

**Friday, May 21, 1999 (5 a.m. Moscow time/9 p.m. DC time, 5/20/99)**

**MEMORANDUM TO SEC. ALBRIGHT, APNSA BERGER, OVP FUERTH**

**FROM STROBE TALBOTT**

**TRIP REPORT NO. 2 (FROM MOSCOW)**

Ahtisaari, Chernomyrdin and I have agreed that we've made enough progress on Hammer-&-Anvil to justify a follow-up meeting here in Moscow next Wednesday. Depending on how that goes, it's probable the two of them would travel to Belgrade the next day (Thursday, May 27). The purpose would be to see if they can lock in and improve upon what Cherno says he got from Milosevic Wednesday and, more important, to give us a fresh set of eyes on the target: is Milosevic really ready to make peace on NATO's terms, as Chernomyrdin keeps saying?

Our six hours of talks (on the birch forested premises of Stalin's dacha) produced agreement — what I'd call grudging acceptance on Chernomyrdin's part — that NATO must be at the core of KFOR.

Moreover, Chernomyrdin claims that he argued for something like this arrangement strenuously with Milosevic in Belgrade yesterday, and that Milosevic accepts that NATO will have to be "on the ground in Kosovo."

That said, it is not at all clear that the Russian government — and the Russian military — will sign up to the Alliance's definition of, and requirements for, NATO-at-the-core, much less that Milosevic will agree to it. In his seven hours of talks with Milosevic in Belgrade, Chernomyrdin probably extracted more of an indication than he's letting on to us about what Milosevic will settle for, and he is probably calibrating the welcome but highly imprecise Russian change of position accordingly. But we still have what I keep calling "the empty chair problem." (I got up at one point during the meeting and brought an empty chair to the table to dramatize the missing man; I kept pointing to the chair and saying, "Yeah, great, but what about *that* guy? Will he say 'yes' to what we're agreeing to?")

We probably won't have much more of an answer on that crucial subject for the next six days, before Cherno and Ahtisaari take their trip. Meanwhile, even as we continue to communicate directly with Milosevic in our own way through the air strikes, we've got to concentrate on clarifying and solidifying our own diplomatic positions. To that end, Doc Foglesong and I have told Ahtisaari and Chernomyrdin that we will work intensively within the USG and at NATO in the coming days, so that when we come back here next Tuesday morning, we'll be in a position to take the discussion of what *we* mean by NATO-at-the-core down to the next level of specifics. (Doc is working his own channels back to DoD right

now.) I have talked briefly to Javier Solana and told him that we're going to need to work hard in SHAPE on this subject. Chernomyrdin has agreed to our proposal that Doc and George Casey be accompanied next week by one or two U.S. officers currently attached to SHAPE. Javier was great on this score and will continue to be instrumental in providing both support and cover within the Alliance; but we've got to do some quick, deft work with the Quad to get them on board the contents of the Ahtisaari-Chernomyrdin package without opening it up to a frenzy of Euro-micro-management. Our team will give you more on this subject tomorrow (which is, actually today — anyway, Friday.)

On a cautionary note, when Doc, George and I were here last week, they ran into a stone wall with Gen. Ivashov and other Russian military, who refused to discuss NATO-at-the-core in the absence of political instructions from on high to do so. Chernomyrdin promised us he'd get those instructions to the Russian military. We'll see. We'll have a first hint of his willingness and ability to follow through on that during Doc's scheduled session with Ivashov tomorrow.\*

On withdrawals/returns, the Russians are still fighting hard for an outcome that attaches a number to the four categories of Yugoslav personnel we're prepared to allow back into Kosovo and then convert that number into a ceiling on the number that can stay, especially MUP. We were adamant that "all" means "all," and that only after total withdrawal can some (a small but unspecified number) come back, and then only under the control of the SFOR commander.

Part of our job in coming days is to prepare for another knock-down-drag-out on this critical issue.

A third issue is the nature of a UN "umbrella." The Russians want one that to our ears sounds perilously close to UN political control; we said so, and made clear that was a non-starter. We've got further work to do with our Allies on this as well. (More on that below when I report on my earlier stops, especially Paris earlier today.)

And then there's a fourth issue: the bombing. The dreaded "p"-word did *not* come up in any context other than the one that NATO has stipulated: the Alliance will suspend air strikes when, by its own lights, Milosevic has accepted our five conditions and we've seen the beginning of withdrawals. The Russians seem to accept the fact that while the diplomacy continues, including perhaps more Cherno trips to Belgrade, so will the bombing. Ahtisaari understands that will be the case if he goes along.

