajevo ZOA by a more direct route." See Slocombe interview, January 6, 1997.

⁸ Perry interview.

⁹ For a report of the NAC meeting, see U.S.NATO 3555.

¹⁰ Perry interview.

¹¹ Izetbegovic had pledged this privately to Menzies on September 10. During this conversation, he cautioned that without airstrikes there would not be a continuation of negotiations: "the Serbs won't be interested," he said. Later that day, he made the pledge not to take advantage of the NATO strikes publicly, although he was careful not to say that the Bosnians would cease attacks in the West. See "Izetbegovic: 'You Can Expect a Statement by Late Afternoon,'" Cable, Sarajevo 554, September 10, 1995.

consensus in support of the bombing.¹² This was certainly the case with America's onetime adversary, Russia.

The Russian Dimension

With a history of cultural identification and political alignment with the Serbs, Russia's policy usually translated into sympathy for Serbia and skepticism about any action (such as the economic embargo or NATO strikes) that "unfairly punished" the Serbs. Despite Russia's biases, it seemed that as long as the U.S. was able to sell its ideas to Belgrade, Russia could not oppose a settlement as unfairly anti-Serb. Yet, substance alone was not the problem with Russia. Along with being a de facto ally of Serbia, Russia was also struggling for acceptance as a great power. State Department intelligence analysts observed that the "Russians [were] genuinely angry at being sidelined" in the peace process.¹³ The Russian leadership saw that the future of power relations in Europe were being shaped by the Balkan conflict, and that if "marginalized now, Russia [would] have to live with the consequences for years."¹⁴ Although its Balkan diplomacy was neither strong nor consistent (reflecting the disjointed decision-making environment in Moscow), Russia could not be left out of the process. Accordingly, the Holbrooke delegation had been advised that the appearance of Russian inclusion in the process — achieved through such means as "timely consultations" — was as important as any actual substantive input they might have.¹⁵

Holbrooke understood that as with the rest of the Contact Group, Russia needed to be perceived as being involved in the negotiations. "Moscow's primary goal was neither to run nor wreck the negotiations," Holbrooke reflected later. "In the wake of their dramatic fall from superpower status at the end of the Cold War, what the Russians cared most about was to restore some sense, however symbolic, that they still mattered in the world." In general, Holbrooke felt that leaving the Russians outside "the process risked

¹² The Administration was concerned that Federation and Croatian forces would exploit the NATO air campaign. By September 12, it appeared that they had partially heeded calls for restraint, but that more would need to be done (possibly with Russian help) to make negotiating prospects more attractive to the parties than military action. For a review of the U.S. warnings to Bosnia and Croatia on these points, see memorandum for Talbott (no author), "U.S. Calls for Restraint by Sarajevo and Zagreb," September 1995. Also see Kit Roane, "Bosnian Muslims Said to Push Back Rebel Serb Forces," *New York Times*, September 13, 1995.

¹³ See memorandum to Talbott from Toby Gati (INR), "Bosnia -- How Mad Are the Russians and What Can They Do?," September 13, 1995. This analysis estimated that although the Russian were angry, both Yeltsin and Kozyrev "still see the remedy in active participation in the peace process. They want the bombing stop but think that, at some point, they will be drawn back into play. If engagement bears no fruit, they will have to take demonstrative steps to part company with the West, since Yeltsin's electoral fortunes and Kozyrev's job are at stake. Moscow can do several things (some of which they might have done anyway, but will now tie NATO actions in Yugoslavia): spoil the Euro-architecture game; deny us a successful October summit; and tie up a range of regional and arms control actions."

¹⁴ On this point, U.S. intelligence explained that Russia's "failure to influence events is one more reminder that Russia has lost its great power status and has been relegated to the sidelines while NATO, led by the U.S., takes the lead." See Balkan Task Force Intelligence Report, attached to note for Secretary Christopher (and passed to Holbrooke) from INR, September 8, 1995.

¹⁵ For more details on how the U.S. planned to handle the Russians, see memorandum to Holbrooke from John Herbst (S/NIS), "Managing the Russian Side of our Balkan Diplomacy," August 26, 1995.

provoking them into trying to wreck it simply to get attention, while bringing them in was primarily a procedural tactic that would make it easier to control them."¹⁶

But the Russians were having problems with the bombing. On September 7, Russian President Yeltsin had written Clinton to express his concerns about the course of the bombing effort and the peace negotiations.¹⁷ On September 8, Russian UN Ambassador Sergei Lavrov said that the strikes were "punitive measures" that undermined the peace process, and the next day, the Russian Ambassador to NATO and the EU Vitaly Churkin told NATO Ambassador Hunter that the Bosnian Serbs would not comply with NATO's demands, and that Russia could not convince them. Nevertheless, Churkin offered to meet with Mladic if NATO was willing to pause the bombing. Characterizing NATO actions as an "all-out war" against the Serbs, Churkin said that if the bombing continued, Russia would reassess its role in the Contact Group and, most concerning, "aid the Serbs."¹⁸ Holbrooke, who had met with Churkin in Brussels two days earlier, considered his statement irrelevant -- not much more than an attempt by the Russian Ambassador to reinsert himself into the peace process.¹⁹

The Russians were particularly ruffled by the appearance of coordination between the recent Muslim-Croat gains in western Bosnia and the NATO campaign. On the day after the Tomahawk attack, Defense Secretary Perry discussed the campaign with Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev. Over the course of the last year, Perry and Grachev had established a strong and productive working relationship, allowing them to discuss issues and convey concerns frankly. Throughout the bombing campaign, Perry tried to keep an open line of communication with the Russian Defense Minister, letting him know "what we were doing and why we were doing it." Perry realized that these consultations were never "fully to [the Russians] satisfaction -- they wanted to be in on the decision loop."²⁰

In this September 11 phone conversation, Grachev expectedly complained that it seemed as though NATO and the U.S. had taken the side of the Muslims and Croats in the fighting, and that the airstrikes should have been halted immediately after the Geneva agreement. Continued bombing could sour U.S.-Russian relations; "if the fighting continues," Grachev warned, "we will have to help the Serbs in a unilateral way." Claiming that the West was using a "double-standard" by punishing the Serbs but not the Croats and Muslims, Grachev said that "ignoring Russian opinion casts doubt on the

¹⁶ Holbrooke draft memoirs, Chapter 7 (January 27, 1997), pp12-13.

¹⁷ In President Clinton's September 9 response to the Russian President, he largely side-stepped disagreements and thanked the Russians for their support. See Message from Clinton to Yeltsin, Cable, White House 92005, September 9, 1995. The Russians had complained about the bombing from the moment it started. See, for example, the Moscow embassy's report of the Russian reaction, contained in "Secretary's Message on Bosnia Delivered," Cable, Moscow 28034, September 1, 1995.

¹⁸ For Lavrov comment, see "Security Council 9/09/95: Bosnia-Herzegovina Debate and Adoption of Presidential Statement," Cable, U.S.UN 3433, September 9, 1995. Churkin provided little detail on what he meant by "aid," although he implied that it perhaps would not even be related to the providing of weapons. In his reporting cable to the State Department, Hunter admitted that these comments might be more bluster than substance. "As is often the case with Churkin," Hunter explained, "it was not obvious which of his comments were instructed and which were his own amplification. He did make clear that his instructions encompassed his emphasizing the gravity of the situation, the threat of 'aid' for the Serbs, and the judgment that the Bosnian Serbs would not withdraw the heavy weapons. Beyond these points, it was not clear that even his proposal to meet with Mladic was instructed." See "Russian Ambassador Churkin on NATO Bombing," Cable, U.S.NATO 3531, September 10, 1995.

¹⁹ Holbrooke interview with author (notes), December 20, 1996.

²⁰ Perry interview.

sincerity of Western intentions to settle the warfare." Perry and Grachev agreed to stay in close contact, but Russia had already begun formal moves to assert its role in the process. Within a day, Russia tried to get the UN Security Council to order an immediate halt to the bombing, only to be rebuffed.²¹

In a further attempt to assuage Russia's discontent, Strobe Talbott planned to travel to Moscow on September 14 for what he described as "quiet consultations at a time of scratchiness in the [U.S.-Russian] relationship over Bosnia." In meetings with Russian officials, Talbott hoped to show that the U.S. wanted to improve consultations between the two sides. The basic message was that while the U.S. understood that NATO bombing was hard for Russia to swallow, allowing the Bosnian war to continue would be worse. "If Bosnia were to fester," Talbott's talking points read, "it would drive an even-deeper wedge between Russia and the West; it would continue to make Russia look desperate for a deal that favors the Serbs; [and] it would continue to undermine the credibility of the UN, in which Russia is heavily invested." The bottom-line was, the U.S. needed to make the case for U.S.-Russian cooperation on the issue. "Let's concentrate on fixing the problem rather than the blame," Talbott's points stated.²²

While most of Talbott's discussions that day focused on Russian support for the current peace negotiations, there were some preliminary discussions of a Russian role in implementing a settlement. On this latter issue, Talbott felt the talks went well. "There will almost certainly be a Russian role in the follow-on arrangements toward peace," he told the press in a background briefing. In sum, Talbott characterized his discussions in Moscow as evidence that despite recent friction, the U.S. and Russia "will be able to do important and effective work together on bringing peace to the former Yugoslavia."²³

NATO Bombing Nears the End

All of these developments, including a read-out of the Holbrooke team's negotiations and their next steps, were discussed at a September 11 PC at the White House. With the President and the entire negotiating team in attendance, Holbrooke explained the progress recently made in Geneva and some of the goals for the next shuttle. From Holbrooke's perspective, the last round of talks "drew the lines on the field, established the team rosters, and wrote the rule book for the next round of negotiations. Now the rough and tumble game begins." Specifically, Holbrooke outlined several "clusters" of issues to handle, including: opening discussions on the map; negotiating a cease-fire (when the "time is right"); working to organize NATO implementation; and beginning to flesh out the Geneva principles into working government structures.²⁴

The discussion then turned to the NATO air campaign's strategic goals. President Clinton asked whether Holbrooke thought that the campaign had "reached the point of

²¹ See Perry-Grachev Telcon, September 11, 1995 (Pardew notebook; Shuttle 2; Book 2); Christopher Wren, "Russia Fails in UN to Bar Raids on Serbs," *New York Times*, September 13, 1995; and Rick Atkinson and Daniel Williams, "NATO Rejects Demand to End Bombing; Russia Warns Alliance on Bombing Campaign," *Washington Post*, September 12, 1995.

