

WAR

FILE TITLE:

In their own words

SERIES

KOSOVO

Selected communications

between senior global leaders.

PART BEGINS:

JUNE 1998

PART ENDS:

SEPTEMBER 1999

DECLASSIFIED

Blair
Clinton
Yeltsin
Milosevic
Cook
Holbrooke
Albright
Solana
Shea
Clark
Jackson



Collated by: Marc Perry

[Kosovo Declassified]

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June 1998 - September 1999

Contextualised and collated by Marc Perry, 2023.

1st Edition

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Abbreviations

ACTORD: Activation Order

FYR: Former Yugoslav Republic

G8: France, Germany, Italy, UK, USA, Canada, Japan, Russia

IMF: International Monetary Fund

KFOR: Kosovo Force

KLA: Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK)

KVM: Kosovo Verification Monitor

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

OSCE: Organisation for Security and Cooperation Europe

SACEUR: Supreme Allied Commander Europe

SHAPE: Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Introduction

*"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players."*
- William Shakespeare.

The stage is Kosovo at the turn of the 20th century. The actors are an extraordinarily aligned cast of political personalities satelliting in powerful orbits, united in a common purpose: stopping a bully bent on ethnic cleansing. But this is no play, this is bloody war. Demonstrating trans-Atlantic cooperation at its most urgent and real Madeleine Albright and the foreign ministers of Britain, France, Germany and Italy hold five-way conferences call almost every day. "Never before had there been such a combination of modern technology and political will," remarked Albright afterwards.

So, what do we learn from reading the letters, telephone transcripts and recollections of leaders involved in the Kosovo war? Undoubtably, each of us will take different things away from personal readings of these releases, but some common insights stand out:

Taking centre stage throughout this reading is the highly effective Blair-Clinton relationship. In 1998 Tony Blair was initiating his second year as British Prime Minister on a platform of political centrism, progressive Europeanism, pluralism and tolerance. Clinton was in the second year of his second term delivering policies based on a centrist "third way" political philosophy. Blair's politics and that of his partner, were ideologically united on building an international consensus on issues from the Balkans, to peace in Northern Ireland to free trade. In the early days of his political ascendancy Blair spoke of standing for: "Co-operation, not confrontation; for fellowship, not fear." And as the record here speaks, he would collaborate with Clinton in building a unique international consensus.

Crucially, Clinton and Blair are trained lawyers, and as their conversations show, they both know how to play hard for high ideals enacted through hard-nosed realism. Both are highly intelligent, articulate and able to navigate complexity with a strong sense of statesmanship. Both have rock star-like ambition and Clinton, in particular, is concerned with leaving behind a legacy. Blair may have been the junior partner, but he vigorously pushes for the commitment of ground troops and his securing of British boots on the ground allowed Clinton to leverage similar USA commitments. Both leaders understand the political power of media presentation and are constantly striving to give voice to the refugees and other victims of violence. They are quick to realise that if ethnic cleansing increases after bombing it will look like they caused it: "If we take the imitative and he moves against the people it will look like we caused it," says Clinton. As expected, Milosevic uses the bombing to intensify expulsions and declare: "everybody is running away because of bombing, Serbs, Turks, Gipsies, Moslems, deer are running, birds are running...bees are

running.” Both Blair and Clinton are emotionally invested in the welfare of the refugees. They visit the camps and busy themselves finding finances to fulfil their responsibilities to them.

Within their conversations allusions to “another option,” where NATO would commit a much bigger military ground force of 175,000 to 200,000 personnel, are made. This, assumedly, is the force that would be required to take Milosevic out of power should he not capitulate. Clinton and Blair repeatedly reiterate that winning is the only option. They foresee Serbs out, NATO in, refugees home. They foresee Milosevic before a court. They, with Chirac, even deal in the details targeting strikes. And, when victory is eventually secured, they concern themselves with seeking out the best people to set up and run a new government; as Clinton tells Blair: “There are literally thousands of detail questions that we [still] have to answer.”

The astonishing levels of responsibility they were dealing with are brought into full-focus when we consider that Kosovo was not the only issue on their desks. They were simultaneously managing the Northern Ireland Peace process, Iraqi weapons inspections, a US-EU banana trade quarrel, and the Monika Lewinsky scandal. Remarkably, despite these heavy responsibilities their sense of humour remains intact. Clinton often wanders off topic, joking about bananas, nakedness and cashmere sweaters; while Blair, often acting the straight man, jokes about executing the person who accidentally dropped the telephone line.

Through reading these releases we learn more about the personalities of the “internationals” than we do about the Albanian contingent. We do, however, learn that the British Foreign Office feared for President Rugova’s life. As the more moderate arm of Albanian opinion, they justifiably worried the more militant wing could take him out. Madeline Albright throws some light on the characters of the Albanian delegation in her autobiography, pegging Thaci as the brilliant young student with a penchant for turning his homework in late, Rugova as the eccentric academic and Veton Surroi as the pragmatist. Early on in the Rambouillet talks the UK and USA were confident of getting the Albanians to sign on the dotted line despite potential problems, “where we have both sides pissed at us.” Early on too, both Blair and Clinton envision an autonomous, rather than independent Kosovo. They do not want to fight the KLA’s war or have anything to do with a Greater Albania. Clinton and Blair also decide to pressure the KLA into taking responsibility for breaking cease fires, coming to the negotiating table, and disarming.

The releases do reveal more about the character of Milosevic. We read that past experience had taught Clinton that the Serbian President, “will cheat and jerk us around.” As early as the early autumn of 1998 Blair, Clinton and their advisors were convinced that an ultimatum, backed by force was the only means of getting him to pull forces out and come to an agreement on autonomy for Kosovo. Though he tries

to lie and deny about his motives Milosevic talks openly about historic ethnic cleansing. In a memorandum regarding Milosevic's character Richard Holbrooke amusingly describes his downfall amongst political peers on the global stage: "He will never again eat the Packy's All-Sports Bar in Dayton," he remarks. And in the final hours before bombing Clinton doesn't mix his words either: "Holbrooke is on his way back. Milosevic stiffed him. He wouldn't agree to a cease-fire."

Much more still is revealed about the emotionally expressive character of President Yeltsin. We read that Clinton is aware of how bombings will politically hurt the Russian President and so he works particularly hard at keeping him close. The Russians agree to turn a blind eye to the *threat* of force, as long as it brings about a political solution without *using* force. They are, however, extremely agitated by the eventual bombing campaign: "NATO have made a big mistake," says Yeltsin. Despite this Clinton, Albright, Yeltsin, Chernomyrdin and Ivanov prevent disagreement on Kosovo from ruining the American-Russian relationship in other areas, such as economic cooperation and nuclear arms reduction.

On March 24 1999 Clinton throws the ball into Yeltsin's court: "It will be your decision if you let this bully [Milosevic] destroy the relationship we worked hard for six and a half years to build up," he says. Yeltsin, meanwhile, confides his fears about growing anti-Americanism in Russia and of a 'communist' clamour, "calling for an unleashing of a European and world-wide war." In response the Russian President appears to de-escalate military options by declaring: "Any General that speaks of sending troops to help Milosevic will be summarily dismissed from the military." Despite resisting pressures to respond to NATO's bombing campaign Yeltsin's internal split at home spills out in an emotional exchange over the timing of bombing cessation: "Do not push Russia into this war. You know what Russia is. You know how it is equipped, but don't push Russia into this!" he says to Clinton. Later, Yeltsin is much more concerned with being perceived as a peace broker: "We shall continue efforts to work together so it looks like we stopped the European war, the World War," he says. And, when all the efforts eventually pay off Yeltsin effusively says to Clinton: "So, I would like to hug and kiss you, and I am sincerely glad that in such a difficult situation our friendship wasn't broken."

As an addition to the narrative, I have included a day-by-day account from the perspective of 'boots on the ground.' Here, I must confess a selective bias: as the man leading the ground force was British, and I am British, my focus singularly recalls the experience of British boots. In the theatre of war that follows I endeavour to allow them, and all the politicians, diplomats and military men involved, to speak for themselves. Through words and actions all of the "actors" within this "play" display the full range of human characteristics: some are genial, some are heroic, some are bloody minded, some are all three at once; while all, without exception, are flawed. [Blair became messianic, Holbrooke arrogant, Jackson liked a drink, and Clinton, well, we all know about Clinton's weakness].

A note on redactions:

Redactions [marked xxxx*] are clauses removed by censors to protect national security, diplomatic relationships or personal information. The majority of the redactions in this narrative retains information that has not yet been declassified by UK authorities. Practically speaking this means we do not hear all of what Prime Minister Blair said. We can however, read between the lines. To improve readability redactions have been indicated in places where narrative flow was not impeded. Minor abridgements such as repetitive statements of agreement in the Blair-Clinton conversations have been removed. Major abridgements - bigger cuts – have been made when the subject under discussion strayed too far from the central theme of the ‘Kosovo conflict’. Where major abridgments have been made the digressionary subject is recorded within square brackets.

Marc Perry, Prishtina, February 2023.

Dramatis Personae

Madeline Albright: (61) US Secretary of State.

Anthony “Tony” Blair: (45) UK Prime Minister.

Gen. Wesley Clark: (54) Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

William “Bill” Clinton: (52) US President.

Richard Holbrooke: (57) US Special Envoy.

Lt. Gen. Michael Jackson: (54) Commander Allied Rapid Reaction Corps.

Slobodan Milosevic: (57) President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Hashim Thaci: (31) Commander Kosovo Liberation Army.

Boris Yeltsin: (67) President of Russia.

Other key characters:

Martti Ahtisaari: UN Special Envoy for Kosovo.

Kofi Anan: UN Secretary General.

Louise Arbour: Chief Prosecutor; International Criminal Tribunal Former Yugoslavia.

Samuel “Sandy” Berger: US National Security Advisor.

Victor Chernomyrdin: (Russia) Special Envoy for the Balkans

Jacques Chirac: President of France.

Robin Cook: UK Foreign Secretary.

Massimo D'Alema: Prime Minister of Italy.

Al Gore: US Deputy President.

Igor Ivanov: Foreign Minister of Russia.

Helmuth Kohl: Chancellor of Germany.

Gen. Klaus Nauman: Chairman of NATO Military Committee.

Yevgeny Primakov: Prime Minister of Russia until May 12 1999.

James Rubin: US Envoy / Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs.

Ibrahim Rugova: President of Kosovo.

Jacques Santer: President of the European Commission.

Jamie Shea: NATO Spokesperson

Lt. Gen. Michael Short: NATO Joint Air Force Commander.

Javier Solana: Secretary General Of NATO.

John Sawers: UK Diplomat, Foreign Affairs Advisor.

William Walker: US Ambassador, Head of Kosovo Verification Mission.

Background chronology:

1987 Slobodan Milosevic's power grows with a trip to Kosovo. At large public rallies, Serb nationalists embrace him when he promises to defend their interests in the province.

1989 Milosevic changes the Serbian constitution to vastly reduce the provincial autonomy Kosovo has enjoyed since 1974. Other measures put tens of thousands of Kosovar Albanians out of work and restrict the activities of their cultural organizations. Rioting and protests by Kosovo Albanians ensue.

21 November 1995. The Dayton Accords end war in Bosnia but leave the Kosovo question unresolved.

1996. The KLA appear and take their first actions against Serb forces.

26 November 1997. First front-line action by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) against Serb forces in Drenica.

5 March 1998. Prekaz massacre. Following the deaths of four Serbian policemen Serb forces surround and shell the home of KLA leader Adem Jashari, killing over 60 family members.

7 March 1998. Rome. Madeleine Albright declares, "We are not going to stand by and watch the Serbian authorities do in Kosovo what they can no longer get away with doing in Bosnia."

9 March 1998. "Contact Group" countries (United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and Russia) meet in London to discuss Kosovo.

23 March 1998. Ibrahim Rugova re-elected "President" of Kosovo with 99% of vote in controversial elections boycotted by increasingly popular Kosovar Albanian hard-liners.

31 March 1998. United Nations Security Council resolution 1160 condemns Yugoslavia's excessive use of force, imposes economic sanctions, and bans arms sales to Serbia.

15 May 1998. Rugova-Milosevic meet in Belgrade.

29 May 1998. As a part of the international community's move to bolster Rugova's plummeting support at home he meets with Clinton and Albright in the Oval office.

9 June 1998: Blair writes to Milosevic...





10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 June 1998

Dear President Milosevic

I wanted to let you know personally of my grave concern about what is happening in Kosovo.