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\* Chubais told you, Mme. Secretary, and me on Sunday that Ivashov would be fired. No hint of that here tonight.

However, both men are interested in whether the Alliance will take care not to endanger their own safety, and in Chernomyrdin's case, he is pressing hard for NATO at least not to intensify bombing in the immediate wake of his trip. He claims that in the case of all three of his trips, he's gone, he's left and the strikes have intensified. He says the Yugoslavs have noticed, are wondering if there's a causal connection and are questioning whether it's a good idea to invite him back. Doc will be working this issue through his channels.

Given what he regarded as the significant Russian movement on a NATO-at-the-core KFOR, plus the hint of some movement in Belgrade, Ahtisaari is prepared to return here on Wednesday with a default position in favor of going to see Slobodan the next day. But that's *only* if what's happened in the intervening days confirms Chernomyrdin's repeated statements that Russia is now prepared to help bring about such a force rather than doing everything it can to block it or UNPROFORize it.

If Ahtisaari does decide next Wednesday to go ahead with the trip on Thursday, he will do so only after first reiterating and establishing with Chernomyrdin (happy coincidence!) five conditions that he laid out earlier tonight:

1. While they will divide their speaking parts into the "general principles" for suspension of hostilities (Chernomyrdin's affirmation of the G-8 principles, perhaps as amended in our direction in NATO-at-the-core) and the "essential specifics" (Ahtisaari's layout of the elaboration of conditions), there must be, in advance of their trip, total clarity between them on the contents and meaning of the entire package.
2. They must understand in advance that the only circumstance in which NATO will suspend military action would be Milosevic's total and unambiguous acceptance of the package, plus verifiable beginning of withdrawal.
3. They must understand in advance that NATO reserves exclusively to itself the decision on what constitutes acceptance on Milosevic's part — and what constitutes adequate verification of withdrawal (although we've indicated we're open to ideas about how Russia might participate in verification). In other words, we and only we will decide what we hear to be a "yes," and any form of "yes, but..." equals "no."
4. They must understand in advance that neither is asking for nor receiving authority to negotiate on behalf of NATO.
5. They must promise in advance that neither will — in Belgrade or afterward, no matter what the outcome — contradict each other or blame each other for the consequences of Milosevic's refusal to accept — i.e., continuation of bombing.

For this approach to accomplish what the Russians most want — a suspension of bombing — there can't be any ambiguity, imprecision or lacunae about the "essential specifics" that Ahtisaari would lay out to Milosevic. We

know how Milosevic will try to exploit any such loopholes, and we don't want Chernomyrdin — in what he says, doesn't say or says afterward — to give aid and comfort to our enemy in this regard.

The U.S. role — including my return to Europe next week — will be to help the two gentlemen in that regard. It was in that spirit that we saw fit to commit to paper the key points in Helsinki, and that document remains, as we've told Chernomyrdin, a canonical text from our standpoint. (Ahtisaari has referred to NATO's five conditions plus the five conditions he's setting for joining Chernomyrdin as "The Ten Commandments.")

What matters, of course — and what we must now test — is whether the Russian government as a whole really does understand, as Chernomyrdin has said *he* understands, that KFOR has got to be, in Ahtisaari's phrase, "hard-core NATO." As we've speculated, Yeltsin has ordered Chernomyrdin to get Kosovo fixed — and that means the bombing stopped — almost no matter what it takes, even if that means Russia as part of a hard-core NATO KFOR.

It will be interesting in several hours for me to meet with Ivanov. Will he be up on what transpired earlier tonight, and supportive of it? Or will he react the way he did to Helsinki? On Wednesday, Mrs. Secretary, Ivanov told you that he regarded our Helsinki paper as a step backward from the Bonn G-8 statement. It is, of course, exactly the opposite: it makes clear how we can move forward from Bonn. I'll go over that ground with him before departure. If he seems to be clueless or, worse, in a blocking mode, it will not augur well for next steps — or for next week.

As you know, we've sensed that Chernomyrdin is leaning, sometimes unsteadily, forward while Ivanov tries to pull him backward (with a lot of help and maybe some instigation from his sort-of namesake Ivanovsky, the career diplomat whom Ivanov has seconded to Chernomyrdin and who, throughout tonight's session, was whispering negative advice in Chernomyrdin's ear like a very grumpy Jimminy Cricket).