²² These points were contained Talbott's briefing packet, which also detailed a "basic script" that the Deputy Secretary could use when meeting with the Russians. See "Moscow Mission: September 14-15 -- Talking While Bombing," EUR/RPM files, September 1995.

²³ See "Transcript of Talbott Briefing," Cable, Moscow 29798, September 15, 1995.

²⁴ See Memorandum for Christopher from Holbrooke, "Principals Committee Meeting: September 11, 1995," September 11, 1995.

diminishing returns." Holbrooke responded that the bombing was still advantageous to his team's diplomatic effort. "We want it to continue," he said. "We believe that we should tough it out. The U.S. has gained leadership. Izetbegovic would not have come as far as he has without the bombing." Holbrooke did admit, however, that they may reach a point where continued bombing would hurt the initiative, but "we're not there yet." Christopher concurred with his Assistant Secretary. "The bombing should continue through Option Two targets... it would be bad to back off." The President agreed, but expressed frustration that the air campaign was not better calibrated with the diplomatic effort. "It's tricky," Holbrooke responded, well aware of the challenge of trying to orchestrate the bombing to complement the negotiations.²⁵

Such strategic questions as the duration and policy goals of the air campaign were soon answered by military realities. Perry and Admiral William Owens, the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, informed the meeting that NATO would likely run out of Option Two targets in two to three days. This news seemed to take some officials by surprise; although U.S. military leaders had let everyone know that the target list was nearing its end, some officials, including Christopher and Holbrooke, did not expect the end to come so soon. Indeed, Christopher remained skeptical that the military had actually "exhausted all the targets."²⁶ If the U.S. wanted NATO to continue the bombing, it would have to go back to the NAC and the UN to receive approval for Option Three targeting.²⁷ General Shalikhvili had raised this point with the President and his advisors four days earlier, and they had decided to defer such a decision. Now the point to decide was upon them.

The problem was that it would be very difficult to get new NAC and UN approval before NATO ran out of targets. Recalling the arduous process to get the NAC to approve Options One and Two following the London decisions in July, there was no good reason to believe it possible to secure the controversial Option Three decision anytime soon, if at all. U.S. Allies had already expressed skepticism that such an agreement could be reached, and now Russian sensitivity seemed particularly problematic.²⁸ Moreover, after almost two weeks of casualty-free bombing, many civilian officials believed that the U.S. military commanders and Secretary Perry were reluctant to press forward with more ambitious attacks. Pentagon officials absolutely dismiss this charge, but the perception remains.²⁹ As Holbrooke later reflected, the military "had a deep fear of what they called

²⁵ Vershbow interview, December 17, 1996. Vershbow was the notetaker in this meeting.

²⁶ Christopher interview, October 30, 1996.

²⁷ On September 8, the U.S. mission to the UN judged that an escalation to Option Three strikes would not only require a new NAC decision, but another UN Security Council resolution. Since "there are a number of differences in a smooth transition to explicitly [Option] III operations," U.S. UN recommended that decision-makers focus on "the more liberal approach to [Options] I and II," such as expanding the zone of operations around Sarajevo, seeking UN authorization for additional types of targets within the current zone of operations, or hitting air defenses outside the current zone by claiming that the Bosnian Serbs were threatening NATO aircraft (as had been done in the Banja Luka Tomahawk strike). See "U.S. UN Secretariat Understanding of Category III Air Strikes," Cable, U.S. UN 3422, September 8, 1995.

²⁸ For example, in a letter to Christopher on September 8, British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind doubted that getting further NAC approval would be possible. See cable, State 951710, September 20, 1995. Further, NATO Ambassador Robert Hunter had said that such a decision would be impossible. See Holbrooke comment, Dayton History Seminar. For Russian opposition to Option III, see Gati to Talbott, September 13, 1995.

²⁹ See, for example, Slocombe interview.

the 'slippery slope' or 'mission creep'... when they talked about Bosnia, they thought of Vietnam or Somalia." Finally, informed by their own contacts with Serbian military officials, some in the U.S. military command may have felt that continuing or escalating the bombing may hurt, not help the prospects for negotiating success. This view was even shared by the Pentagon's representative on the shuttle team, Jim Pardew.³⁰

Secretary Christopher and Holbrooke felt very strongly that if the NATO attacks paused or ended because of allied inability to approve escalation, it would undermine any bargaining leverage the U.S. had vis-à-vis the Bosnian Serbs. "I thought it was important to carry on the bombing campaign to the point where it would achieve real effectiveness, [and] that the Bosnian Serbs would be impressed with the willingness of NATO to bomb on a continuous basis," Christopher reflected. If the air campaign was going to end anyway, he and Holbrooke contended, then the U.S. should try use the little time remaining to get something for it. Since the Bosnian Serbs did not know of NATO's targeting problem, the U.S. should try quickly to press a negotiated settlement on them to lift the siege of Sarajevo. Otherwise, the U.S. would be without the leverage of military force.

Christopher and Holbrooke pressed the military leaders to extend the bombing for a few days to buy the negotiating team some time to get back out to the region to meet with Milosevic. "If you pause the [bombing campaign] now you are going to risk losing the Sarajevo government; and if it takes place [as we're] flying in we won't get any credit for it [the pause] with Belgrade," Holbrooke said to Admiral Owens. "We need to find a way to leverage the end of the bombing." The President agreed, telling his advisors that he had no problem with continuing the campaign. "We can't look weak; we can't look like we're kicking the can down the road," he said. "Even if we're having problems with the Russians, we have to stay firm." The military leaders agreed to extend the bombing for another 72 hours, and the negotiating team moved up its schedule, leaving the next day for Belgrade. If they weren't successful, the NATO air campaign would have to pause until the NAC and UN authorized escalation.³¹

³⁰ For Holbrooke comment, see "The Road to Sarajevo," *The New Yorker*, October 21 & 26, 1996; and Holbrooke comment, Dayton History Seminar. On U.S. military contacts with Serbian commanders, Admiral Owens had been in contact with the General Perisic, the Chief of Staff of the Yugoslav (Serbian) Army. In a phone call at 4pm September 11 (a half-hour before the White House PC meeting), Owens and Perisic discussed the course of the bombing campaign. Perisic said that the "further dimension of the TLAMs (Tomahawks) further exacerbated the situation and that it is imperative to the overall peace process that we achieve a cease-fire." Reassuring Perisic, Owens said that his "efforts will continue in Washington," emphasizing that "it was NATO, not Washington, making the specific military decisions on the use of weapons in the theater." See "Owens-Perisic Telcon," Cable, VCICS Washington 111853, September 11, 1995. In his September 10 memorandum to Perry and Slocombe reviewing the second shuttle, Pardew observed that "the bombing generally strengthened the diplomatic process, but the command and control of the process is too cumbersome to link the bombing directly to the diplomatic process. The longer the bombing lasts, the more the BSA will adapt to it and discover that military operations can continue while bombing continues. Continued bombing will prevent serious negotiations on the map by strengthening the position of both Serb and Bosnian Government hard-liners. We need a face-saving way to suspend them for the time being to move forward with territorial discussions."

³¹ Vershbow interview, December 17, 1996; Holbrooke/Owen interview; Holbrooke, Owen, Hill, Clark, Kerrick comments, Dayton History Seminar; and Holbrooke, "The Road to Sarajevo (unedited pre-publication draft), *The New Yorker*.

Milosevic's Surprise

Two hours after landing in Belgrade the afternoon of September 13, the Holbrooke team met with Milosevic in his hunting lodge.³² The team was ready to try to cash-in on what would likely be the last bargaining chip provided by NATO bombing. When they sat down to meet, the Serb leader seemed to have read their minds. Insisting on addressing the NATO bombing campaign before any other issue, Milosevic said that the situation needed "calming," and that he thought he could get the Bosnian Serbs to agree to lift the siege of Sarajevo in return for a permanent cessation of bombing. Television cameras from the ABC program "Nightline," in Belgrade with White House clearance for a story on the peace negotiations, filmed about ten minutes of this early exchange. After Holbrooke asked the cameras to leave the room, Milosevic made an unexpected announcement to the U.S. team: Karadzic, Mladic and other Bosnian Serb leaders were in a villa two hundred meters away and ready to meet with them.