I know very well how complex such problems can be. Governments here grappled for many years to try and find a solution to the problem of Northern Ireland. We are now making progress. But history shows that there is no alternative to a process of negotiation if lasting solutions to such problems are to be found. Violence generates violence, down through the generations. That is why I find what is happening in Kosovo deeply disturbing. Too much blood has been spilled in the Balkans in recent years. The world hopes that you and the leaders of the Kosovo Albanian community will show vision and courage in tackling the issues that divide you. But it looks to you in particular as the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to defend the civil and human rights of all your people, and to find a peaceful way forward.

No one disputes that you have a right to deal with security problems in your country. We have no desire whatsoever to see the break-up of the FRY. But the actions of the Serb security forces in the last few months, and particularly in the last few days, have gone far beyond what is acceptable to the international community and have created a threat to regional peace and security. Moreover, the attempt to deal with the problem of Kosovo by military means is undermining the fragile process of dialogue which followed your welcome meeting with Dr Rugova in mid-May. It is fuelling the violence by the Kosovo Liberation Army, and the demands for independence for Kosovo, which it seeks to contain. What is needed is a genuine political process which marginalises the men of violence. I fear that your present policy only increases the international spotlight on Kosovo; bolsters the position of those in Kosovo who are seeking independence; and increases the possibility of international intervention.

As you will have seen, we are seeking action by the UN Security Council. You should be in no doubt of our determination that regional stability and security must be preserved by any necessary measures. Naturally, we would much rather work with you to find a peaceful way to tackle successfully the problem of Kosovo. Britain, through its role in the Contact Group and EU, stands ready to help. I appeal to you to accept this offer of cooperation; to hold out to all the inhabitants of Kosovo the prospect of a peaceful resolution of their problems; and in doing so to set your country on the road towards the integration in the international community we all want to see. The risks of your present course, not least for your country and its future, are huge.

Yours sincerely

Tony Blair

President Milosevic

June 1998, Pressing Problems

11 June 1998, Milosevic replies to Blair:

Dear Mr Blair,

Referring to your letter of 9 June 1998, I should like you to have in mind the following essential elements of our policy: Our orientation to resolve all issues in Kosovo and Metohija through direct dialogue and by political means, while respecting the integrity of Serbia and guaranteeing equal civil and human rights to all those living there, regardless of their nationality, ethnic origin or religion, is very clear. Such a principled starting-point emanates from the multi-ethnic nature of Serbia and Yugoslavia as a whole.

In this respect, we accept the existing European standards, in particular those built into the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe. In this approach we have never equated our citizens of Albanian nationality with leaders of separatism, let alone with those advocating or practising violence and terrorism as a means of attaining political goals. The philosophy of division is characteristic, as I believe you are aware, of the leaders who publicly call for the secession of Kosovo and Metohija from Serbia and who impose on their fellow Albanians the boycott of the civil and political rights granted to them under the Constitution and the laws by blackmail, and who promote segregation of education, health and other ideas belonging to the distant past.

From our territory no threat to any of our eight neighbours or to our region, has ever been posed nor it poses, least of all, a threat to peace and security. Yugoslavia has always been open to comprehensive cooperation with its neighbours and with all other countries and international organisations. It is open to such cooperation even today, on an equal basis. This is its lasting orientation. Such a policy is particularly demonstrated in practice through our good-neighbourly cooperation and philosophy of open borders in continuous efforts to promote our relations with the European Union and to restore our membership rights in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe which have been suspended with the known and now formally outdated explanation, contrary to the procedure based on the principles of this Organisation.

In your letter you say that no-one is questioning the right of the State to cope with its security problems. This is precisely the case. Police in Kosovo and Metohija are taking only those measures and actions which are deemed necessary to protect the physical security of people and their property. It is a special responsibility of the State to prevent terrorism and banditry. The recent action by police you referred to, was limited to lifting the blockade of regional communications. In doing so, they have inflicted no losses among the civilians and the communications were

unblocked and now operate normally. More than 60 foreign representatives were able to see it for themselves when they visited the region on 7 June, as well as several dozen foreign news correspondents during their visit on 10 June. Naturally, foreign representatives accredited in Belgrade, foreign correspondents, international and other aid organisations can still freely travel to Kosovo and Metohija and carry out their mandated duties. We believe that this will serve greater impartiality and an improved understanding of both the situation and our policy.

Taking into account the long tradition of friendly relations, respect and understanding between our countries and peoples, I sincerely regret to have to say that we are deeply surprised by some of the positions of your Government regarding Yugoslavia and, in this context, in particular by your initiative and action in the United Nation Security Council to pass a resolution against Yugoslavia. We see none of the reasons indicated as a basis for taking such a move. Therefore, we wonder whether it is possible that you have not been informed of the actual situation in Kosovo and Metohija and that the fundamental meaning and implications of separatism and terrorism in this part of Europe are not understood. Indeed, what could have been the reason for you to refer to the terrorists, in your letter, as the Kosovo Liberation Army and to fail to mention at all terrorism, whose existence in Kosovo and Metohija you do not, I hope, doubt. What could be the reason for the oversight that the substantial dialogue begun at my personal initiative and that of the Government of Serbia, having agreed and publicized modalities, is avoided precisely by those leaders who publicly espouse separatism?

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize our assessment that the initiative to impose sanctions and exert continued pressure on Yugoslavia represents support to those forces asking for public striving to undermine the territorial integrity of Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. These are, understandably, not the values subscribed to by the Government or its leaders, but rather by all the population of this country.

Slobodan Milosevic

11 June 1998. NATO defence ministers begin conceptual planning for potential intervention in Kosovo. Ministers decide to "send a signal" to Milosevic by conducting air exercises in the region. Blair and Rugova at 10 Downing Street:

The Foreign Office reports Rugova's position: "Rugova said that there was already a legal basis for international action because Kosovo had been part of Yugoslavia, but Yugoslavia no longer existed. There was also a humanitarian basis for action and if something was not done soon, he feared a catastrophe. The Prime Minister asked whether the situation was getting worse. Rugova confirmed that it was. After presenting the Prime Minister with two pieces of Kosovan rock crystal, Rugova concluded by saying that, although Kosovo was a small country, they wanted independence."

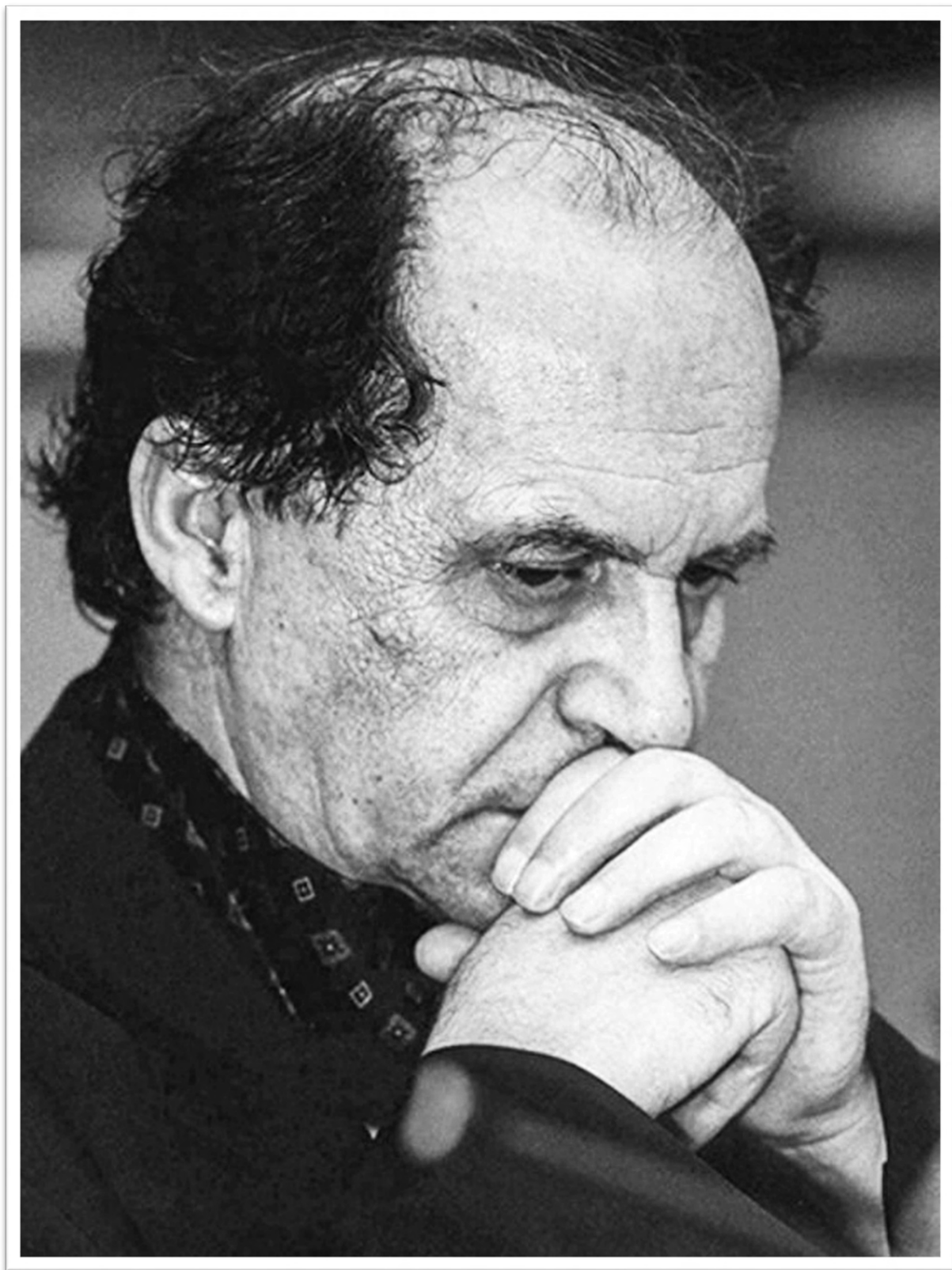
Foreign Office officials fear threats on Rugova's life:

"Rugova's standing in Kosovo political circles was on a steady downward course even before his agreement to meet with Milosevic last month. Milosevic's repression has radicalised a large part of Kosovar opinion, and there is a growing wave of support for independence. Rugova's policy of dialogue is putting his position, and possibly even his life at risk."

15 June 1998. 85 NATO warplanes fly over Albania and Macedonia in a show of force called Operation Determined Eagle.

23-24 June 1998. Holbrooke meets with Milosevic and travels to Kosovo to talk directly with KLA commanders.

23 June 1998. During a confidential visit to Albania UK envoy Paddy Ashdown observes extensive Serb shelling, mortaring and machine gun fire on Albanian farms and refugee gathering points in Kosovo from a vantage point in Albania north of Gjakova.



President Rugova, 1998. Photo: Wikicommons

July 1998, Credible Threat

31 July 1998, Downing Street, London. Blair meets with Defence Secretary Robertson and Foreign Secretary Cook. Private Secretary John Holmes reports:

“The Prime Minister said that Milosevic had to know that he would be hit if he went on the offensive against civilians. As for the KLA, we had no realistic military options against them, but they had to understand that we were bound to be less tough on Milosevic if they were too active militarily themselves. The only way to bring the two sides to compromise was by demonstrating that the international community would not let either side win militarily. They could of course fight each other to a standstill, but it was in the best interests of both to come to the negotiating table now. It was therefore important for us to get sensible compromise proposals on the table as soon as possible, while getting the message across that we would not help either side win the military struggle. In particular, the Kosovar Albanians needed to know that we would not fight their independence war for them, or countenance any Greater Albania strategy on their part. He was inclined to think that we should be more explicit about this strategy, since our current public position lacked clarity and was in danger of sending the wrong signals to the parties.”

31 July 1998. Private Secretary Philip Barton records a Blair telephone call with Clinton:

“The Prime Minister had a brief discussion with Clinton on Kosovo. The Prime Minister said that Chris Hall was doing a good job. He understood he was shortly going to put forward a plan in conjunction with the Contact Group. We should set out to the KLA and Milosevic what we wanted i.e., for Kosovo to be an autonomous republic in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), rather than independent. We should make clear that this was our plan. If Milosevic tried to eliminate the KLA, we would go for him, while if the KLA continued to fight for independence, we would go easy on Milosevic. The sooner Hall came up with his plan the better. Clinton agreed. The Prime Minister said that originally Milosevic had been the clear aggressor. But in the last three to four weeks the KLA had started to do quite well. The situation had become more complicated and nuanced. Milosevic had now won back some territory in part because we had taken our grip off his arm. He had been able to open up some roads and so on. Now was the time to propose a diplomatic solution and to make clear to both sides what we wanted to happen. Returning to Kosovo at the end of the conversation, Clinton said that he would follow up what the Prime Minister had said.”