Part of the reason for this, I suspect, is butt-covering by Ivanov. Back at the Bonn G-8 Ministerial, Ivanov acceded to some important, though less than ideal improvements in wording, especially description of KFOR as an "*effective international security presence*." We can be pretty sure that he sold this at home *as our concession to him*; that is, he bragged about how he beat back our attempts to add the word "military" vice "security" and "force" vice "presence." Now, in our Helsinki paper, we're making unmistakably clear that it's got to be a military force *with NATO at its core*. So Ivanov may be getting, or anticipating, heat for having fallen into a trap you set for him in Bonn.

Beyond that, the last three weeks have been full of evidence that there's both institutional and personal bad blood between Ivanov and Chernomyrdin (Primakov's guy versus Yeltsin's guy, etc.).

We had what may have been a precursor of Cherno's position being ascendant Wednesday at the G-8 political directors meeting in Bonn. Boris Mayorsky, the Russian master stone-waller, said Russia does not think KFOR should be blue-helmeted; it should have a "nominal" authority from the UN; it should report "nominally" to the SYG or his designated representative. Boris knows English very well, including loaded adverbs. That isn't our position, of course, but it's moving in the right direction, and Cherno took it further tonight.<sup>†</sup>

What we've got to do is try to keep 'em movin'. There are three ways to do that.

One is not, under any circumstances, to give into the temptation to expose the Russians publicly as positioning themselves to concede to us on NATO-at-the-core, since that will, Chernomyrdin made clear, queer whatever further movement the Russians might make. If only for Russian domestic political reasons, the Russian government would have to deny having made any concession. My guess is that, as they think through their own next moves, including the endgame, they can imagine sacrificing a major piece — i.e., accepting NATO-at-the-core — *only* if it's in the context of a peace (i.e., suspension of hostilities); in other words, they may be counting on the cheers of praise at home to drown out the howls of protests as Russian soldiers head off to keep the peace under the command of General Clark, who is well known to Russian audiences these days.

The second thing we can do is to be equally careful not to appear to be *adding* conditions on NATO's behalf and/or walking back from principles that Russia has associated itself with, specifically the Bonn G-8 statement. That's why it was good that Wednesday, in response to press reports on Cherno's visit to Belgrade, we reaffirmed *both* the G-8 principles and the NATO conditions. We must publicly remind everyone, and reassure the Russians, that our diplomacy is all about *amplifying* and *making operational* the G-8 principles, not changing them or toughening them up. We're not moving the goal posts; we're trying to move a

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<sup>†</sup> Mayorsky also signaled movement on withdrawals. Here's his argument there: rather than going from the 80-100,000 (including paramilitaries) armed Serbs that are in Kosovo now, let's figure out how many we're prepared, under NATO's scheme, to let comeback in the designated four categories. Then let's take the aggregate number and say the Serbs need to go down from 100,000 to X.

There are two problems with this suggestion. First, we believe that zero has to mean zero, and we must consider returns only after we've established, in principle and to the extent possible in fact, the totality of withdrawals. Second, when Cherno got notional about the number X, it was much too large: "UNESCO says there are 8,000 religious and historical sites in Kosovo, and let's say it takes three guys for each site..." — the math lands you suspiciously close to one number that Slobo has hanging out there (22,000). At the Bonn meeting yesterday, Mayorsky floated a number in the range of 500 of 1,200, the low end of which is in the universe of what our experts are thinking about.

team that includes the Russians closer to the only goal line there is. (I hear a wee, small voice in my ear — maybe it's Doc Foglesong, a big sports fan, saying: block that metaphor!)

Third, especially in the light of what we heard tonight, we need to do a lot more work, on a faster schedule and in a way that includes both the Alliance and the Russians, on some gritty but important “essential specifics” (as opposed to genuine ‘details’ that can wait until after there's a peace). Here are the ones that our stops in Helsinki, Bonn, Paris and Moscow this week have highlighted:

- What exactly do we mean by NATO-at-the-core? What's the actual command structure? How does it relate to sectors? How does it relate to the UN? The French (Levitte) are pushing a single, UN-ish over-guy (as opposed to over-lord) who would not give orders to the KFOR commander but, as Jean-David puts it, “would have coffee with him every morning.” Call this the “coffee-with-Kofi option.” Is there some version of it we can live with? We've got to decide with our Allies *and* with the Russians before we get a whole lot further.<sup>‡</sup>
- What exactly do we mean by MUP? Right now, we (i.e., SHAPE) mean every single policemen, including traffic cops and cops on the beat. The Russians (specifically Chernov) are arguing that if we insist on “expelling” every last policemen of every job description, track record and background, including ones whose families have lived in Kosovo for generations, we'll be committing “ethnic cleansing in reverse.” Therefore, they say, we should not be “rigid and total” in the way we define MUP.
- As Serb forces withdraw, how do we prevent a “security vacuum” that unleashes chaos, including an orgy of Albanian-on-Serb retribution and an accompanying new refugee crisis, this time Serbs fleeing across borders, including in Montenegro and Macedonia?
- More generally, how do we protect Serbs who decide to stay on in Kosovo?

By the way, on this last point, Michael Steiner, our interlocutor this week who knows the Balkans best, was quite blunt in predicting that — despite our good intentions and reassuring rhetoric about Kosovo's ending up as a “multiethnic democracy” — it's in fact going to be, fairly soon after it's, what?, liberated from Belgrade an all-Albanian, what?, protectorate of the international community. If we succeed in our mission short-term — i.e., get all armed Serbs

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<sup>‡</sup> Chernov's proposal is for a “troika” to “coordinate” KFOR that would be chaired by a NATO member, with one Russian deputy and one traditional neutral one; a FRY representative would be attached to the troika as a liaison — “to take orders, not to give them,” in Chernov's words.

out — and open up return to refugees, no Serbs of any description will want to stay.

Be that as it may, it's equally (if not even more) true that if we fail in our mission short-term, no Albanians of any description except for UCKsters bent on vengeance and independence will return.

Whatever the answers to these and other such questions, Levitte on Thursday formally and rather urgently proposed that we set up a Quad working group right away — in coming days, if possible — and that we make a real effort, as he put it, “to take account of the Russian factor in our planning for KFOR and civilian implementation” so that when we talk to them in the future, we're not just giving them our answers to their questions.

The French, as you know, have been quite resistant to the Ahtisaari-Chernomyrdin gambit, partly for not-invented-in-Paris reasons, partly (and relatedly, for reasons of hypersensitivity to the *hyperpuissance*). With a lot of stroking and a special trip to Paris just to see Védrine and Levitte, we've got them calmed down. But we have more work to do there. Levitte had just come from seeing Chirac, who is still pushing the idea that if Ahtisaari goes to Belgrade, with or without Chernom, he should undertake in advance to see, while he's there, every conceivable Serbian politician, especially democrats (and “democrats”), in order to encourage anti-Milosevic feeling and to demonstrate our distaste for dealing with Sloba.

Ahtisaari, who had gotten this message directly from Chirac, tonight over dinner told Chernom that he intended to see opposition figures in Belgrade if he goes there next week. Chernom said, why not? Maybe he'd do the same. This aspect of their mission requires, to put it mildly, more thought.

Via Levitte yesterday, we heard Chirac also wanted a G-8 Ministerial to approve the Ahtisaari-Chernomyrdin package *in advance* of the trip (which, of course, would flush out the Russians on hard-core-NATO). We didn't quite hear that in Paris Thursday — maybe in part because I preempted — but Jean-David did say that Ahtisaari and Chernomyrdin should “agree” in advance on “their” message. If that means what we're saying with the five ground rules above (the 2<sup>nd</sup> five of the Commandments), then *d'accord*. If, however, it means making it harder for Chernomyrdin to associate himself, *in Belgrade*, with Ahtisaari's half of the script, then *pas de tout*.

On Bildt, his name never came up in Moscow, but it did come up in Paris earlier because I raised it: I decided, at the tail end of a generally very *accord*-filled session with Levitte to lay down our marker on Bildt: a) we support him in his assignment to begin now preparing for peace-implementation; b) we oppose — and will do whatever necessary to thwart — his involvement in any aspect whatsoever of peace-brokerage; c) we reserve on whom we will support for the

Big Job in Kosovo, whatever its institutional auspices. Jean-David's reaction:  
*hmmmm....*

Among the issues we didn't get to in Paris or Moscow are critical ones of sequencing and synchronization among the various tracks: Ahtisaari-Chenromyrdin, G-8 and UNSC.

While Doc & Co. are working hard on the hard military/security questions, we've got a considerable challenge of our own ahead on the diplomatic front.

As our team sorts through all that it heard today, we'll provide further impressions and suggestions on how to prepare for next week, and how to manage Allies in the meantime.