Fortunately, Holbrooke later reflected, the delegation was prepared for such a surprise. On the flight to Belgrade that day, they had discussed the prospect of meeting Karadzic and Mladic, deciding that they would talk with the two indicted war criminals if it would help the negotiations. However, as Holbrooke told Milosevic that day, the team decided that they would meet with the Bosnian Serbs only if the three conditions were met: first, that Milosevic be recognized as the head of the delegation; second, that they be willing to engage in "serious discussions," not digressing into their typical and highly emotional historical monologues; and third, that Milosevic secure their agreement to these conditions prior to meeting with the U.S. team. They wanted to make sure that Milosevic understood that the U.S. held him responsible for the behavior of the Bosnian Serbs. The Serb leader agreed to talk to them, and Holbrooke led his team into the woods outside the villa to wait.

A few minutes after the Bosnian Serbs arrived at Milosevic's villa, the U.S. team was called in. The delegation faced Karadzic and Mladic warily; some members shook their hands, others didn't. From the moment the meeting opened, it was clear to the U.S. team that despite some intelligence reports to the contrary, these men were effected by the NATO bombing campaign. They were visibly shaken by the airstrikes; the Bosnian Serb Vice President Nikola Koljevic complained that the use of Tomahawks was "no fair" and that it was "an outrage" that American jets had struck 150 meters from his office. Karadzic launched into a self-pitying diatribe about the bombing, referring often to the "humiliation the Serbs are suffering." Overall, the group appeared "staggered" by the bombing and the losses in western Bosnia. "The atmosphere in the region indicates a general breakdown of Bosnian Serb will," Pardew reported back to Washington. "[The Bosnian Serbs] argued long and hard, but primarily wanted a face-saving way out of the bombing. They were very concerned with 'humiliation' of the Serbs."

Karadzic, clearly the leader of the motley group, did most of the talking. Mladic, dressed in battle fatigues, looked like the perfect "bad guy" sent from central casting. He

³² Holbrooke presented a vivid portrayal of this meeting in his *New Yorker* article; see also Holbrooke draft memoirs, Chapter 10 (February 18, 1997). Other details of this meeting from: Holbrooke/Hill interview; Holbrooke, Hill, Clark, Kerrick, Owen, Pardew comments, Dayton History Seminar; Pardew reports to Slocombe, "Meeting with Milosevic," September 13, 1995; "OPS Report #1/1800L," September 13, 1995; "Meeting with key Bosnian Serb Leaders," September 14, 1995; and Kerrick personal notes, September 13, 1995.

did little except to engage in occasional stare-downs with his American interlocutors across the table. At one point, Karadzic threatened that if he did not get what he wanted from Holbrooke, he would call the last U.S. leader he had been in contact with, Jimmy Carter. Holbrooke responded firmly that while he had worked for President Carter fifteen years ago, the American team worked only for President Clinton. Later, Milosevic told Holbrooke that it was good to clear this up for Karadzic. "You know," the Serb president said, "that was very smart the way you handled Jimmy Carter. Those guys are so cut off from the world they think Carter can still decide American policy."

After several hours of haggling, the Bosnian Serbs agreed to allow the Americans to draft a document that outlined the terms for an end to the bombing campaign. General Wes Clark joined Owen, Pardew and Chris Hill to write the document. A half-hour later, Clark stood to read the draft to the Bosnian Serbs, while Holbrooke and Milosevic looked on. As Clark read, the Bosnian Serbs, particularly Mladic, became increasingly angry, complaining that the terms were unfair and neglected Serbian pride. Looking as though he was going to boil over, the general burst into a furious monologue, claiming that the bombing was a criminal act and that the U.S. needed to punish all sides, not just the Serbs. Seeing that things were spinning out of control, Holbrooke interrupted, turned to Milosevic, and stated bluntly that "we had an agreement. This behavior is clearly not consistent with it. If your 'friends' do not wish to have a serious discussion, we will leave now."

Milosevic quickly caucused with his Bosnian colleagues, and they agreed to calm down and rejoin the discussions on American terms. At three o'clock that morning, the Bosnian Serbs accepted the U.S. plan. Specifically, they pledged to cease all offensive operations around Sarajevo and begin immediately to relocate their heavy weapons. Further, they would allow unimpeded road access to Sarajevo, and open the Sarajevo airport for humanitarian traffic within 24 hours. In exchange, NATO bombing would be suspended for 72 hours, after which their compliance would be assessed. If the Bosnian Serbs cooperated, bombing would end indefinitely and the agreement would be formalized with the Sarajevo government. Holbrooke called Washington to inform his superiors of the accomplishment and to recommend a bombing pause effective immediately.³³ Wanting to be able to present the document as a unilateral concession from the Bosnian Serbs, Holbrooke refused to sign. He only promised to deliver the paper to Janvier as a "recommendation" from the U.S.. Accordingly, the Bosnian Serbs alone signed the document, with Milosevic as a witness.

After four years, the U.S. was thus able to forge a formal end to the siege of Sarajevo. The delegation had set out to Belgrade to try to use their remaining leverage to negotiate an end to the bombing, and surprisingly, remarkably, Milosevic delivered in spades.³⁴ Once again, when doubts had emerged that Milosevic was losing control of his

³³ See "A Framework for A Cessation of Hostilities Within the Sarajevo TEZ," document faxed to Washington by Kerrick, 3:15am, September 14, 1995. Holbrooke discussed the document in a conference call with Christopher, Lake, Perry and Tarnoff. See call at 2123 EDT, September 13, 1995, from "Bosnia Action Log, September 13-14, 1995," EUR/RPM files.

³⁴ This was fortunate, since the U.S. soon learned that the fact that NATO was running out of targets was to go public. On September 14 Embassy Zagreb reported that UN Generals Janvier and Rupert Smith were preparing a letter for public release indicating that there were no more Option Two targets. They would not make any recommendations for further action, but would delineate "what would occur if the response

Bosnian brethren, the Serb leader demonstrated himself to be the master manipulator.³⁵ Although some had raised questions about the air campaign's military effectiveness, it seemed clear from this meeting that the Bosnian Serb leadership as well as their chief patron wanted the bombing to end. To the shuttle team, there was no doubt that the bombing had enhanced their bargaining power. Now the Holbrooke team had what they felt was a good agreement to lift the siege of Sarajevo. The next step would be to sell it to the Bosnians.

Zagreb and Mostar

Shortly after 9am the next morning, September 14, the Holbrooke delegation presented the document to General Janvier in Zagreb. Holbrooke asked the French general not to see this as a Serb-U.S. "agreement," but as a message to the UN from the Serbs. Although stunned, Janvier welcomed the message, saying that it seemed to be the "right approach" and an acceptable response to the terms of his September 4 letter to Mladic. Janvier said that the first 72-hour suspension would begin that evening.³⁶

The Croatian leadership had no real reaction to the Bosnian Serb agreement, discussing instead the progress the Muslim-Croat Federation forces were making against the Serbs on the ground in western Bosnia. The Croats had already promised the U.S. that the Federation military campaign would be limited, aiming only to stabilize the confrontation line.³⁷ Yet, recent actions proved otherwise. The Federation continued to press on toward Banja Luka, sending as many as 40,000 Bosnian Serbs fleeing.³⁸ The Bosnian Serb Army was in great disarray, and the Croats confirmed reports that BSA soldiers were shooting their officers. Bolstered by these successes, President Tudjman mused whether the Federation should try to take Banja Luka. Holbrooke cautioned Tudjman against doing so, arguing that they would create huge numbers of refugees and have to give up the city in a settlement anyway. Instead, Holbrooke and General Clark discussed with Croat Defense Minister Susak the areas that Federation forces should fight to take, suggesting, for example, that the area around Bosanski Petrovac looked good. Briefly switching the subject to Eastern Slavonia, Holbrooke mentioned that a Serb-Croat

in Bosnia moved on to Option Three." See "Janvier and Smith Preparing a Letter on Next Steps," Cable, Zagreb 3536, September 14, 1995.

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³⁶ See Holbrooke comment, Dayton History Seminar; Kerrick notes, September 14, 1995; and Pardew report, "Meeting with key Bosnian Serb Leaders," September 14, 1995.

³⁷ During a long-scheduled visit to Washington on September 12, Croat FM Granic pledged that the Federation would use restraint in these actions. Meeting with both Secretary Christopher at the State Department and Anthony Lake at the White House, Granic reaffirmed Croatia's willingness to reach a comprehensive peace settlement. When pressed on Croatian humanitarian violations against Krajina Serbs (which Galbraith characterized to Washington as "appalling"), Granic replied that while such problems were hard to avoid in war, the situation was stabilizing. See "A Topic For Your Meeting with FM Granic: Croatia's Appalling Treatment of the Krajina Serbs," Cable, Zagreb 3501, September 11, 1995; "Granic Tells Christopher Croatia Need Slavonia Settlement, Will Support U.S. Peace Initiative," Cable (draft), September 13, 1995; and "Meeting Between National Security Advisor Lake and Croatian FM Granic, September 12, 1995," NSC memorandum, September 21, 1995.