18 May 1998, Clinton and Blair, Foreign Office, London. Photo: Clinton Library

31 July 1998, East Hampton, New York...

Blair: Bill, a couple of other things. Kosovo. xxxx*

Clinton: I agree.

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: The KLA has put us in a tough position.

August 1998, Gathering Support

6 August 1998, 4:46 p.m. - 5:06 p.m. Oval Office...

Clinton: I called you to talk about Kosovo. It is getting worse.

The headlines show that, but Milosevic is going for a military solution. Serb security forces are not only suppressing Albanian militants, but are also engaging in a systematic campaign against the civilian population. I think we are getting closer to a major humanitarian disaster. Milosevic has a sense of doing this under the threshold for NATO military response because he believes that NATO will respond only with a UN resolution, but Russia guarantees to block it. My view is, at a minimum, we need to make him think again. We need to finalize planning that we started, identify forces and think about some sort of ultimatum to get him to stop the offensive and restore autonomy for Kosovo. I believe we ought to make it clear that, while we would like to get UN authority, we can do it without it. I know you differ here, and Albright talked to Cook about asking the UN Security Council for the necessary authority. Let me tell you we are headed to a collision on Kosovo and what is going on in Russia. I talk to Bob Rubin about every day. I am still quite concerned about their economy and about the stability of the Yeltsin government. His health is deteriorating and a lot of noise is being made about controls on freedoms to get order in society. What I'm afraid of is, if things get worse in Kosovo, a lot of civilians will be dying and others turning into refugees. If we put Yeltsin into this box, he will be forced to abstain because it is so bad and would really hurt him at home politically with the economy the way it is, or he can keep with Primakov and veto it and run the risk of alienating the rest of the world at the very time he needs the most support from the international community. While it is better to have UN support, I am very worried about bringing this to a vote right now. Milosevic thinks he has a free hand. I talked to you and John Major and I understand you have different system to decide legal authority there. One thing I had our guys do - there is a basis - there have been a number of cross-border incursions and threats to international observers, which could be a trigger for self-defence. Also, there is Milosevic's record of threat to international peace and security and then the humanitarian atrocities. I think we could construct a legal case, but if I can't convince you about it, we don't have a chance with Chirac and Kohl.

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: Let me ask you this then. Shouldn't we try to get Chirac and Kohl to sign off on ultimatums we would give Milosevic? Word of planning would be somewhat helpful. Convince Chirac and Kohl that a UN resolution is not legally necessary. I know how Chirac is on this, but it will hurt Yeltsin if we put him in a position of having to sign off or block now.

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: We can nose around it. His economic problems are horrible and his internal political problems are awful. I'm very worried about this. Yeltsin was going to go on vacation in August, but then he had to come early, even though his health needs the rest. I am going over there and meet with him for a few days in September, but I'm very worried about this.

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: I don't know, we have to work on that. We have to work through another option, apart from a Security Council resolution. They would have to raise holy hell, but, in the end, if we handle it in the right way, it would be the best of three bad alternatives. Better than forcing them to veto it. Better than forcing him to eat it. My problem is I am afraid what happens if we let it deteriorate more. There is a rumour, news story, of 500 people in a mass grave. It may not be true, but the other side is trying to force us in, too. We have all those problems you and I discussed before. People want us to be their air force to get independence. But I think the near-term problem is we went through all this with the Bosnian civil war and I don't want to replay it with another Muslim population.

August 1998 (Undated approx. 20th) Blair writes to Yelstin:

[UK Fax Draft]

I wanted to underline to you my grave concern about the international community's failure so far to deal effectively with the crisis in Kosovo.

At your meeting with President Milosevic in June, you secured a number of important undertakings from him. In particular, he agreed not to carry out any repressive actions against the peaceful population in Kosovo. But since then, the Serbian security forces have engaged in widespread, and prolonged, repression. All of us with representatives in the Kosovo Diplomatic Observer Mission have received eye witness reports of Serbian forces destroying homes and whole villages, burning crops in the fields and killing farm animals. They have terrified the civilian population. UNHCR estimate that at least 160,000 have fled from their homes; this represents one of the largest movements of people since 1991. With winter fast approaching, we face a major humanitarian disaster. Already, there are reports of children suffering from dehydration, malnutrition and related illnesses. President Milosevic is directly responsible: these operations can in no sense be justified as necessary to maintain law and order in Kosovo or to protect the FRY's borders.

In the early stages of the crisis, the Contact Group acted together. For a time, it brought effective pressure to bear. But more recently, Milosevic has sensed

divisions within the Contact Group, and has exploited that to flout the undertakings he gave you and to defy the will of the whole international community. This is therefore an issue of major importance for European security. If the NATO-Russian partnership is to develop as we all wish, it must show itself capable of dealing firmly and effectively with the threat to regional stability and human rights which Kosovo presents.

Achieving a ceasefire and progress towards a political settlement will require the Kosovo Albanians to stop violent attacks and start negotiating in good faith. We are pressing them energetically to do so in coordination with the Americans. But President Milosevic's policies of recent weeks have made that task much more difficult. He must realise that he cannot resolve the problem of Kosovo by military force.

I attach great importance to re-establishing a united approach with Russia. There are two points of particular urgency. First, on the humanitarian front, humanitarian organisations are having real difficulties reaching parts of Kosovo. Both the Yugoslav authorities and Kosovo Albanians bear responsibility for this. We are urging both sides to allow unimpeded access throughout Kosovo. I would welcome your support for this with Belgrade.

Secondly, the most effective way of deterring further excesses by the Serbian security forces would be to adopt a robust UN Security Council Resolution requiring President Milosevic to implement the undertakings he has given you and the requirements laid down by the Contact Group. That would send the clearest possible message of our united resolve to see an end to the fighting and an early political settlement. If Russia blocks such a resolution and there is a further dramatic deterioration in the situation in Kosovo, Russia would be widely blamed. That would be bound to have an impact on our wider cooperation. I know you may face domestic difficulties on the Kosovo issue. But I am convinced that determined action now at the UN would be important in helping to prevent a further dramatic deterioration which could drag in neighbouring countries and leave NATO with no choice but to act. I hope that you will instruct your people to work with ours to secure an early Security Council Resolution and to restore effective international control of this dangerous situation.

September 1998, Ready To Hit Hard

15 September 1998. [Abridged] Foreign Secretary Robin Cook writes to Blair on moral position:

“So, we are likely to face a decision on whether an ultimatum, and accompanying commitment to military action, was justifiable on the grounds of overwhelming humanitarian necessity. In my view, it would be politically and morally unacceptable to have to wait until hundreds of people were dying each week before concluding that such a situation existed. Experience shows that only a convincing threat influences Milosevic. Any measures short of a strategy with a credible military threat will not tackle the roots of the problem.”

17 September 1998. Yeltsin writes to Blair



President of the Russian Federation

Dear Tony,

Having taken very seriously your concern over the situation in Kosovo as expressed in our telephone conversation I have undertaken a number of concrete actions in order to prevent the worst.

I urgently despatched First Deputy Foreign Minister, now Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Igor S.Ivanov to Belgrade who delivered my personal message to President S.Milosevic. In no uncertain terms I expressed my deep concern over the situation with special emphasis on the acuteness of the humanitarian problem in Kosovo causing heavy sufferings to the civilian population and threatening to grow into a real catastrophe.

As a result of very difficult talks with S.Milosevic we succeeded in persuading him to take some serious additional steps. The President of FRY publicly confirmed that he would strictly follow his obligations undertaken in Moscow in the interests of the Kosovo settlement. In response to my appeal he announced that the Yugoslav leadership would provide guarantees for the safe return of all refugees and displaced persons to the areas of their permanent settlement. Belgrade is ready for the broadest cooperation with all international humanitarian organisations. Together with the UNHCR and the IRSC the Yugoslav authorities intend to ascertain the

number of refugees and to inspect the areas of their concentration for the purpose of rendering them urgent assistance. It is significant that S.Milosevic firmly pledged that there would be no new outflows of refugees from Yugoslavia. We believe that the practical realization of these principally important arrangements would, no doubt, contribute to easing the tension in Kosovo and around it. Thus, I strongly urged S.Milosevic to act so as to prevent the humanitarian tragedy there. It is extremely important now to put the same pressure upon the leaders of the Kosovo Albanians. An end must be put to provocative attacks, terrorist actions and constant intimidation of the civilian population. Everybody knows that military units of the Albanian terrorists openly operate from the territory of Albania, where they have bases and act with impunity.

As to the humanitarian problem I believe it is important to take advantage without any delay of the obligations taken by the FRY President and to focus on giving refugees and displaced persons an opportunity to return to their homes before the winter sets in. Now, as never before, it is imperative to act in unison using every political means available. It is only in this manner that we can overcome the situation in the region and to untie eventually this complex knot. I firmly believe that it is impossible to achieve this by means of force.

The solution of the Kosovo problem will in a large measure depend on how closely we continue to interact in this direction.

Your sincerely,

Boris Yeltsin

21 September 1998. Blair and Clinton grab fifteen minutes in New York. Philip Barton reports, "Clinton was ready to hit Milosevic hard if necessary, and keen to put together a serious ultimatum."

23 Sept 1998. UN Security Council approves Resolution 1199 demanding cease-fire, Serb withdrawal and refugee return and calling for unspecified "additional measures" if Serbia refuses to comply.

24 September 1998. Blair writes to Milosevic:



10 DOWNING STREET

Dear President Milosevic,

I wrote to you in June to express my deep personal concern about the situation in Kosovo, and to appeal to you to take the necessary steps to work for a peaceful resolution of this difficult problem.

I have continued to take a close personal interest in developments in Kosovo. I have to say that I have been disturbed and perplexed by the evidence of continuing hostilities and the rapidly worsening humanitarian crisis. As I said in my previous letter, no one disputes your right to deal with security problems. But the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by your security and armed forces is having an intolerable impact on innocent civilians who are being forced to flee their homes and whose livelihoods are being destroyed. The prospect of tens of thousands of people facing the winter without proper shelter is one which the international community cannot ignore.

The Resolution adopted by the United Nations Security Council on 23 September underlines the deep international concern at the impending humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo and the lack of progress towards a political solution. What is required is an immediate end to the current violence and rapid action to address the humanitarian situation. Above all, there must be speedy progress on a political dialogue, since only by resolving the core problem of the status of Kosovo can there be a lasting solution to the humanitarian problem.

I am sending this message with Paddy Ashdown. I know that he shares my concerns, and will wish to discuss these issues with you following his visit to the region. I reiterate that Britain and our Contact Group and EU Partners stand ready to work with you in the search for a peaceful resolution. But the present situation is intolerable and cannot be allowed to continue.

Your sincerely,

Tony Blair

25 September 1998, 07:27 Blair Writes to Yeltsin:



10 DOWNING STREET

Dear President Yeltsin

Thank you for your letter of 17 September bringing me up to date with your efforts to persuade President Milosevic to take steps to stop repression and prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo. I value our cooperation on this issue, and the joint efforts of our Foreign Ministers.

I note the new undertakings President Milosevic has now given you. The key question is of course whether he will implement these quickly and fully. His track record is not encouraging. We very much welcomed the commitments you secured from him in Moscow in June but he did not fulfil these, or meet the other demands of the Contact Group. Since your letter, the pattern of disproportionate use of force by the Serbian security forces, including using tanks and helicopter gunships has continued, making another 20,000 homeless.

Against this unpromising background, I was delighted that our two countries were able to work together on the Security Council Resolution which was adopted in New York on 23 September. This has sent President Milosevic a firm and united message from the international community that he will be held accountable for his actions, as well as setting out clearly what we expect from the Kosovo Albanian leadership. We look forward to working with you to follow up this Resolution vigorously in the critical weeks ahead.

The prospect of a humanitarian catastrophe in just a few weeks means that the patience we have displayed in the past is not an option. The British would certainly not understand here if, despite what we and you have tried to do since March, such a crisis develops. What is urgently needed therefore is a halt to Military operations and a start to genuine political negotiation. Let us both do all we can to achieve this.

Your sincerely,

Tony Blair

26 September 1998, In the town of Gornje Obrinje, west of Prishtina, Serbian police units were believed to have killed about 19 ethnic Albanians, mainly women and children, belonging to a single family. The act was considered to be in retaliation for the killing of seven Serb policemen by Albanian guerrillas in the same area. Additional deaths were reported in other villages in the Drenica region. The killings prompted expressions of outrage in many countries.

October 1998, Bomb You Good

2 October, 1998, 4:10 -4:21 p.m. Air Force One...

Clinton: The other thing I wanted to mention was Kosovo. We have begun to prepare Congress and the people for the possibility of air strikes. We wanted to ask NATO to authorize operations next Wednesday. xxxx*

Blair: I agree with that.

Clinton: I told Chirac I would talk to him on Tuesday after the UN report is released. Our guys can lead this economic thing, we can say we want a short-term solution and a long-term structural solution that will help.

Blair: What do you think about a summit of some sort at some stage?

Clinton: I am in favour of it. If we can get anything like remote consensus, I think we should do it by the end of the year and before the final report toward the end of October.

6 October, 1998, 9:44 - 10:05 a.m. Oval Office...

Blair: Hello Bill.

Clinton: Hey Tony how are you?

Blair: I'm fine. I'm in China.

Clinton: Are you having a good time? Is it hot there?

Blair: It was until we got here, but we brought some British weather with us.

Clinton: I just wanted to check in with you on Kosovo. Yeltsin called me yesterday, as he called you, to say Milosevic got the OSCE to come in and now everything is going to be all right. I think it would be a real mistake for us to take the pressure off now. Kofi's report is going to be filed today and it is a graphic account of Milosevic's continued defiance of the UN and the International Community. I believe we have to maintain momentum and keep building a consensus for the NATO decision to authorize force. Dick Holbrooke is there and is still meeting either in Belgrade or Pristina. Fighting has been in a lull for the past few days, but Milosevic hasn't withdrawn or agreed to measures that would make the end of hostilities verifiable or durable. I would like to find some way to get the Russians on into a veto. We can't force Yeltsin. We have got to tell Yeltsin, look, if you are right and we are wrong then Milosevic will be in full compliance. If he lied to you

one more time, then we are going to do it. This is an issue that to me seems to be a real mistake to let pressure up now.

Let me mention one other thing. [xxxx*]. That may be necessary but it is a terrible time for me to deal with it with this Congress of mine. They are always willing to give more money to the military and then do not want to do anything with it. There is a really strong block in the Republican party that wants to do that and I have worked to get them to continue to support SFOR in Bosnia. And we really do have a readiness problem. Keep in mind this is the same group that took eight months to approve IMF funding. If we have to do this publicly, it will be a real problem for me. I don't want to do anything to undermine my ability or encourage them to try some eleventh-hour measure to stop these air strikes. They will be gone in a week.

Blair: I totally understand that Bill. On the first point I am in complete agreement. xxxx*

Clinton: I completely agree with that. I am just saying injecting that now into the public debate would be a problem. It also might create problems with some other NATO allies and get them to vote against it and we don't want to complicate our business with NATO.

[Conversation continues on other matters].

Clinton: Back on Kosovo, we will be in touch with the French. If the Contact Group meets Thursday we have to go forward with the activation order no matter what the Russians say. We will tell them we won't have to do this if your deal works. This guy, all he understands is pressure and he lied before, and pressure will increase the chances that the deal will work.

Blair: I agree Bill, I'll talk to you in a couple of days.

Clinton: Okay, goodbye.

13 Oct 1998 NATO approves an "activation order" (ACTORD) authorizing a limited bombing campaign if Milosevic does not withdraw security forces from Kosovo within four days.

13 Oct 1998 After more than a week of negotiations, Holbrooke secures the "October Agreement," calling for Serbian compliance with UN Resolution 1199. The agreement consists of troop withdrawals, allowing refugees to return and international ground verification team of 2,000. The Serbian government also releases a "unilateral statement" outlining a political framework and timetable for establishing autonomy for Kosovo and free elections within nine months. NATO

temporarily suspends - but does not rescind - its activation order to allow for Serbian compliance.

14 October, 1998, 2:38 - 2:58 p.m. Oval Office...

Clinton: I just cannot thank you enough for the strength you showed on Kosovo. It was fascinating to watch that North Atlantic Council meeting unfold, compared to where we were three months ago. They all acted as if they were disappointed Milosevic caved. I told my folks here that it bore some of the similarities to Bosnia, where we worked for two years to get everybody off the dime. But it happened a lot quicker, in no small measure because we were in lockstep from the get-go. Parenthetically, we have to do the same on this global financial thing; maybe we can talk about it in the next few days. It was amazing to see how that happened. Here is where our next problem in Kosovo is. I think right now we are in a position where we passed the ACTORD - this action order - and are suspending it as we see if he complies. xxxx*

And as soon as that happens, he'll start cheating, but they'll argue it's not enough. We really need to carefully coordinate our positions to keep maximum pressure on him so we don't have to take military action. We don't want to look weak three months from now. It looks so good right now, just the right thing being done in the right way. We really, really need to coordinate our positions; I'm convinced we can avoid military action if it is always hanging there. But it would take 3-4 months to try to get everybody where they were. And all the forces of the last 3 months will reassert themselves. Milosevic will cheat a little here and there and undermine the integrity of this thing. That is my only sort of yellow caution light, but otherwise it's terrific. It's good to have some good news. [xxxx*] We have to figure out a posture. Some guys will say you can't keep granting 96-hour extensions, and then they will say we ought to say, okay, let's go to one-week extensions, two-week extensions. The point is, we don't want to let them put us in a position where we have to do this all over again. The minute we do that, he will start cheating.

15 Oct NATO Secretary General says that 4,000-5000 Serbian forces need to be withdrawn from Kosovo to achieve full compliance with the October agreement.

16 Oct 1998. Milosevic agrees to allow unarmed cease-fire monitors - the Kosovo Verification Mission - into Kosovo. NATO extends activation order deadline until 27 October. Over 400 NATO aircraft remain on stand-by for air operations.

24 Oct 1998. General Wesley Clark and Gen. Klaus Nauman travel to Belgrade where Milosevic agrees to reduce his forces in Kosovo. The following conversation is reconstructed using quotes from an interview with Wesley Clark:

Clark: "Mr. President, you're going to withdraw your forces that don't belong here, aren't you?"

Milosevic: "There are no such forces."

Clark: "Have you ever heard of the 211th Armor Brigade?"

Milosevic: "No, I have not."

Momčilo Perišić: "Oh, yes, that's in there, in Serbia."

Milosevic: "Okay, we have such a unit. It will be withdrawn. "

Clark: "Mr. President, you have to understand that NATO is very serious. You have to pull out the excess forces. If you don't, there's an activation order. And if they tell me to bomb you, I'm going to bomb you good."

Milosevic: "Well, General Clark, NATO must do what . . ."

Clark: "Come on, Mr. President, you don't want to get bombed by NATO. You tell your generals to cooperate. You figure out a way to get those forces out of here. You're going to have to pull out the extra police, pull them out. It's your problem. You signed up, you agreed to do this, and you pull them out."

Milosevic: "We know how to handle these murderers, these rapists, these bandits. We've done this before, in Drenica in 1946."

Clark: "What did you do?"

Milosevic: "We killed them all, although it took several years, we killed them all."

Clark: "Mr. President, we're not even talking about the Albanians here. We're talking about your obligations to NATO."

25 October, 1998, 2:14 -2:42 p.m. San Francisco, California...

Clinton: Okay, let's talk about Kosovo briefly and then go back to finances. What is your sense of where we are on Kosovo?

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: I got it. Last night Wes Clark literally stayed up all night working on him. Milosevic agreed to a specific set of things that most reasonable people would

conclude if he did between now and the day of the ACTORD, the 27th, he would be in compliance. The one thing that is most important is that nothing we and the French say between now and then should look like anything other than that we are prepared to put the planes in the air. We are on the same wavelength. I think that he will do enough to comply for us all to agree that he's done what he has to do. In the last several days, he has done a lot of things to comply but also some backsliding. We just have to hang in there.

Blair: I agree absolutely. We are at one with that.

Clinton: That is good enough right now. I don't want to give him mixed messages. Based on his meeting last night with Wes, he will stick on compliance enough that we will not have to use violence, but only if he thinks we are prepared to do it.

27 Oct 1998. In what appears to be a vindication of NATO's strategy, Serbia withdraws thousands of security forces from Kosovo. In view of Belgrade's "substantial compliance" NATO suspends its immediate threat. Thousands of Kosovar Albanians begin to descend from the hills as winter threatens.

November and December 1998, Clashes Continue

11 Nov 1998. American Ambassador William Walker deploys to Kosovo to take charge of a 200-person verification team for the Organisation for Peace and Security in Europe (OSCE). Simultaneously Milosevic blocks the entry of UN war crimes investigators.

13 November 1998. UNHCR estimates 100,000 persons remain internally displaced while 135,000 Albanians in other countries.

20 November 1998. Madeline Albright tells a press conference that both sides continue to violate the cease-fire.

01 December 1998. U.S. State Department spokesman Jamie Rubin pronounces that Yugoslav President Milosevic was "not simply part of the problem," but rather was "the problem."

12 December 1998. 12 people killed in clashes, marking the worst deterioration of cease-fire to date.

14 December 1998. The Yugoslav army ambushes a group of KLA attempting to smuggle weapons and supplies from Albania into Kosovo. A five-hour battle ensues, ending with the deaths of 30 KLA and the capture of nine. In a separate incident Albanian gun men kill six Serbs in a bar in Peja.

17 December 1998. The Serbian Deputy Major of Kosovo Zvonko Bojanic is kidnapped and executed in a village near Prishtina.

24 December 1998. Serbian tanks attack an Albanian stronghold near Podujevo; fighting continues in the area well into the New Year.

January 1999, Massacre

15 Jan 1998. Serb security forces kill 45 Kosovo Albanians in what becomes infamously known as the Racak Massacre. Kosovo Verification Monitor Director William Walker arrives on scene the following day. Shaken by what he has seen he forcefully blames Serbian forces in front of television cameras. OSCE observers suspect the attack was in retaliation for the death of a Serbian policeman. Milosevic refuses to allow war crimes prosecutor Judge Louise Arbour to visit Racak.

19 Jan 1998 Gen. Wesley Clark and Gen. Klaus Naumann meet with Milosevic in Serbia for what turns out to be a tense seven-hour meeting. The following conversation is reconstructed using quotes from a later interview with Wesley Clark:

Naumann: "Let's talk about the massacre."

Milosevic: "It's not a massacre. Our people would not do such a thing."

Naumann: "Very good. And how do you know this?"

Milosevic: "We just know this. We're having an investigation, which will show that our people didn't do this." ... "But the investigation is only being done because this is in accordance with Serbian law. We already know what the answer is."

Clark: "I am very glad that none of us are involved in that investigation, if you've already determined what the outcome is going to be. Will Louise Arbour be allowed to go down and look at the site of the massacre?"

Milosevic: "Yes, if you speak to the minister of justice; Now, what's the name of our minister of justice?"

Clark: "Mr. President, let's be honest with each other. You're not going to let her come in there and do an investigation. You're not going to let her really see what happened. So, if you're not going to do that, why are we going through this charade? Just let her come in, or tell us she's not going to be allowed to do it."

Milosevic: "She will not be allowed to do it."

Clark: "You told Dick Holbrooke that Kosovo's 'more important than your neck.' What do you mean by that?"

Milosevic: "I said Kosovo's more important than my head." [continues on the theme of Kosovo is the cradle of Serbian civilization]

21 Jan, 1999 2:26-2:53 pm. Oval Office...

Blair: Hi Bill. Kosovo. xxxx*

Clinton: I completely agree with you on that. Obviously, we have to do something and be prepared to take some action and be determined not to let him undermine the KVM and work over Walker. I don't want to be slow of indecisive. I will try to get Congress to go along with me and not stop it. Domestic politics aside, my problem about ground forces is that if we send them in without some type of agreement beforehand - it doesn't have to be as detailed as Dayton. I really think we have to do something, but I know if we do military action without a political plan we will have a problem. This is likely to be one of those things where we can't see completely to the end. We have to keep working on it. We are in a much different situation than we were legally and politically in Bosnia because the world has said these people deserve autonomy but not independence. I don't want to get into a pickle, but now that 45 people have been slaughtered and Milosevic is trying to throw the KVM out, we don't have any choice but to do something. One thing is to go to them and say, "Look, if you want us to do any more you have to help, too. They probably have as many violations of cease-fires as Milosevic, though his are more egregious. For a long-term resolution you have to come to the table too, you can't have it both ways, and you never take any responsibility.

Blair: It's important we do that.

Clinton: They may ignore it but we have to try.

Blair: If we do that in a really concerted way, we may get somewhere. I think it very important we do that, xxxx*

Clinton: That makes a lot more sense. It is a very difficult problem and I don't pretend to have all the answers. We have to be careful not to be weak and move decisively with NATO now, knowing it won't solve the problem without a political resolution. [xxxx*] I would be in an impossible position. I may not be able to sell time with Congress, but I certainly can't do it unless there is an appropriate environment. I think we have to keep working and go full speed ahead with NATO.