³⁸ For details, see Mike O'Connor, "Bosnian Serb Civilians Flee Joint Muslim-Croat Attack," *New York Times*, September 14, 1995; and Paul Wood and Bruce Clark, "Serbs Flee Homes as Bosnian Forces Advance," *Financial Times*, September 14, 1995.

settlement on this issue must be part of any peace agreement. Tudjman agreed with Holbrooke's view that Milosevic was prepared to give up the disputed territory, but was looking for way to "save face."³⁹

That afternoon the team left Zagreb by convoy to meet with the Izetbegovic and Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic in Mostar, the ancient city on the Neretva River which had been nearly decimated in 1993 during the Muslim-Croat conflict.⁴⁰ The U.S. expected that the Bosnians would not be pleased that the bombing against their Serb enemies was ending. In a phone call earlier that day, Secretary Christopher had urged the Bosnian President to support the Bosnian Serb agreement. Izetbegovic was noncommittal, explaining that he had not yet seen the draft.⁴¹ Yet, from the very beginning of the meeting, it was clear that the Bosnians were very upset that the bombing had ended. To the U.S. delegation, the Bosnians perceived themselves as close to a military success against the BSA. Accordingly, they wanted the air campaign to continue so they could press their advantage. Izetbegovic even indicated a willingness to have Sarajevo undergo a few more days of shelling in return for more NATO bombing. Already fatigued from the late-night in Belgrade, Holbrooke characterized this discussion with the Bosnians as "long and difficult." Haris Silajdzic angrily stated that the cessation paper was "totally unacceptable." Holbrooke explained that while he understood their frustration, they really had no choice; NATO was running out of targets, and the next level of bombing would require UN and NAC approval.⁴² The Bosnians seemed to understand that they had no real control over the issue, and gave their grudging support.

Yet, Izetbegovic and Silajdzic did raise four specific objections to the Bosnian Serb proposal. First, they wanted the French Rapid Reaction Force troops to protect the newly opened road routes into Sarajevo. Second, Izetbegovic strongly objected to the word "humanitarian" rather than the word "civilian" to define the kind of goods that could be transported into Sarajevo. He was concerned that "humanitarian" could be defined too narrowly, thus leaving out certain goods -- such as cement, glass, shoes and radios. Holbrooke claimed that this was merely a drafting error, and agreed to obtain Milosevic's agreement that "humanitarian goods" meant everything but military supplies. Third, the Bosnians wanted the U.S. to commit to assess Serb compliance and resume airstrikes if Mladic "plays games." Finally, they objected to the definition of Serb heavy weapons, which the draft agreement described as "artillery greater than 100mm [and] mortars greater than 82mm." They felt, and the U.S. delegation agreed, that by inadvertently omitting the phrase "or equal to" when describing the caliber, the definition was too permissive.⁴³ On all these points, Holbrooke concurred, promising to get what Izetbegovic wanted from Milosevic.⁴⁴

³⁹ Details of meeting from Pardew report to Slocombe, "Federation Offensive in Central B-H," September 14, 1995; Kerrick notes, September 14, 1995; Galbraith Diplomatic Diary, pp50-51; and Clark report to CJCS/VCJSC, "Daily Negotiations Update, 14 September."

⁴⁰ The town was under provisional EU Administration and divided between Bosnian Muslims and Croats.

⁴¹ "The Secretary and Bosnian President Izetbegovic," Cable, State 218658, September 14, 1995.

⁴² At this point, Holbrooke read to the Bosnians quotes from a *New York Times* article explaining the political realities of continuing the air campaign. See Kerrick notes, September 14, 1995; and Eric Schmitt, "NATO Commanders Face Grim Choices," *New York Times*, September 14, 1995.

⁴³ Earlier that day, General Clark had realized that this error had been made, and contacted Perina in Belgrade to make sure the change was made with Milosevic. Yet, the Bosnians did not know this, and while the team was on its way to Mostar (and out of radio contact), they relayed their objections to Washington. The press also picked up on this error, explaining (mistakenly) that this represented a "big

The discussion turned next to constitutional principles and Roberts Owen. The Geneva points had set out the broad framework for a Bosnian constitution, yet did not address exactly how this would operate. The next step was to flesh this agreement out. Accordingly, the team aimed to get the parties to agree to specific governmental structures that would, in a sense, serve as the connective tissue to hold Bosnia together. Using the Geneva principles as a template, Owen had prepared a draft document of "further agreed principles" outlining the superstructure of a Bosnian state. The Principles called for elections in Bosnia as soon as conditions permitted; a joint presidency that would govern the state; and provisions for creating a new Bosnian parliament.⁴⁵

Owen outlined his proposal for a three-person Presidency that would sit atop the Bosnian government. Such an idea had been discussed earlier during the negotiations that led to Geneva, but was not included in the agreement by Milosevic's request. Visibly angry, Silajdzic said that any consideration of an electoral process or joint leadership would legitimize Serbian ethnic cleansing. In the Prime Minister's view, elections would not be just until refugees were allowed to resettle in their own land -- a process, he pointed out, that would likely take 5-15 years. The U.S. team agreed that the current leadership in Pale would make poor partners in a unified government, however, they hoped that by forcing the Bosnian Serbs to democratize through elections, more reasonable leaders would emerge in the future.⁴⁶ Silajdzic also reopened the "Republika Srpska" issue which the U.S. team had fought so hard over in Ankara, claiming that the title recognized the "fascist" Bosnian Serbs. Overall, Izetbegovic and Silajdzic seemed most concerned over issues related to the joint presidency, particularly over which governmental structure would control foreign policy.⁴⁷

Sarajevo and the Contact Group

Following this discouraging session, the U.S. delegation saw that Silajdzic could be a problem. Thus far, he was clearly the most vocal critic of the U.S. plan, and seemed to be the most adverse to any settlement with the Bosnian Serbs. Of the three primary Bosnian interlocutors, the team felt most comfortable with Sacirbey and Izetbegovic. In the past they had worked very closely with Sacirbey on constitutional issues, and were optimistic that the Foreign Minister would be able to bring Izetbegovic around to an agreement.⁴⁸ They were less hopeful about Prime Minister Silajdzic, who seemed to distrust the U.S. and had a poor relationship with Holbrooke. Realizing this, Holbrooke asked Owen and Hill to drive to Sarajevo with Silajdzic the next morning. Holbrooke hoped that by traveling together during the five-hour trip over Mt. Igman, the two

concession" to the Bosnian Serbs. See James Rupert, "U.S. Shift Allowed Face-Saving Exit by Serbs," *Washington Post*, September 16, 1995; and Clark comment, Dayton History Seminar.

⁴⁴ For details of meeting, see Pardew report to Slocombe, "Discussion of NATO Air Strikes with Federation," September 14, 1995; Kerrick notes, September 14, 1995; Holbrooke phone readout, September 14, 1995 (EUR files); and Clark report to CJCS/VCJSC, September 14, 1995.

⁴⁵ Owen had discussed this approach during a September 12 meeting in Washington with Komblum and the legal working group. See handwritten notes (unidentified author) from September 12 meeting between Komblum and Owen, EUR files.

⁴⁶ Owen interview, June 18, 1996.

⁴⁷ See Clark CJCS/VCJSC report, September 14, 1995; Holbrooke phone report (EUR files), September 14, 1995; Kerrick notes, September 14, 1995; and Hill interview.

⁴⁸ Indeed, many of the ideas Owen had placed into his draft of "further agreed principles" were raised during his initial meetings with Sacirbey in Washington during August 23-25.

Americans and Silajdzic could establish a relationship of trust. Hill and Silajdzic both had a background in U.S.-Albanian relations (Silajdzic had written a thesis on it, while Hill was considered an Albanian expert), and Holbrooke hoped that this common interest could break the ice.⁴⁹

On September 15, Hill and Owen left with Silajdzic for Sarajevo while the rest of the U.S. team departed for Geneva to attend a Contact Group meeting. That night in the Bosnian capital, Hill, Owen and Ambassador Menzies met with Silajdzic over dinner where they went over the draft "further agreed principles." The two key areas of negotiation were over elections and the presidency. Milosevic had pressed to hold elections sooner rather than later. Through the ballot, he hoped to remove his Bosnian Serb rivals, namely Karadzic. Thousands of Bosnian Serb refugees were living in Belgrade, and the Serbian President expected that his influence would turn their vote against the Karadzic-dominated Pale government. In contrast, the Bosnian position, as previewed the day before by Silajdzic in Mostar, was to delay elections until Bosnia returned to its pre-war normalcy demographically. If the thousands of Muslim refugees were allowed to return to their home throughout Bosnia, Silajdzic hoped that they could regain control over much of the country through democracy.

That evening, Hill and Owen convinced Silajdzic that it was in Sarajevo's interest to hold elections while an international presence -- presumably NATO-led -- was still in Bosnian territory. An outside presence such as the OSCE could monitor refugee return and human rights during a transition period, and then oversee the elections to assure that they are free and fair. Silajdzic tentatively agreed to these points, but nothing definitive was decided on the timing of elections. The draft principles outlined only that they would take place "as soon as social conditions permit."