Bolshoi theatre (top). Madeline Albright (bottom). Photos: Wiki

26 January, 1999, Evening: The Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, watching La Traviata.

[Recalled in Albright Memoir]

Albright: “Look, Igor, I'll tell it to you straight. If Kosovo explodes, we'll face huge obstacles in working together on a whole range of issues. We can't let that happen. There has to be a political settlement. But the Albanians won't lay down their arms unless NATO is there to protect them. And Milošević will never allow NATO in unless we threaten force. The Europeans are worried about your reaction if NATO tries to act without going to the Security Council, but I can't entrust this to the council, because Milošević knows you will veto force, which means our threats won't be credible, which means there will be no political settlement, which means war in Kosovo. This is a real Catch-22.”

Ivanov: “Madeleine, if you do not mind, what exactly is a 'Catch-22'?” [Albright explains]

Albright: “Igor, this is serious. I need be able to tell the Europeans that NATO can threaten force in order to get a political settlement and that you will find a way to live with this.”

Ivanov: “Russia will never agree to air strikes against the Serbs. That would be totally unacceptable. NATO has no right to attack a sovereign state. We do, however, share your desire for a political settlement, and perhaps the threat of force is needed to achieve that. I do not see why we cannot try to work together.”

29 Jan 1999, London. Contact Group foreign ministers issue an ultimatum to Kosovo Albanians and Serbs, calling them to begin peace talks in France at Rambouillet on Feb. 6.

February 1999, Going Bananas

4 February, 1999, 2:13-2:30 p.m. Oval Office...

Clinton: My staff won't let me talk to you unless I have a banana at hand. I'm sitting here with a banana; it's a big, ugly, brownish one.

Blair: Now Bill, I thought we should have a word about Kosovo.

Clinton: Yes. Let me tell you, the Prime Ministers of both Macedonia and Albania were here today and they make us look like old men. They are 31 and 33 years old. xxxx*

Blair: I think Robin and Madeleine did a really good job and we got a plan. The parties are coming on Saturday and the KLA are involved, as well. That is all good. xxxx*

Clinton: First of all, I agree with everything you say about maintaining pressure on Belgrade and the Kosovars on the interim settlement. I'm encouraged by Saturday's talks. There is no other way it works over the long run unless we can get a peace agreement and troops on the ground. xxxx*

It is a hard sell in Congress. They still lecture me on Bosnia and how we didn't pay for it in advance. I tell them Bosnia is a great success story and they ought to be proud of it and keep it going, and not let it be wiped out. I gather there is a general feeling that a lot of European countries are willing to make troop contributions. That will help me to get Congress to support participation. You know I always want to be part of these things.

I just gave a speech today. I basically said we were considering our participation and talking to Congress about it. I will make the strongest case I can, but our system is that they have to come up with money for it. The more European countries that are willing to participate and the greater extent, the better luck I will have with the Republican Congress.

Ironically, all the business with me might help us get something done here. I think the announcement of substantial British participation, which I gather is your decision, will help us a lot. I want to help and I made my first big public pitch today. We will work with Congress and stay in close touch. Our military people are in contact and are simultaneously designing this concerning who contributes what. I will do the best that I can. I wish I could give you a number now, but I don't know what level yet. I am working it and I'll do the best I can.

Blair: Well, Bill, that is great.

Clinton: Great. Let me say, there's one other thing that would help me. If you put out that we talked, say that we have this under active consideration. That is what I just said publicly. If you could not say that I have made a definite decision. Because the Congress is Republican, at every public hearing we have, they start moping and saying that I expect them to fall in line afterward because they never refuse to support the troops. If you could say I haven't made a decision, that would give me another day to massage the congressional psyche and break it loose here.

Blair: Don't worry, that is absolutely fine. That is very good indeed. Thanks, as ever.

6 February, 1999. Rambouillet peace talks begin in a French Chateau near Paris without Milosevic's attendance.

19 February, 1999, 10:59 a.m. - 11:24 a.m. Oval Office...

[Abridged and redacted]

Blair: Chirac is with you today?

Clinton: He is here and I will meet with him in a few minutes.

Blair: You had Schroeder there, didn't you? What was he like?

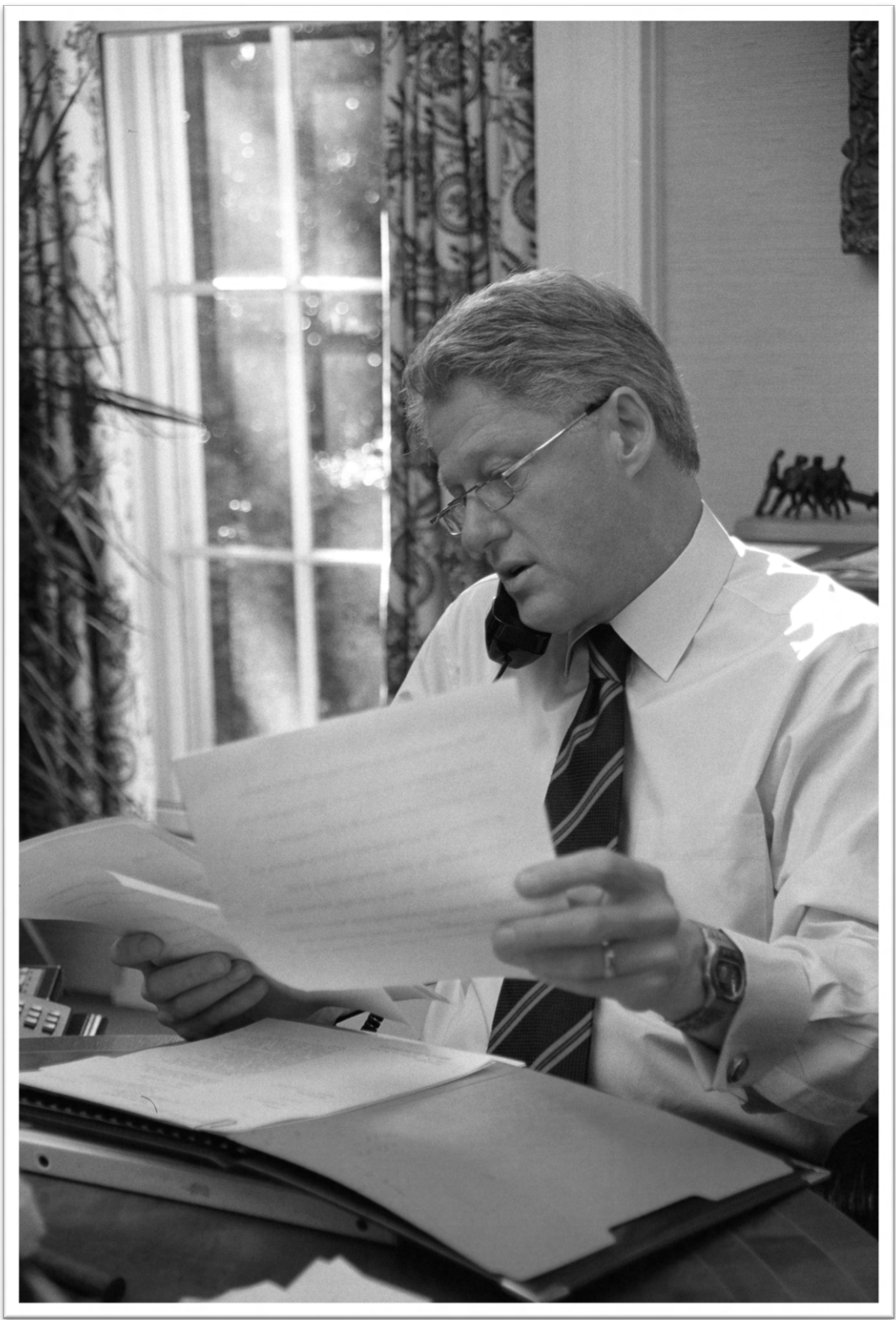
Clinton: xxxx*

Clinton: I agree with that. That is good. I think we are doing alright on getting the enabling force together. I don't know if Milosevic is playing brinkmanship or not. He seems to believe he loses Serbia if he lets NATO in there.

Blair: Yeah xxxx*

Clinton: Let me ask you a couple of questions. What is your sense on the Kosovo Verification Mission? I know the EU is interested in a new structure. [xxxx*]. I think that can be accomplished by the OSCE maintaining the lead with civilian implementation. I like the idea that the Europeans have been so forthcoming, and I want to be supportive, but I don't want to screw it up.

20 Feb 1999. Madeleine Albright arrives in France for the last days of scheduled talks and attempts to salvage negotiations. The Albanian delegation continue to refuse to sign the agreement.



13 Feb 1999. Clinton on phone regarding Kosovo in the Oval Office Dining Room. Photo: Clinton Library

March 1999, Rambouillet

4 March, 1999, 4:40 - 5:04 p.m. Oval Office...

Clinton: I think we have a chance to get the Kosovars to all right on the Kosovo agreement.

Blair: Really?

Clinton: Yes.

Blair: That would be great.

Clinton: Bob Dole went over there today for me. He's been a champion of theirs. I'd say we have a pretty good chance. I'm worried about the possibility of the Kosovars saying yes, Milosevic saying no, and NATO will blink. I'm really worried. We need to suck it up. You and I may have to do another round of calls.

10 Mar 1999. Holbrooke and Hill meet with Milosevic to urge him to accept the NATO settlement.

14 March 1999, 1:55-2:12 p.m. The Residence...

Clinton: Good. I think that we are in sync on the other two matters. I won a big vote in Congress on Kosovo. I think it's interesting because when the Republicans pushed for it, they didn't think I would win it. Our guys worked very hard on it and won a big vote with explicit authorization to deploy, consistent with the conditions I've stated. I feel good about it. But I don't think there is any way that Milosevic will take this deal. But we believe the Kosovars will take it and then we will be right back.

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: If the Kosovars say yes, and they have been difficult, we may even get Milosevic to the point where he will say yes - if we stay tough and if we are prepared to use force. But if not, he will jerk us around.

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: Yeah, I will do that. Do you want me to buy a cashmere sweater from him with duties?

Blair: You don't have to do that or give him bananas.

The President: I wish we could get this resolved before your elections, you know.

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: We got a really rough column that said this is not what the new world order was meant to be. Kosovo goes to hell, and we have a war over this.

Blair: Do shake hands with him.

15 March Rambouillet, Paris. In a tete a tete conversation with Thaci Albright underlines the choice facing the Albanian delegation: "If you sign and the Serbs don't we will bomb. If you don't sign our hands are tied."

18 March 1999, Rambouillet, Paris.

Following three weeks of talks the deadline for signing approaches. Under high stakes 'take it or leave it' pressure the Kosovo Albanian delegates finally cave in and sign the agreement. Madeline Albright accepts a letter stating that the will of the people will be tested in a referendum on a final settlement for Kosovo in three years time. Serbs refuse to sign, and begin "winter live fire" exercises in Kosovo the next day.

19 March 1999, In light of the failure of peace talks and the massing of Serb troops on Kosovo's border, Clinton meets with his foreign policy team to review NATO plans & strategy.

21 March 1999, 12:50.- 1:12 p.m. The Residence...

[Abridged and redacted]

Clinton: Can we talk Kosovo? Milosevic has agreed to meet Holbrooke. He will go over there tomorrow and tell him he will bear the full responsibility for consequences for NATO military action unless he does what he is told to do. I got reports this morning of one village of 13,000 people that has been completely evacuated. [xxxx*]. Primakov is supposed to come here next week, and I need to give him a heads-up, so if he wants to cancel, he can.

I had a meeting with a lot of members of congress and several Republicans said that it sounds bad - if he were out there practicing ethnic cleansing again we would support it [strikes], but if we take the initiative and he moves against the people it will look like we caused it.

Clinton: I agree with that. Let me ask you this. How are the Tories reacting at home? Are they supporting you?

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: Our right-wing isolationists certainly would if they thought they could get public opinion on their side and since they have the parliamentary majority, they would cause a problem. The Republicans fluctuate between isolationism and unilateral action. They want the biggest possible military and want to spend money on only the military and concrete, but never want to use it on anything. I think that in the near term I am in need of a stronger presentational argument than you are. I am hoping that it will be fine, I couldn't agree more that we need to get a strong presentation. If the others are going with us, we need Chirac and Schroeder saying the same thing. I will call them when I get off the phone with you. I understand they are even chiding us a little bit about whether we are moving quickly enough.

22 March 1999. In a last-ditch effort to avoid airstrikes, Holbrooke is sent to Serbia, via Brussels, to deliver a final ultimatum. The meeting fails to draw any concessions from an embittered Milosevic. Clinton writes an address to the American Public; his handwritten notes begin:

“This week I made the hardest decision a President can make. I sent our men and women in uniform into combat, alongside NATO allies, to bring peace to Kosovo. No President enjoys sending our troops into harm's way. But after long and careful reflection, I agreed with the other NATO leaders that this was the only way left to salvage peace in a war-torn corner of Europe.”

order no p. lts to. One comhead -

why?

1) moral humanitarian history
2) in US interests ← peace agreement

on goal: lasting peace

centering on the Balkans. No wars.

But we're leeches from long experience that in the B., a small spark can set off a major explosion.

Falsehood. That happens on & again this past century. It will not happen this time.

That's history. But we know I have devoted a great deal of time to making peace. War is
abhorrent to me, as it is to all Americans. But sometimes you have to fight to end
in order to end fighting.

Waging peace. Humans have natural distrust... also anxiety

This week I made the hardest decision a P can make. I sent on men
+ women in uniform into what, alongside our N. allies, to bring peace to
Kosovo. No President enjoys sending on troops into harm's way. But
after long and careful reflection, I agreed with the other NATO leaders
that this was the only way left to salvage peace in a
war-torn corner of Europe.

IP @ returning safely.

Some argue that the K crisis has its origin deep in history, but the
current problems only began a decade ago, when SFR ~~shattered~~ away
in 1989, as other Europeans were ~~enjoying~~ fastening freedom for the first
time, & Serbia went in the opposite direction. Under the govt of SFR,
it took away the rights of ~~the~~ most people in Kosovo - a province
of Serbia that is overwhelmingly populated by ethnic Albanians.
Milosevic distorted history and inflamed ethnic tensions throughout
the Balkans. He launched a bloody war in B. & C, and he was only
stopped then by firm and resolute N. intervention.

Today the pattern is the same. Serb troops have brutally attacked
innocent civilians in Kosovo, pursuing ^{aimed} violent counterattacks, and
~~murdering~~ ^{killing} ~~into~~ ^{thoroughly} all of SFR. ~~into~~ ^{into} ~~just~~ ^{just} close to a vicious
precipice. That is why the US, along with our allies and R,
strongly supported the peace agreement proposed in France last
month. It was fair and balanced, favoring neither the Serbs nor Kosovans,
and creating a framework to ~~keep~~ ^{preserve} the rights of all
K within Serbia, and to pursue

March 23, 1999, 5:11-5:22 p.m. The Oval Office...

Blair: I'm fine. I'm in Berlin.

Clinton: I know, Gerhard just told me you were there. Holbrooke is on his way back. Milosevic stiffed him. He wouldn't agree to a cease-fire. He was belligerent and it seems to me he's strongly poised to unleash greater violence in Kosovo. I want to talk about two things: first, Primakov has postponed his visit to Washington. I think that's the best outcome given the circumstances. Maybe you can call him in the next day or two and tell him you understand why he didn't come to Washington. [Substantial redactions between the two leaders]

24 March 1999. Combined Air Operations, Vicenza Air Base, Italy.

*The USAF squadron commander declares: "Boys, were going to war!"
In a darkened room full of computer screens mapping aircraft movements, US General Short clenches his jaw and keeps his silence: the Kosovo air war begins.*

The NATO plan has three phases: phase one strikes at antiaircraft defences and command bunkers. Phase two extends strikes to Yugoslavia's infrastructure south of Belgrade and phase three is set to his targets in Belgrade itself. Due to the realities of execution and true to the motto: 'no plan survives first contact with the enemy,' commanders dip into phase three targets earlier. Officials hope for a quick resolution, but Wesley Clark estimates only a 40% chance of Milosevic conceding. To signal Russia's displeasure of the bombing, Prime Minister Primakov cancels a trip to Washington in mid-flight.

In a televised address from the White House Clinton rules out the use of ground troops:

Clinton: My fellow Americans, today our Armed Forces joined our NATO allies in airstrikes against Serbian forces responsible for the brutality in Kosovo. We have acted with resolve for several reasons. We act to protect thousands of innocent people in Kosovo from a mounting military offensive. We act to prevent a wider war, to diffuse a powder keg at the heart of Europe that has exploded twice before in this century with catastrophic results. And we act to stand united with our allies for peace. By acting now, we are upholding our values, protecting our interests, and advancing the cause of peace.

Tonight, I want to speak to you about the tragedy in Kosovo and why it matters to America that we work with our allies to end it. First, let me explain what it is we are responding to. Kosovo is a province of Serbia, in the middle of south-eastern Europe, about 160 miles east of Italy. That's less than the distance between Washington and New York and only about 70 miles north of Greece. Its people are mostly ethnic Albanian and mostly Muslim. In 1989 Serbia's leader, Slobodan

Milosevic, the same leader who started the wars in Bosnia and Croatia and moved against Slovenia in the last decade, stripped Kosovo of the constitutional autonomy its people enjoyed, thus denying them their right to speak their language, run their schools, shape their daily lives. For years, Kosovars struggled peacefully to get their rights back. When President Milosevic sent his troops and police to crush them, the struggle grew violent...[Abridged]...It is this challenge that we and our allies are facing in Kosovo. That is why we have acted now—because we care about saving innocent lives; because we have an interest in avoiding an even crueller and costlier war; and because our children need and deserve a peaceful, stable, free Europe.

Our thoughts and prayers tonight must be with the men and women of our Armed Forces who are undertaking this mission for the sake of our values and our children's future. May God bless them, and may God bless America.

24 March, 1999, 9:20-9:56 a.m. Oval Office. Clinton-Yeltsin conversation...

Clinton: Hello, Boris.

Yeltsin: Yes, hello Bill.

Clinton: Thank you for taking my call. I want to talk to you today about the situation in Serbia and Kosovo. I know you are aware already that Jacques Chirac, Tony Blair, Gerhard Schroeder and the rest of the Europeans have decided we have to launch airstrikes against military targets in Serbia soon. My people have kept in very close touch with yours for many days now and have tried to talk openly about how the situation is developing and what we would be required to do. But as you know, Milosevic has stonewalled your negotiator and Dick Holbrooke, and he has continued to move his forces into Kosovo and to evacuate villages. He has left us no choice. I know that you oppose what we are doing, but I want you to know that I am determined to do whatever I can to keep our disagreement on this from ruining everything else we have done and can do together in the coming years.

Yeltsin: I'm afraid we shall not succeed in that. If you do that [unintelligible] our side very much. Because what was needed to have begun were political discussions again and again and again, instead of bombing and destroying people. Primakov is only the first step...[unintelligible]. We have many steps to aim against your decision, maybe inadmissible steps.

Clinton: Let me just say this, Boris. I did everything I could do along with you to try to negotiate with Milosevic. He made an agreement last Fall and ended the trouble for a while, and then he unilaterally violated the agreement. In violation of the agreement he made with us, he has massed 40,000 troops in Kosovo around the border and nearly 300 tanks, and he is running people out of their villages again. He won't even stop the violence, and this means he is going to recreate Bosnia all over again, and we're supposed to sit around and say that this is terribly unfortunate.

Basically, it will be your decision if you decide to let this bully destroy the relationship we worked hard for six and a half years to build up.

I have always been there for you, working hard with my people to support Russia economically. I came there last Fall. I was there in 1996 when a lot of people said I shouldn't go. I decided to let this get in the way of our relationship, but I'm not going to because I do not think he is that important. I won't sit still while Europe is pleading with me to help them avoid another Bosnia.

He made 2.5 million refugees there, and there are another 250,000 from Kosovo, and I'm not going to let him make another 2 million and impose those kind of burdens. I'm sorry he is a Serb. I wish he were Irish or something else, but he is not. He has constantly refused every plea to stop his aggression. It is not important enough for us to allow him to wreck the relationship between the U.S. and Russia and all the European support. It is not worth it.

He has displaced 30,000 more people just since last Friday. He is killing innocent people. We have reports of summary executions. He has basically told Russian, EU, and American negotiators that he doesn't care what any of us think. If we don't do something, we are going to have another Bosnia all over again. We had a peace agreement at Rambouillet. No one wanted to take his land, his property away, but he wants to crush them militarily. I think we have to do something about it, but I do not believe it should get in the way of bigger issues of trying to make Russia stronger economically, politically, securing its role in the world in a positive way, and both of us reducing our nuclear arsenals. That's a lot more important than Milosevic. But if we let him destabilize the Balkans, that is all we will do for the next two years. 687

Yeltsin: Yes, Bill, it is a great pity for me. We have been for so long working in each other's direction. We have done a great deal. I have reached agreement with the State Duma with regards to START II, and on the sixth of April, they were supposed to ratify that Treaty. This time around that will not happen, of course, under the circumstances. It is easy to throw bombs about. However, the long-term political search for a constructive solution to the situation, that's a different thing. But this is the only correct approach, the only correct way. If we pool our strengths together, we could turn Milosevic around. Their parliament made some appropriate decisions yesterday.

Clinton: Well, let me just say this, I believe we should not give up on diplomacy. After what

Yeltsin: Of course, we are going to talk to each other, you and me. But there will not be such a great drive and such friendship that we had before. That will not be there again.

Clinton: But the problem is, Boris, if you remember going back to Bosnia, remember what happened in Bosnia. After threatening a few airstrikes and him losing a few battles on the ground to the Croatian forces, and a few other things happened, then he was willing to talk about diplomacy. But right now, he is only too happy to have people come in and talk to him because he continues his invasion in violation of his own constitution and his own agreement.

How can you negotiate with someone while he's evacuating villages and has no intention of stopping, but he is happy to have you in for a talk and give you a cup of tea while he does it? That is why the Europeans feel even more strongly than the U.S. does. My God, they have nightmares they'll repeat Bosnia and all the instability and all the problems, and it will spread from Kosovo to Macedonia to Albania and engulf all of their southern flank. They are very, very worried about it. They are right to be worried about it. I think we should take this first round of action and then engage in diplomacy again. Then maybe Milosevic will listen.

Yeltsin: But this is an intolerable situation when something is done because of the position of one person. It is intolerable because of the hundreds of thousands of people who will suffer and die. We cannot be guided only because of his words, we should not proceed only from his position and actions. He should be surrounded by the people who will encourage the situation in the correct direction so that it would become intolerable for Milosevic to behave the way that he has until now. Foreign intelligence [services] should also play a part in that process.

Clinton: If I thought that were true, that would be wonderful, but the truth is he has dislocated 25,000-30,000 people since last week.

Yeltsin: In the name of our future, in the name of you and me, in the name of the future of our countries, in the name of security in Europe, I ask you to renounce that strike, and I suggest that we should meet somewhere and develop a tactical line of fighting against Milosevic, against him personally. And we are wiser, we are more experienced, we can come up with a solution. That should be done for the sake of our relationship. That should be done for the sake of peace in Europe. It is not known who will come after us and it is not known what will be the road of future developments in strategic nuclear weapons. It is known, however, what will be when we are in power because we have taken the decision to decrease them, decrease them, decrease them.