On the joint presidency, Owen's initial idea of a three-person body was expanded to a six person body comprised of two members from each ethnic group. Decisions would be made by majority vote, and the group would have the powers appropriate for a central government, including command over foreign relations, trade, and customs. However, the specifics of the presidency's power remained vague, particularly on how its decisions would relate to a new Bosnian parliament and what powers would be reserved for the two entities.

By the next day, Silajdzic had agreed to the points on elections and the joint presidency which Owen had incorporated into his draft. Hill and Owen felt that they had made a good deal of progress in these talks. Silajdzic seemed looser and more comfortable with them, and his attitude was less edgy and combative. For the moment, the Prime Minister wasn't the problem they thought he would be. He now supported the "further agreed principles," and Hill and Owen believed that they had created a draft that Milosevic could live with. If the Serb leader agreed to these points, it could lay to rest most of the core constitutional issues. The details would have to be sorted out later, probably at a peace conference.⁵⁰

While Hill and Owen were with Silajdzic in Sarajevo on September 15, the rest of the delegation attended a Contact Group meeting in Geneva. Hosted by the Russians,

⁴⁹ Holbrooke/Hill interview.

⁵⁰ Details of these talks from Hill interview; Owen/Kornblum interview. For the version of the principles that came out of the Hill/Owen talks in Sarajevo, see "Eyes Only" fax to Secretary Christopher from Owen, September 16, 1995.

Holbrooke had to attend this meeting to help douse some of the Great Bear's recent frustrations concerning Bosnia. This was a prime example of the utility of "process" to make up for Russian dismay over substance. In the heavily publicized meeting held at the Russian mission in Geneva, the Contact Group pressed for convening a peace conference. Holbrooke noted that all three Balkan Presidents had expressed interest in such an event, but since they remained divided by so many issues, any conference in the near future would be doomed to fail. The Americans briefed the group on the Bosnian Serb commitments, and they discussed the eventual lifting of sanctions on Serbia. Holbrooke suggested that the Contact Group agree to meet at another meeting, similar to the one in Geneva, later that month at the UN in New York.⁵¹

From Geneva, the Holbrooke delegation returned to Belgrade, where they reunited with Hill and Owen on September 16. With Milosevic, they needed to clarify the changes to the Bosnian Serb commitments on Sarajevo and begin negotiations on the draft "further agreed principles" Hill and Owen brought from Sarajevo. Joined by General Perisic, the Serb Military Chief of Staff, Milosevic listened to the team's refinements on the weapons withdrawal agreement. Following the September 13 meeting, Mladic had fallen ill with kidney stones and was in a Belgrade hospital. Milosevic offered to let the U.S. delegation visit the general, but they declined.⁵² In Mladic's absence, Milosevic and Perisic agreed to the specific conditions for BSA compliance. To emphasize the seriousness of this commitment, Holbrooke bluntly told them that "if the Bosnian Serbs do not comply with their commitments, the air strikes will resume." Throughout this discussion, Holbrooke kept a line open to Lt. General Rupert Smith (who, as commander of UN forces in Sarajevo, would monitor compliance), and relayed each new Serb concession to him. Smith, who had seen such "agreements" from the Bosnian Serbs come and go, was skeptical, but agreed to test the conditions the next day with the BSA commander in the Sarajevo area. On the "further agreed principles," Milosevic showed little interest. Hill and Owen walked him through what they had accomplished in Sarajevo, but the Serb leader simply did not focus.⁵³

The next day, the Holbrooke delegation planned to travel to all three Balkan capitals, the first time anyone had made such a one-day shuttle. The Muslim-Croat offensive in western Bosnia continued to advance, and the U.S. team wanted to remind Zagreb that they did not think it wise to take Banja Luka. Then, the delegation planned to fly into the newly re-opened Sarajevo airport. They wanted to send the same message of military restraint to the Bosnians. At the same time, Holbrooke believed that this leg of the trip could have a certain dramatic value. The very act of flying into an airport they

⁵¹ The team first attended a Quad meeting (U.S./UK/Germany/France). See Kerrick notes, September 15, 1995; "September 15 Contact Group Meeting," Cable, Geneva 7052, September 15, 1995; and Holbrooke/Hill interview.

⁵² It was later learned that Mladic's hospital stay may have had more to do with a "diplomatic illness" than kidney stones.

This view was shared by other contacts, as "even normally restrained practitioners of Balkan conspiracy theories find the timing of Mladic's purported operation too unlikely to be true." See "Speculation on Mladic continues," Cable, Belgrade 4598, September 20, 1995.

⁵³ See Holbrooke draft memoirs, Chapter 11 (February 19, 1997), pp12-13; Holbrooke, Hill, Pardew comment, Dayton History Seminar; Holbrooke/Hill interview; Kerrick notes, September 16, 1995; and Pardew report to Slocombe, "Meeting with Milosevic," September 16, 1995.

had helped re-open would symbolize his team's accomplishment and potentially improve their relationship with Sarajevo, which had been a bit frayed since the end of NATO bombing. Finally, they planned to complete their 24 hour diplomatic trifecta with Milosevic in Belgrade.⁵⁴

A Three-Capital Day

The day began in Zagreb at 9:00am, with Holbrooke meeting privately with Tudjman and Clark, Pardew and Kerrick meeting with Defense Minister Susak. With Tudjman, Holbrooke reviewed the past few days of negotiations, including the refinements of the withdrawal agreement and the status of the constitutional talks. Holbrooke then raised the military situation on the ground in Bosnia. He and Ambassador Galbraith had already told Tudjman, on direct instructions from Washington, that Croatia be careful in conducting its offensive, but there was little sign of it abating. Washington had asked Galbraith to approach the Croats on this a few days before; he did, but little was resolved. The western press began to turn its attention to the quickly moving offensive, describing the effort as the creation of "Greater Croatia."⁵⁵ When Holbrooke raised Banja Luka that morning, Tudjman's tone left him less than convinced that his earlier message of restraint had even registered.⁵⁶

The U.S. was concerned about Banja Luka for several reasons. First, and most basic, was Holbrooke's initial advice to Tudjman that taking Banja Luka would be useless, since the Croats would have to give it up in a negotiated settlement. Second, and more strategically significant, was the concern that an attack on Banja Luka would bring a near-catastrophic defeat for the Bosnian Serbs, thus drawing Belgrade into the war. Milosevic had not hinted one way or the other, but the impression was that the Serbian military might feel compelled to intervene to stave off a complete BSA collapse. Third, even if an attack on Banja Luka didn't spark a wider war, it seemed certain that it would create a massive Serbian refugee crisis. The UN estimated that 250,000 refugees could be sent streaming into Serbia, which on top of the refugees from Krajina, would create a profound humanitarian crisis.⁵⁷ Such fallout might significantly disable Milosevic's ability to negotiate; even the Bosnians realized that sparking a massive refugee flow was not desirable. Finally, taking Banja Luka might exacerbate the already tense relationship between Muslims and Croats. The problem, it seemed, was that the Muslims and Croats were fighting over the spoils. With the Bosnian Serbs on the run, the essential Federation partnership threatened to be destroyed by each side's diverging battlefield objectives. Territorial greed could rip this "shotgun marriage" apart. If these differences split the

⁵⁴ Holbrooke/Hill interview.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Roger Cohen, "Croatia Expands Its Power in Bosnia," *New York Times*, September 16, 1995; and Chris Hedges, "Tensions Ease in Sarajevo, But Fears Rise on New Front," *New York Times*, September 18, 1995.

⁵⁶ See Galbraith Diplomatic Diary, pp55-56; Holbrooke interview with author (notes), December 20, 1996.

⁵⁷ U.S. intelligence estimated that Belgrade's policies to resettle the Krajina refugees alone "threatens to upset the delicate ethnic balances and broaden ethnic conflict in the Balkans," and that a new refugee flow "would present a major budgetary challenge" to Milosevic and spark Serb ethnic hostility in other areas, such as Vojvodina in Eastern Slavonia and Kosovo. See "Serbia: Krajina Serb Resettlement Threatens Broader Balkan Conflict," INR Intelligence Warning, September 21, 1995. This new refugee problem had been tracked by the U.S. since shortly after the Krajina attack. See, for example, memorandum to Secretary Christopher from Toby Gati (INR), "Resettlement Options for Krajina Serb Refugees," August 17, 1995.