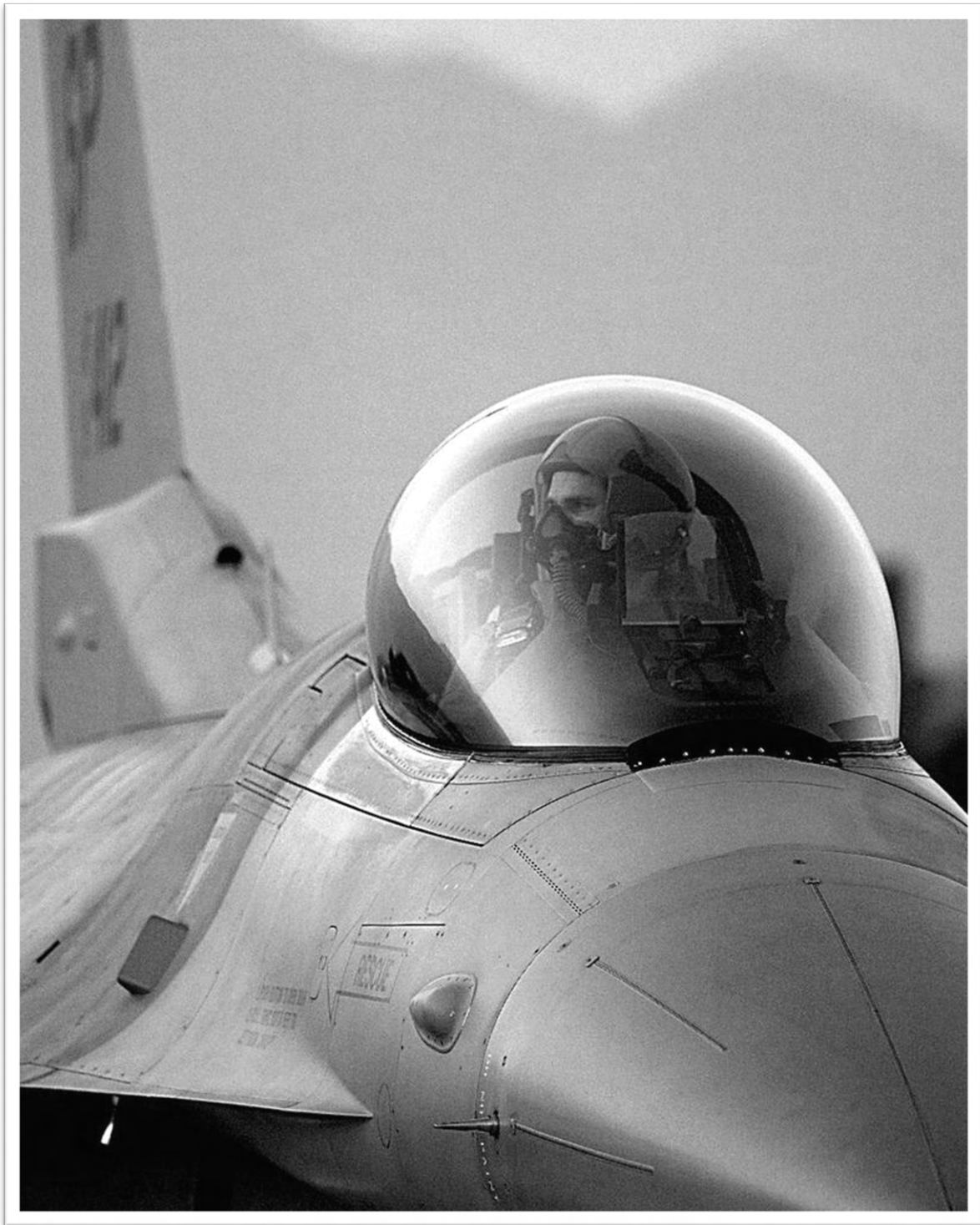
Clinton: Well, Boris, I want to work with you to try to bring an end to this, but I don't believe there is any way to call off the first round of strikes because Milosevic continues to displace thousands of people every day. I think we can get some of our people together in the next couple of days to try to dissuade him. I don't want this to be a great source of a split between Russia and Europe and Russia and the U.S. We have worked too hard. There are too many economic and political things for us to do together, and I regret this more than I can say.

I could not believe after we got this agreement from the Kosovar Albanians that he not only refused to sign the agreement, but moved into their territory, but that is what has happened. What has to be done in the next day or so is clear. I hope we can stay in touch and find a diplomatic solution. I think you know what has to be done to find a diplomatic solution. Maybe after a first round of airstrikes, he will be ready to give diplomacy a chance. Madeleine is ready to go back to work with Ivanov, back to the Contact Group. We should think several moves ahead, almost as if we are playing a chess game. This would be the time to come together to resolve this, but I can't go against the unified opinion of the Europeans, as well as my own view, that this man is not going to stop his military advance unless someone does something. Milosevic is still a communist dictator and he would like to destroy the alliance that Russia has built up with the U.S. and Europe and essentially destroy the whole movement of your region toward democracy and go back to ethnic alliances. We cannot allow him to dictate our future.

I know this is a political problem for you at home, and I will do everything I can to put it right and restart the diplomacy at any point in this. I'd give anything not to have to make this telephone call today, but we have no choice. I hope between the two of us we will not let it destroy all the bigger issues before us and the world.

Yeltsin: I think that now we should try and seek at least some ways in order to retain, to save, some of what we have managed to develop during these years. But our people will certainly from now have a bad attitude with regard to America and with NATO. I remember how difficult it was for me to try and turn the heads of our people, the heads of the politicians towards the West, towards the United States, but I succeeded in doing that, and now to lose all that. Well, since I failed to convince the President, that means there is in store for us a very difficult, difficult road of contacts, if they prove to be possible. Goodbye.

31 March 1999. Systematic expulsions continue to intensify. Serbian police board hundreds of residents of Prishtina onto trains heading towards the Macedonian border. UNHCR estimated that, since March 24, over 100,000 persons from Kosovo had fled the province into the neighbouring states. From March 1998 and through March 1999, it estimated that well over 500,000 persons became displaced by the Kosovo conflict.



March 31, 1999, The Pilot of a U.S. Air Force F-16 prepares to take off from Aviano Air Base, Italy, on a mission against targets in the Serbia. Photo: Jeffery Allen USAF.

April 1999, Bombs Away

1 April 1999. Serbian television broadcasts images of three US soldiers taken while on patrol in Macedonia, feeding fears about the use of ground troops.

3 April 1999. Central Belgrade is hit by NATO missiles for first time. Air commanders bomb the massive seven story Serbian Interior Ministry as they seek to make clear their determination to "go after the head of the snake" in Serbia. Chirac requests an urgent phone call with Clinton to request that the French are kept closer in the loop with regards to targeting positions.

5 April 1999, 1:50 - 2:11 p.m. Oval Office...

[Abridged with substantial redactions]

Clinton: I agree. You can be sure all these offers he makes will not meet that standard. More and more of the Europeans are of the mind that we may have some definitional problems down the road. I'd like to talk about two things that are related. One is the refugee issue. It seems to me we are doing a little bit better, with NATO taking the lead organizing with Macedonia and Albania. But we have got to do more and quickly in finding places to resettle them and the conditions of their return. Different countries have different conditions, camps. I don't know, but I know we have to create a release valve to take the pressure off Albania and Macedonia. We're increasing economic assistance to countries bearing the greatest burden. I hope we can get as many concrete offers from others as we can, but the most important thing is to get those offers out now. We don't want Albania and Macedonia to close their borders and cause a worse situation. The other thing I wanted to mention is I am quite concerned about Russia's growing involvement. We have to make it clear we understand this is a political problem for them, and we don't mind them jumping on us, but they shouldn't have military support that will put our pilots and our forces at risk. We can't act as if there are no consequences to that. Another issue that we're trying to work on is that surrounding countries need to thoroughly inspect all the Russian shipments going into Kosovo to make sure they are not violating the arms embargo. I am concerned about that. I think the military situation is in pretty good shape. This is an open line we have to be careful what we say. You and I have discussed this before. xxxx*

The problem we are having here is whether we're talking people in Guantanamo or the continental United States, then they like it and say they don't want to home. Will they go home once they have seen London?

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: I understand the problem. On the other hand, we have to take enough pressure off Macedonia and Albania so they don't close the borders to keep their countries from coming apart. Talk to your folks. On one level, I'd like to take 100 thousand and put them in America tomorrow and run the risk of saying people don't want to go home. On another level I don't want any. They might like it here and not want to leave. We have a ways to go. People can say to us you don't have a clear strategy, but we have had clear goals, but you have got to have the proper mix of long-term goals and enough flexibility to deal with day-to-day realities. Getting our presentation, a little better has helped some, with the clearing of the weather, the targeting process being worked out. I thought your memo was terrific, by the way.

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: Absolutely. We've got that here. They would be calling people traitors, now they all join in. Everybody is a Monday morning quarterback. The right is saying you should have ground forces in there. Some people think I'm on the receiving end of a Trojan horse, that it's a deliberate set-up. But we have to take it as it comes and be determined we will not be defeated, that we will run this strategy out. But under no circumstances are we going to be defeated. If you tell me that, and I tell you that, and we hold hands.

8 April 1999. German Defence Minister Rudolf Scharping publicizes the existence of a document several pages long detailing the Serbian "Potkova" (Horseshoe) Operation - allegedly a detailed plan to expel ethnic Albanians months in the making.

10 April 1999, 1:31 - 1:30 p.m. The Residence...

[Abridged and redacted]

Clinton: OK, on Kosovo, just want to check in and reconnoitre where we are. We had greater military impact with the air actions. I think if we could do a couple more weeks, I think that we could really have it. The G-8 statement is good. Have you received the report on the G-8 ministers? We are hoping to get a statement here involving the Russians.

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: That was good. Madeleine is going to see Ivanov on Tuesday or Wednesday. I also think that Kofi gave a good statement. He is a little miffed, though maybe that's too strong a word, disappointed maybe or concerned that neither of us have put out a statement on it. I told him that you were in Scotland and that I was preoccupied with the Chinese. I think that we ought to put one out now because he is out in Europe now. There are two things we need to think about. One

is whether any economic pressures could be put on Milosevic that don't hurt the Macedonians and the Montenegrins too badly. I have a list of things, maybe cutting down on their money laundering in Cyprus and putting the squeeze on their London accounts. I don't want to cause the Montenegrins any trouble.

I will get that list to you today and let you guys look at it and respond to it. Any time that I try to get our banks to do something the Treasury Department gets squirrely on me. It is always a fight with those guys. I would like to send you this list and let you evaluate it.

We have to decide whether we want to have a more aggressive diplomatic initiative and if so, how to intensify the military action to enhance the likelihood that diplomatic efforts will succeed, assuming we can achieve all our objectives that Kofi signed off on and bring Russia into it. It may turn out to be, a bigger problem for me than you. It assumes that we can achieve our political objectives because Milosevic doesn't want to get the hell bombed out of him and have Apaches on top of his tanks. If you assume - the one downside is that we are facing a lot of hurdles - if you assume that all of our stated objectives are achievable if we intensify our bombing campaign without actually toppling Milosevic. Then it seems to me that there will be some kind of diplomatic agreement for an international force that will include Russian participation. They will push Milosevic back when he says who can and cannot be part of it. I think that it will be difficult to have NATO as NATO participate. The problem this creates for us is Somalia. [Explains Somalia experience] We would also need the serious command and control issues to be worked out. We did not have these problems in Bosnia. It worked like a charm once NATO went in and the Russians came in with us. We only had to make an amendment to the NATO issue. Does that make sense?

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: The Russians are allergic to NATO and Milosevic is allergic to NATO. Keep in mind Tony, I know you know this, if we go in, we can't go in with one foot. If we get a multi-national force we have to go in at least with the commitment to protect the Serbs in Kosovo at a minimum as well as the Kosovar Albanians. There is enormous grass roots support right now for the freedom fighters. This will be a big force protection issue - command and control will be critical with huge political implications. We may have all kinds of problems where we have both sides pissed at us.

Blair: xxxx

Clinton: I will send you the list of economic sanctions. We will look like assholes at the garden party if we don't make sure that everybody understands that NATO means keeping our people alive. We need to talk on a secure line or talk when you

get here. There are arguments both for it and arguments against it. We will need to look at in the context of where it is going to be five years from now. We need to keep our crowd together and keep at him and get a diplomatic solution with a mechanism that includes the UN and Russia. I will follow up on this. I am in the country all next week and will get that economic list out to you. Tell Jose Maria I said hello. Did you show him Napoleon's pistol and Charles' sword?

10 April 1999. NATO approves operation "Allied Harbor" deployment of 8,000 men into Albania. Throughout April, British troops fly into Thessaloniki, marrying up with vehicles that had been transported by ship.

12 April. US jets are suddenly turned around as they target the TV towers on top of the Socialist Party headquarters in Belgrade. Journalists are reported to be within the building.

14 April 1999. Yeltsin appoints Chernomyrdin as special envoy to the Balkans. The move appears to herald a Russian shift on Kosovo, and desire to salvage relationship with the West. Hard-line Prime Minister Primakov is fired from Prime Minister's position one month later. News breaks of a mistaken US/NATO strike, on a column of Kosovo Albanian refugees travelling the Decani-Gjakova road, killing 73 people.

14 April 1999, 1:56 - 2:14 p.m., Oval Office...

[Abridged with significant redactions]

Clinton: Hello, Tony.

Blair: Hi, Bill. This is a secure line, fortunately. Go on.

Clinton: Yes. First of all, I didn't mean to take you out of a meeting there, but I thought it was important I talk to you as soon as possible. Aznar was here last night and he was really good, and I know he is there. Wes Clark asked for another 300 airplanes, and we've got these Apaches coming in, but the truth is we're just going to have more and more planes filling the air and restriking old targets or hoping the weather gets better so we can hit tanks and soldiers, unless we can get into Phase III targets. We have got to make these people start paying a higher price. I was hoping while you're there, you and Aznar could convince [Insert Europeans - Chirac/Schroeder] to give Clarke and Solana the authority to strike a wider range of targets. That would require hitting national level headquarters, military-industrial targets, the TV towers (which he has resisted), some of the presidential targets, the power plants, the Socialist Party headquarters, which also has a radio-TV broadcasting facility there. I really believe we are making a mistake not turning the heat up on these guys. I have also been urged by our people to look at preventative

action against some targets in Montenegro. I know [Chirac] doesn't want to hit there, but even I said there were some things we ought to be hitting. Let me give you an example or two: there are several facilities where we think they are moving in to take their missiles out; in and around the ports in Montenegro; there's one critical bridge we need to take out, before they start moving their military units. So, we're quite worried about their ability to use these facilities. There are not a lot of targets and not a lot of risk of civilian damage. But it's even more important we get to Phase III targets within Serbia. I know there'll be collateral damage and some controversy, but if we want any chance of a solution soon, we have to turn the heat up.