Federation and sparked renewed Muslim-Croat fighting, then the entire peace process would unravel.⁵⁸

Like Tudjman, Susak's military hubris was in full bloom that day. Before Clark, Pardew, or Kerrick even had a chance to speak, the Croat Defense Minister was on his feet, enthusiastically gesturing at a map to explain how his army was close to taking Banja Luka. Susak was clearly invigorated by Croatia's recent successes, pointing to Bosnian Serb positions as though he "were a kid in a candy store."⁵⁹ When Clark, Pardew and Kerrick each pressed him to cease the fighting and not take Banja Luka, Susak reacted angrily. After considerable debate, he did pledge that the Croats would not go "one inch further" in this operation. Pardew then raised U.S. concerns over reports of clashes between Muslims and Croats, stressing the importance of maintaining comity within the Federation. Susak reacted strongly to what he described as a U.S. "lecture," stating emotionally and bluntly that the Federation meant more to Croatia than the U.S.. He claimed that the problems were with the Muslims, whose combat logic was "to go as far as possible but cry foul when [they] run into trouble." Susak did say that Muslim and Croat military leaders had met recently in an effort to calm tensions, and, observing that "it takes two to make the Federation work," asked that the U.S. press the Muslims to cooperate.⁶⁰

Despite Susak's pledge that things would calm down, the U.S. delegation remained uneasy about the threat to Banja Luka and the possibility for renewed Muslim-Croat fighting. The self-interested Croats had been less than reassuring, and the team was concerned that their efforts were perilously close to being undermined. Holbrooke wanted to reduce the temperature of the intra-Federation rivalry, and proposed that Tudjman and Izetbegovic get together soon to sort things out. They agreed, scheduling to meet September 19 in Zagreb under the Holbrooke team's auspices -- an unusual arrangement, but indicative of the critical role the Americans played to keep the Federation together.⁶¹

After a brief visit with Janvier, the team left shortly after noon for the second leg of their three-capital shuttle.⁶² Flying in a C-130 military cargo plane with F-16 escorts,

⁵⁸ Explication drawn from Holbrooke, Hill, Clark comments, Dayton History Seminar; see also Galbraith Diplomatic Diary, pp55-56. During this time, officials in Washington wanted the fighting stopped, but never ordered the team to accomplish this. Rather, it was simply conveyed as "guidance." Holbrooke comment, Dayton History Seminar. The U.S. knew that the Federation was heading for trouble, with Tudjman less reliant on Bosnia military cooperation and the rise of Muslim nationalism in Bosnia. The concern was that the focus on the peace process necessarily diluted the focus on the improving the Federation. One recommendation was to convene talks (chaired by Roberts Owen) to check on compliance of the Washington Agreement and explore possibilities for merging the Federation with the Bosnian Republic. See memorandum to Holbrooke from Charles Thomas (EUR) and Daniel Sewer (EUR), "The Bosnian Federation: Acting Now to Shore it Up," September 11, 1995.

⁵⁹ Kerrick interview.

⁶⁰ See "Meeting: Croatian Minister of Defense Susak with LTG Clark, BG Kerrick and Mr. Pardew; 17 September 1995; Croatian MOD, Zagreb," Typed meeting notes (no author), September 17, 1995; Pardew report to Slocombe, "Defeat of the Bosnian Serb Army in the West," September 17, 1995; Clark CJCS/VCJSC update, "Daily Negotiations Update, 17 September 1995"; Kerrick notes, September 17, 1995; Clark, Kerrick, Pardew comments, Dayton History Seminar; Kerrick interview.

⁶¹ Holbrooke interview with author (notes), December 20, 1996.

⁶² Janvier had judged that while the BSA had not yet completed withdrawal, they had shown good faith and therefore deserved a 72-hour extension in the bombing pause. The UN commander outlined BSA progress

the U.S. team arrived in Sarajevo for the first time by air. As a precaution, the Air Force crew captain asked that the team wear helmets and flak jackets for the flight. To the people of Sarajevo, the act of traveling to Sarajevo by air clearly had the intended effect: when the team arrived at the Bosnian Presidency building, the crowd gathered outside showered them with cheers.⁶³

The delegation hoped that such goodwill would translate with the Bosnian leadership. Unfortunately, it didn't. Izetbegović and Silajdzic remained unconvinced that the Bosnian Serbs would comply with the terms for weapons withdrawal. They queried the team on every minute detail of BSA compliance, reopening issues that had been resolved only days before, such as the definition of "humanitarian." Frustrated, Holbrooke sternly rebuked the Bosnians. By only concentrating on the "smaller picture," he said, Izetbegovic and Silajdzic were missing the opportunity to move forward on what could be a highly-favorable settlement. With the discussion of BSA compliance dominating most of the discussion, the team was unable to get much more done on the "further agreed principles." This was probably for the good, as the Bosnians were so argumentative that the discussion would have likely been counter-productive. On Banja Luka, the Bosnians listened to the call for restraint but were noncommittal. The U.S. would have another chance to press them on this with Tudjman in Zagreb.⁶⁴

After this aggravating meeting, the team discussed Bosnian Serb compliance with UN general Rupert Smith and the civilian head of the UN mission Antonio Pedayue at UNPROFOR headquarters. Smith explained some difficulties "communicating" this new approach to his troops, describing how they were conditioned to do certain things like stop at Serb checkpoints. In time, Smith said, UN forces would become less sensitive and thus be more able to exploit the freedom of movement mandated by the withdrawal agreement.⁶⁵ The U.S. delegation then left Sarajevo for Belgrade, where they met with Milosevic at 10pm.

Reviewing the day's events, the U.S. team made it clear to Milosevic that while NATO bombing had been suspended, the "jury was still out" on whether bombing would resume. Full BSA compliance was expected within the next three days, they said.⁶⁶

for the Holbrooke team in Zagreb, following-up with a letter to Admiral Smith. The second pause was granted. See Janvier letter to Smith: Zagreb, September 17, 1995.

⁶³ Pardew, Owen comments, Dayton History Seminar.

⁶⁴ See Pardew report to Slocombe, "Sarajevo," Clark CJCS/VCJCS September 17 update; Kerrick notes, September 17, 1995; Holbrooke/Hill interview; Holbrooke, Hill, Pardew, Clark comments, Dayton History Seminar.

⁶⁵ See Pardew report to Slocombe, September 17, 1995; Clark CJCS/VCJCS September 17 update; and Holbrooke comment, Dayton History Seminar. Evidence soon emerged that Janvier was reluctant to allow Bosnian trucks to use the Kiseljak Road into Sarajevo and declined to allow Bosnian aircraft to use the Sarajevo airport. Apparently, the UN military commander was concerned that the Bosnian Serbs would shoot at the trucks or planes and thereby increase pressure for a resumption of NATO airstrikes. During a September 22 meeting with Boutros Ghali in New York, Holbrooke and Albright pressed the UN Secretary General to get the UN to "test" the Serb commitment to end the siege of Sarajevo -- such as sending Bosnian trucks through Serb checkpoints or resuming flights into the Sarajevo airport. See "A/S Holbrooke Presses for UNPROFOR's Full Implementation of the Sarajevo Agreement During September 22 Meeting with UN SYG Boutros Ghali," Cable, U.S.UN 3669, September 23, 1995.

⁶⁶ Before meeting with the U.S. team, Milosevic had received British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind. Interestingly, Milosevic discussed with Rifkind the constitutional principles (such as the joint presidency) as though they were the Serb leader's idea. See "Rifkind Visit To Belgrade," Cable, Belgrade 4556, September 18, 1995.

They explained that the Sarajevo government was still unhappy with the pause, and wanted the campaign to resume "at all costs." Surprisingly, the Serb leader seemed utterly unstressed about the military situation in western Bosnia. After the team told him that things looked desperate for the Bosnian Serbs and that Federation forces smelled blood, Milosevic confidently stated that the commander in the area "would bring things under control." Rather than talk about the fighting in the west, Milosevic was anxious to discuss the future negotiations; particularly, the prospect of convening a three-president "Camp David" style summit as soon as possible. While the U.S. had always envisioned such a summit to conclude the negotiations, Holbrooke and his delegation believed that it would be ill-advised to announce one (as Milosevic wished) until all the parties proved a willingness to compromise. Until then, as Holbrooke characterized it to Milosevic, such a summit would be too risky, akin to "Evil Knievel trying to leap over the Grand Canyon in two jumps" – a favorite Milosevic metaphor. Despite Holbrooke downplaying any consideration of a summit until more was accomplished, he did discuss with Milosevic some important details (such as a possible site of outside New York, where the press would be shut-out; a duration of around two-weeks; and the likely composition of the Serb delegation, in which Karadzic and Mladic would be excluded).⁶⁷ Three hours later, the team's three-capital day ended. But the time for rest was short. They would return to Zagreb the next afternoon to prepare for the Tudjman-Izetbegovic meeting.

Federation Restraint; Taking Credit with Milosevic

In Zagreb, the Holbrooke team hoped to get the two presidents to agree to a joint statement reiterating their commitment to the Federation and intent on military collaboration. When the two leaders met at the Croatian Presidency the afternoon of September 19, any semblance of goodwill that might have existed between them quickly disappeared. Tudjman erupted during the first twenty minutes, angrily berating the Bosnian president on the need for restraint and not to take Banja Luka. Tudjman's lecture stood in stark contrast to his bluster of the previous days. But his forces had recently suffered a setback trying to cross the Una river, and two Dutch UN peacekeepers had been killed in the crossfire.⁶⁸ With these losses, the Croat leader seemed to have lost his appetite for conquest. When the Bosnian President resisted, Tudjman furiously yelled that the Bosnians had no place to talk, since Croat forces had suffered casualties to liberate "eighty percent" of the land. Looking on, Ambassador Galbraith observed that Tudjman "could barely contain his contempt [for the Bosnians]" and "had the smug aspect of superiority while Izetbegovic seemed quite beaten down." The shouting match proceeded for some time, continuing on as though the Americans were not even in the

⁶⁷ See Pardew report to Slocombe, "Three More Hours with Milosevic," September 17, 1995; Clark CJCS/VCSJSC September 17 update; Kerrick notes, September 17, 1995; and Hill comment, Dayton History Seminar.

⁶⁸ Prior to the meeting, a Croat official had told Galbraith that the Una crossing had been a disaster, reporting that twenty-five men had died and fifty were trapped on the opposite bank. See Galbraith Diplomatic Diary, p57. For reports on UN peacekeepers, see "Two Danish Peacekeepers in Croatia Killed, Eight Wounded, By Serb Shelling," Cable, Copenhagen 4856, September 19, 1995; and "More Danish Casualties in Croatia: Serbs Attack Again, Danes Soldier On, Defmin Angry at UN," Cable, Copenhagen 3843, September 20, 1995.

room. As Galbraith noted, "it was like observing a therapy session through a one-way glass mirror."⁶⁹

Despite the poisonous environment, Tudjman and Izetbegovic did agree to a joint statement on cooperation that their foreign ministers had worked on the previous day. Couching their decision in terms of their support for the American peace initiative, the two presidents promised to slow their offensive and not take Banja Luka, asking Holbrooke to make the announcement public. They reaffirmed the commitments made in the (July 1995) Split agreement and declared that their strategic partnership would continue in an effort to liberate "occupied territory." Finally, they agreed that the ownership of any territory taken by the offensive would be settled through a political dialogue and without regard to the ethnicity of the conquering army. Since most of the territorial gains thus far had been accomplished by Croatia, this was of particular interest of the Bosnian government. At least on paper, the Bosnians and Croats remained Allies. Unfortunately, as the discussion that day proved, the reality remained much more tenuous.⁷⁰

With the threat to Banja Luka in check, Holbrooke still believed that further military gains by the Federation in western Bosnia could have major diplomatic benefits. He was not entirely comfortable with Washington's guidance to get Tudjman and Izetbegovic to stop completely. In a message written for Secretary Christopher, Holbrooke observed that "contrary to many press reports, the military offensive has so far helped the peace process." To Holbrooke, the tough negotiations over territory were "taking place right now on the battlefield, and so far, in a manner beneficial to the [51-49] map." Indeed, by September 17, U.S. intelligence cartographic analyses showed that the Federation now controlled 51% of Bosnia to the Serbs 48%.⁷¹ The issue, then, was how far they should be allowed to go. Washington and the Holbrooke team concurred that attacks on Banja Luka and Eastern Slavonia were off-limits. Concerning other areas, however, Holbrooke argued that the negotiations would benefit from Federation victories around the towns of Sanski Most and Prijedor. Both were part of Federation territory under the Contact Group plan, and both were areas which Milosevic said he would not let go. Accordingly, Holbrooke advised that the U.S. should get out of the "traffic light game." In the past, he wrote to Christopher, "we have weakened our credibility by flashing so many 'red lights' that no one knew which ones we meant and how seriously we meant them."⁷² Win or lose, Holbrooke asserted that Federation attacks on these areas would, paradoxically, be better "for the negotiations (although [the U.S.] would exploit

⁶⁹ See Holbrooke/Hill interview; Holbrooke, Hill, Clark, Kerrick, Pardew comments, Dayton History Seminar; Kerrick notes, September 19, 1995; and Galbraith Diplomatic Diary, pp57-58.

⁷⁰ See press statement from meeting in Pardew notebook, Shuttle III; Galbraith Diplomatic Diary, pp56-57. For press reports of agreement, see John Pomfret, "Bosnia, Croatia Agree to Halt Offensive," *Washington Post*, September 20, 1995; and Stephen Kinzer, "Bosnia Vows Not to Attack Serb Town," *New York Times*, September 20, 1995.

⁷¹ These figures reflected dramatic changes since June 28, 1995, when the territorial breakdown was 63-37 in favor of the Serbs. See memorandum to Talbott from Toby Gati (INR), "Bosnia: The Pendulum Swings," September 19, 1995.

⁷² This was particularly the case, Holbrooke explained, with the Croats, who had routed the Serbs in Krajina despite U.S. warnings to the contrary. As Holbrooke observed in his note, "the low point of the [traffic-light] process, which has left an enduring legacy, was when Perry and Shali told Susak in Munich in February 1995 that if Croatia attacked Knin they would lose. I was there, and Susak enjoys reminding me of the meeting."

them quite differently) than restraint imposed by the U.S.”⁷³ In one way, this recommendation to the Secretary of State was somewhat *post hoc*: earlier that day, Holbrooke had already received Susak’s promise that Croatia would provide artillery cover for Muslim attacks on both areas.⁷⁴

Immediately after the raucous Tudjman-Izetbegovic meeting, Holbrooke and his team shuttled to Belgrade. Before returning to the U.S., Holbrooke wanted to tell Milosevic personally that the U.S. had gotten Izetbegovic and Tudjman to stay away from Banja Luka. The American negotiator wanted to make sure his team was credited with the accomplishment. He told Milosevic that while Izetbegovic and Tudjman understood all the military and strategic reasons why not to pursue Banja Luka, the main reason they had pledged not to attack was because “the U.S. had told them not to.”⁷⁵

Finally, they closed the meeting by discussing the “further agreed principles.” Since Hill and Owen’s talks in Sarajevo, the principles had evolved a bit further, and the U.S. team continued to hope to finalize an agreement later in the month. Taking another look at the principles on the 19th, Milosevic supported the draft, but said that he needed help bringing his Pale partners around. He asked Holbrooke if Owen could return to Belgrade to work on “technology” with the Bosnian Serb leadership. To Milosevic, “technology” meant “theater,” and he explained that a “procedure must take place” for the Pale leadership to sign on to these principles. Such a meeting would not be a negotiation, but rather a chance for the U.S. to walk the Bosnian Serbs through an agreement to which they would be a party. Agreeing to satiate Milosevic’s need for drama, Holbrooke said that he would send Owen, Hill and Pardew back to Belgrade over the weekend of September 24-25.⁷⁶

When the Holbrooke team arrived home in Washington early September 20, they believed that once again, things were modestly moving forward. The NATO bombing campaign had finally ended.⁷⁷ The siege of Sarajevo was over. Milosevic again proved he was ready to compromise, forcing the Bosnian Serbs along if necessary. A follow-on to Geneva was near approval, with closure expected soon. And the Croats and Bosnians

⁷³ This message, dated September 19, was hand-written by Holbrooke. This message was faxed to the Secretary that day. Holbrooke phone interview with author, September 17, 1996; and Christopher interview, October 30, 1996.

⁷⁴ Galbraith Diplomatic Diary, p57.

⁷⁵ Holbrooke, Clark comment, Dayton History Seminar.

⁷⁶ For details of this meeting, see Hill/Holbrooke interview; Holbrooke, Clark, Hill, Pardew comments, Dayton History Seminar; and Kerrick notes, September 19, 1995.

⁷⁷ After a second 72 hour pause, the NATO air campaign officially came to an end on September 20. See “Joint Statement by Admiral Smith and General Janvier,” September 20, 1995 (EUR/RPM files).

For NATO’s own assessment of the bombing campaign, see “September 20 NAC -- Former Yugoslavia Topics,” cable, U.S.NATO 3723, September 22, 1995.

appeared to understand the need for restraint. Notwithstanding all these accomplishments, the closer the U.S. got to the parties toward agreement, the more time seemed to be of the essence. Pardew reported to Secretary Perry that "The overall momentum in the Balkans is shifting dramatically toward a peaceful solution... the next thirty days are critical. A settlement is possible within a month, although Milosevic wants it to happen before then. If no settlement can be reached in that time, I'm afraid we are in for another long winter in Bosnia."⁷⁸

Over the past week, Milosevic had displayed a great desire to end the conflict. He seemed anxious to enjoy the fruits of a settlement, especially sanctions relief as well as political relations with West. Further, he struck some team members as motivated by a personal need to enhance his own image, to be viewed as an international statesman. "He is increasingly insistent on a Balkan summit which he hopes will be in the U.S.," Pardew reported. Understanding these goals, Holbrooke wrote to the Christopher that his team had "deliberately stalled" discussing an international conference in order to "see how much we can get from him."⁷⁹

In an odd twist, the Serb leader was much easier to deal with than the Bosnians. Infuriated by the end of the NATO campaign, they paid almost no attention to its consequences -- the improvement of life in Sarajevo. Finally enjoying military success, they displayed little desire to settle an agreement anytime soon as long as the new situation continued to work to their advantage. As negotiating interlocutors, they remained moody, disorganized and conflicted about both objectives and tactics. Accordingly, the Holbrooke delegation had to calibrate their message depending on which of the Bosnian leaders they were with, whether Sacirbey, Silajdzic or Izetbegovic.⁸⁰

Tudjman, it seemed, remained the swing-man for any agreement. His army's successes were again critical; the delegation felt that they boosted the negotiating process by pressuring Belgrade and Pale.⁸¹ Yet, the Croat president's openly contemptuous attitude toward the Bosnians was undermining their already fragile alliance. Further, Eastern Slavonia remained a dealbreaker for Tudjman. As Holbrooke wrote to Christopher, "I must warn that [Eastern Slavonia] is a very explosive issue on which we must make major progress if we want to have a Bosnia settlement." The concern was not only that Milosevic would balk at giving it up, but that Tudjman may actually want to take it by force. "[Tudjman] might rather liberate it by force," Holbrooke wrote, "than get it peacefully, since another military victory which also drives more Serbs out of his country may be more appealing to him than a peaceful but protracted settlement."⁸² Keeping the Croat leader in check would be a critical challenge for the U.S. in the coming weeks.

⁷⁸ Pardew report to Perry and Slocombe, "Balkan Peace Initiative -- Round III," September 20, 1995. Before Pardew had written this report, Slocombe provided Perry with a similar overview of the shuttle (based on phone conversations with Pardew), see memorandum to SecDef (Perry) from Slocombe, "Bosnia Developments," September 20, 1995.

⁷⁹ Pardew report, September 20, 1995; and Holbrooke hand-written report to Christopher, September 19, 1995.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ See Pardew report, September 20, 1995.

⁸² Holbrooke message to Christopher, September 19, 1995.

Washington At Work: Organizing for a Settlement

While the Holbrooke delegation was in the region on this third shuttle, policymakers in Washington continued to prepare for a possible settlement. In particular, the legal working group at the State Department began to think about the different aspects of a comprehensive agreement, and the types of substantive and procedural issues that needed to be addressed. Since late August, John Kornblum had thought that given the complexity of the negotiations and that fact that the signatories would vary according to each particular issue, an agreement should be modeled after the 1971 Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin, in which the U.S., U.S.S.R, Britain and France agreed to establish basic governing provisions for the divided German city.⁸³ Kornblum, heavily influenced by his days as a junior Foreign Service Officer involved in the Berlin negotiations and later as CSCE (now OSCE) Ambassador, felt that what was needed was a "chapeau" document with various attachments -- akin to side agreements -- on specific issues. Thus, like the Berlin agreement, a Bosnian peace would have a general framework agreement detailing the basic principles of a settlement that all sides would adhere to, such as those agreed to in Geneva. Then, there would be various annexes covering the specifics of a comprehensive settlement, such as, for example, the internal political structure of Bosnia, an arrangement for military implementation, separation of forces in Bosnia, and resolution of the Serb-Croat dispute in Eastern Slavonia. Not all the parties would have to sign each annex -- it would depend on whether it was an internal Bosnian issue or an external regional issue.⁸⁴

Along these lines, State Department lawyers Miriam Sapiro, Jim O'Brien, and Tim Ramish began to work under the direction of Kornblum to flesh out what such a document might contain. By mid-September, they had put together a draft paper outlining a vision of how an overall peace settlement in Bosnia could be structured. As Kornblum had recommended, the proposed settlement would contain a relatively short framework document, accompanied by several annexes referring to specific arrangements. Such a structure would provide maximum flexibility, matching particular aspects of implementation with the appropriate parties and helping with timing issues by dividing implementation into discrete phases. Of course, there was not yet any guarantee that there would ever be an agreement to settle -- the shuttle team was still in the process of getting the parties to agree to stepping-stones like Geneva and the "further agreed principles."⁸⁵

But as Kornblum and Holbrooke had discussed, the moment was nearing in which the U.S. would have to prepare for a possible peace conference and comprehensive

⁸³ For details on the Berlin Treaty and negotiations, see Dennis L. Bark, *Agreement on Berlin: A Study of the 1970-72 Quadripartite Negotiations*, AEI-Hoover Policy Study 10, August 1974; and Honore M. Catudal, Jr., *The Diplomacy of the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin* (Berlin Verlag, 1978).

⁸⁴ See Kornblum interview; Sapiro/O'Brien interview. This drafting process apparently began during the September 12 meeting between Kornblum and Roberts Owen. See hand-written notes (no author), September 12, 1995, EUR files.

⁸⁵ This draft paper, first presented to Kornblum by Miriam Sapiro on September 13 and discussed on September 15, had gone through several iterations since the September 11. See, for example, Jim O'Brien e-mail to Sapiro and Ramish on "peace pieces," September 11, 1995; "Peace Settlement" e-mail, no author (L files), September 13, 1995; memorandum to Kornblum from Sapiro, "Outline of a Peace Settlement," September 13, 1995; and "Structure of a Peace Settlement for Bosnia-Herzegovina," Sapiro memorandum, September 15, 1995. See also hand-written notes (no author) from Kornblum, Sapiro, O'Brien meeting, September 15, 1995; Kornblum interview; Sapiro/O'Brien interview.

settlement. On September 17, Holbrooke had informed Kornblum that "we are fast approaching a time when, in order to move this strange and chaotic process forward, we should start tabling specific U.S. drafts of key documents." The U.S. must "be prepared," Holbrooke explained, to offer the three parties such documents to prod them toward specific decisions. "Our talks so far have been useful in clarifying positions and even narrowing many of them, but we must now move to specifics and that requires a U.S. draft." Following Holbrooke's request, Kornblum and the legal team began fleshing out more precisely the contents of a comprehensive settlement, beginning with the "chapeau" framework agreement.⁸⁶

Meanwhile, Washington policymakers also worked on provisions for political implementation of any agreement. The DC had begun to discuss a possible arrangements -- such as the appointment and duties of a civilian implementation coordinator and possible funding -- in early September.⁸⁷ These talks were far enough along that by September 18, John Kornblum hosted meetings in Washington with French and Russian officials on civilian and military planning for implementation. These discussions were only preliminary, as the U.S. wanted to get a sense of potential areas of agreement.⁸⁸ In a very welcome move, UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali made clear that he would be glad to be rid of the former Yugoslavia, agreeing to allow the organization for all aspects of implementation to be placed outside the UN.⁸⁹ And by September 21, the Principals Committee began to focus on settlement implementation planning (including increased congressional consultations), although nothing firm was decided upon.⁹⁰

The September 21 PC also returned to the issue of how to handle the Muslim-Croat ground offensive. Despite the September 19 agreement not to take Banja Luka, the question remained about how far Federation forces should go -- and Washington officials remained very divided about the answer. At the PC, Lake emphasized the importance of the "red lights" the U.S. had given the Bosnians and Croats to end their offensive. Holbrooke strongly disagreed. Voicing aloud what he had written to Christopher privately, Holbrooke said that "we haven't given them any 'red lights' outside of Banja Luka... I made no effort to discourage them about Prejidor and Sanski Most." Lake was concerned, particularly about the prospect of the Administration being blamed for "encouraging" further bloodshed. He urged that their "public line" should be "no more offensive operations."

⁸⁶ Message from Holbrooke to Kornblum, "Official-Informal," Cable, Zagreb 3622, September 17, 1995.

⁸⁷ See "Summary of Conclusions for Meeting of the NSC Deputies Committee," NSC, memorandum, September 8, 1995.

⁸⁸ See "Summary of Conclusions for SVTS Meeting of the Deputies Committee," NSC memorandum, September 15, 1995; "U.S.-French Talks on Bosnian Settlement Implementation Planning, September 18," Cable, State 227479, September 23, 1995; and memorandum for Albright and Ambassador Rick Inderfurth from Jim O'Brien, "U.S.-Russian Consultations on Bosnia Peace Plan, September 21, 1995," September 21, 1995.

⁸⁹ He did so formally in a September 18 letter to the Italian Chair of the Security Council, Francesco Paolo Fulci, recommending that the Contact Group take the lead to create a mechanism to oversee the political side of peace implementation. Two days later, Boutros-Ghali discussed this arrangement further with Albright. See "Bosnia Peace Process: Amb. Albright's Dinner with the SYG," Cable, U.S.UN 3672, September 23, 1995.

⁹⁰ See memorandum for Secretary Christopher from Kornblum, "Principals Committee Meeting, September 21, 1995," with attached paper on "Implementation Structure in a Bosnian Settlement," September 20, 1995; and Slocombe memorandum, "Notes for PC on Bosnia, 21 Sept 95."

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"We should emphasize peace," Lake said to Holbrooke. "It may be your view on Sanski Most and Prejidor, but you should say it in a way that doesn't exacerbate differences on other fronts." The Russians were becoming increasingly sensitive about the offensive, and CIA Director Deutsch added that Federation attacks on these two areas would spark huge refugee flows.⁹¹ With Christopher agreeing with the National Security Advisor, Holbrooke conceded that restraint would be the public line. Moreover, he said, if the current military situation stabilized and Muslim-Croat tensions rose, "then next week may be the time to push for a cease-fire." Holbrooke explained that up to that point, Izetbegovic and Tudjman weren't interested in a cease-fire, "but changes in the last few days may be tipping things."⁹²

⁹¹ On September 19, the day of the Tudjman-Izetbegovic "summit," the Russians had presented a resolution before the UN Security Council demanding an end to the Western offensive. The U.S. rebuffed this effort. See "Bosnia/Croatia: Russians Push a Draft Resolution Demanding an End to Bosnian/Croat Offensive, Settle for a Presidential Statement But Will Reraise Resolution on September 19," Cable, U.S.UN 3771, September 19, 1995.

⁹² Details from Vershbow interview, December 17, 1996. Vershbow was the notetaker during this meeting.