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: Let's talk about all the points you've made. First of all, we're agreed on targets. On fuel and other things, we are now banning Yugoslav ships from our ports and the export and reexport of goods to Yugoslavia. I hope you can succeed in tightening EU exports, freezing government and private projects and the assets of the leadership. You and I should propose NATO search ships going into Yugoslav ports to make sure there's no arms or fuel.

Blair: Agreed.

Clinton: On presentation, Solana is not there, is he? Do you want to send someone in? I think there would be some resentment if I sent an American over there. Maybe we should talk to Solana and have him ask for more help on presentation? Do you have someone you can deputize?

Blair: [Blair recommends Alastair Campbell]

Clinton: We've had to start doing a lot more of our briefings, because they are so ineffective.

Blair: They start off every day at 3 or 4 o'clock, and the press conference sometimes goes on for an hour or an hour and a half, literally answering all their questions.

Clinton: Shouldn't we talk to Solana personally and get him to...operationally, how do we get this done, what is your suggestion?

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: Okay. I am completely agreed. Should we call Solana separately or together. Separately. I will tell him we discussed this, I think your take is right and ask him to work with you on it.

Blair: That is great, Bill.

Clinton: Call me after you talk to Chirac and Schroeder.

Blair: Yes, I will call you back.

16 April 1999, 2:11 -2:21 p.m. Roseville, Michigan.

Clinton: Do you want to spend the night at the White House? Or at Blair House, if you want. I won't get in until 1 a.m., and you may want to be in bed by then, but it's your option. You can sleep in the same bed Churchill did.

Blair: I hope it's appropriate.

Clinton: As long as you don't parade around naked before the bath. You're too young and too trim.

Blair: I'm getting older in this bloody job. Bill, that is great, and then we can meet Thursday morning. will get this information over to you. [xxxx*]. I'm going there Tuesday to talk to people, and SACEUR as well, to get a real fix on what is happening before the summit.

Clinton: That's a very good idea. When you come here, I'd like to develop a strategy on how to work with the others, including some of the smaller countries. I think a little effort on the side could get us a strong voice in making those folks feel included. Between the two of us I think we can touch most people...

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: In Detroit, we had 40,000 Albanians and a whole bunch of Serbs. The Albanians were outside demonstrating, and I said we have no fight with the Serbian people; they were our allies in World War II and most don't have a clue what Milosevic has done in their name in Kosovo. I said that was the proper way to express disagreement, not by killing. We have to be upbeat and resolute. It is important to be determined, but not too damned grim, either. We have to keep spirits up. We're in this world where people expect instantaneous results. We need to act like this started the day before yesterday and not twenty years ago.

Blair: Best of luck in Detroit.

Clinton: I'll see you next week.

Blair: Goodbye.

19 April 1999, 9:30-10:13 a.m. Oval Office...

[Clinton-Yeltsin conversation. Clinton opens by laying out common ground]

Yeltsin: Well, Bill, at this difficult time in international affairs and in U.S.-Russian relations, we need to maintain constant contact. I have never met such a difficult, complicated issue as the ongoing NATO military action against Yugoslavia. Let me reiterate that the developments of the past few weeks confirm that the U.S. and NATO have made a big mistake. You have miscalculated the consequences of the situation itself. Milosevic will never capitulate. Instead of resolving the humanitarian problem, what has been achieved is a giant humanitarian catastrophe, and significant damage has occurred to U.S.-Russian relations. I'll tell you quite frankly that the anti-American and anti-NATO sentiment in Russia keeps growing like an avalanche. Great pressure is exerted on me and the Russian leadership as a whole in favor of taking measures to help Yugoslavia, all the more so since NATO has helped the Albanian fighters. We continue to oppose Russian involvement in the conflict, but our ability to counteract those demands are limited. [Yeltsin lays out common ground].

The greatest differences between us have to do with the question of an international presence in Kosovo. We understand that without international support, no safe return of refugees can be possible, but the question of international presence should be dealt with and resolved, taking into account the political leadership of Yugoslavia. Please, believe me that it took us a great amount of effort to gain consent on the part of Milosevic for an international civilian presence, and I think we should be farsighted enough to build on these achievements. I appointed Mr. Chernomyrdin as my special envoy for Yugoslavia because he is a neutral person and has no other concerns. His primary concern will be Yugoslavia. We discussed the situation specifically in great detail.

Bill, what I think is needed now with Kosovo is a strong Albanian leader, so we can get them both to the negotiating table - Milosevic and the strong Albanian leader. Of course, we also need signals from NATO if we are to cut our losses in finding a way out of this situation. It is clear as day that Yugoslavia will not accept a military mission, particularly if it is a NATO-led mission, because for a long time they will be allergic to NATO. I think other avenues should be explored, and we should come up with a compromise that Milosevic will grudgingly have to accept. We think, obviously, such an option would be for UN blue helmets, based on Security Council resolutions. We think it would be necessary to have among the blue helmets a contingent of Russian forces. Should we accept this position and common understanding, I think we can instruct our foreign ministers to collaborate on this in detail.

Now, there is one thing standing in the way of negotiations. That is, the bombardment, and the bombardment should be stopped. Of course, it is easily

understood that it is hard to think of a settlement when bombs and missiles are exploding all around you. I think a proper pretext should be found for making a pause in the bombardment. It is completely up to you, of course. Such a step on your side would be the testimony of a statesman, wisdom, and an act of humanity. For our part, we will be prepared to fully cooperate with you and continue our pressure on Milosevic. As for Chernomyrdin, I gave him a special airplane to fly around to Muslim countries to gain support for the Albanians. Then it will be a realistic thing to bring the Albanians and Serbs to the negotiating table. After that, we could address the whole settlement issue by joint effort - the U.S., Russia, Yugoslavia and NATO. These are my proposals. Bill. What is your view?

Clinton: First, I think it is good we agreed on the common principles: the ending of attacks, withdrawal of forces, the safe return of refugees, access for humanitarian organizations. These create a foundation for a political solution that will allow the Serbs to preserve the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, provided we can ensure that Milosevic will implement it.

Now, I think in order to implement these principles, there needs to be an international presence in Kosovo that has both a military and nonmilitary element. If there is no military element, the Kosovars will never return. The Serbs forces have burned all their villages, burned them alive, raped children, and there is no way they will come back without military protection. Here is the dilemma about a military force. I don't care what it is called, but if there is no NATO involvement, we won't be able to get the Albanians to disarm. We can get the KLA to disarm. We can get the KLA to disarm, and contrary to what you said, we are not arming them. There is a proposal in Congress to arm them. But I oppose having the U.S. or Russia getting arms in there and stirring up the water, so I have been resisting arming the Albanians.

On the other hand, let me emphasize that I think it would be a grave mistake for there to be a military-diplomatic mission where Russians are not present. We need Russians to make this work. After all, there is a Serb minority in Kosovo, and they have to be protected, too, and know they are protected. It is imperative that Albanian refugees feel protected, that the Serb minority feels protected, and that we have a basis on which we can disarm the Kosovar Albanians.

Yeltsin: The problem that needs to be addressed is that there are many Serbs among the refugees.

Clinton: I think we can find a formula. I have said in every public statement that I have made that I want the force to have Russian participation and leadership and that I would personally not approve going into Kosovo unless our mandate includes protecting the Serbs as well as the Albanians in Kosovo. In terms of a pause in the bombing, NATO could and would stop tomorrow if Milosevic started withdrawing his forces. The problem with stopping the bombing with no withdrawal at all is that

we have been there before. Last October, we were promised that, and Milosevic broke his word before. Before we started bombing, he had 40,000 soldiers and 300 tanks and started to implement the plan he had drawn up last year and changed the military hierarchy so there'd be no opposition and went about flushing out the country. He has to do something to show this is more than just words.

I would like to agree that we are getting much closer to an agreement. Let's instruct our teams to find a formula with a military component that is also sensitive to our concerns about NATO. Strobe can work with Viktor. It won't work unless Russia plays a leading role. There is no way in the world this will work, Boris, unless Russia plays a military and political role, and the Albanians and Serbs believe they will be protected in a formula where autonomy is genuine and the territory of Serbia is maintained. It cannot happen unless we find a way to do this together.

Yeltsin: But then, we were at a stage where Russia was not involved. Russia can, of course, put pressure on Milosevic. Bill, as I said before, Chernomyrdin will now go to several Muslim countries to try to help the Albanians. After that, he wants to go to Belgrade for a meeting with Milosevic, and after that to see you. I think it is a good option. What is a great concern to me is this anti-American sentiment we have in Russia, and that is what I am worried about. We have spent too many efforts in all areas to let them all collapse overnight.

Clinton: What about having Strobe come to Europe to meet with Chernomyrdin even sooner?

Yeltsin: That would be all right. That can be done.

Clinton: Yes, I think we ought to do that. I can see that we are close enough to get an agreement. I will have Ambassador Collins get in touch with Chernomyrdin to work it out. I feel quite good about this conversation, Boris. We just have to work hard and stay in close touch.

Yeltsin: I feel that way too. I agree with you and think we can find our way out. We must find a way out.

Clinton: All right. We will do it. This is a good conversation. I'm glad to hear you, and I appreciate your involvement in this.

Yeltsin: I agree although I find it increasingly difficult to resist sentiments here. I am subjected to violent attacks and assailed by the Communists. They insist that I send armaments and equipment and that I send our troops there. They are calling for an unleashing of a European and world-wide war, and I am absolutely opposed to that. Today I gave orders to repeal previous instructions to send seven ships to the conflict area, so we will have just one ship, a reconnaissance ship, to provide us

with information. We will not provide them with our military equipment, though we are sending them humanitarian aid and doing it publicly in front of TV cameras. What we are sending are foodstuffs and consumer goods. We have already sent 100 cars and trucks with aid. Bill, just like you, I think we have had a good conversation and think we, too, have avenues to explore where we can reach a common ground.

Clinton: I agree, Boris. Let's just keep working on it. Thank you very much.

Yeltsin: All right. Goodbye, Bill.

20 April 1999. The first Apache helicopters begin to arrive in Albania as a part of Task Force Hawk. KLA officials meet daily with Albanian officers at the Albanian Defence Ministry. An attending CIA officer is able to pass on military intelligence about Serb positions to Military planners. KLA-CIA liaison and intelligence gathering kicks in in the Albania-Kosovo borderland area of Kukes.

Blair meets Clark at NATO HQ:

Blair: "Are we going to win this thing?"

Clark: "Prime Minister I have never lost anything significant in my life. We're not going to lose this one."

Blair: "Are we going to do it by airpower alone?"

Clark: "We can't be sure of that."

Blair: "Because the future of almost every government and leader in western Europe depends on this." "Are we going to need ground troops?"

Clark: "We might."

Blair: "Well if that's the case we better start preparing for that."

Clark: "Well for that Prime minister I will probably have to depend on you."

20 April 20, 1999 Holbrooke memoranda. Subject: Some thoughts about Slobodan Milosevic...

Holbrooke: Has he lost his mind? Recent Serb behaviour is so extreme, erratic and stupid that it raises questions -admittedly of a highly speculative nature- about the stability of Milosevic. Until now, while often reprehensible, his behaviour was coolly and cruelly calculating. It no longer is. Recent actions, especially the bizarre

reversals in the refugee flow, suggest an increasingly irrational pattern. Perhaps this is driven by rage and early signs of desperation.

His goals at the time of Dayton were clear: he would throw the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs over the side of his boat, and work out a deal acceptable to us on Bosnia, in order to bring Yugoslavia back into the community of civilized European nations. His high point was surely the ceremonies at the Elysee Palace, when he was treated with some degree of respect as an equal member of the Dayton process, and talked face to face with Presidents Clinton and Chirac, Kohl and other world leaders. Proud of his background as a banker who had negotiated with some of the leading money center bankers in the world, he foresaw international recognition for his regime, membership in the major international institutions, and substantial business opportunities. At first, he made real progress toward these goals. Most of the EU recognized Yugoslavia over our objections. The Italians and Greeks made a grotesque (but potentially profitable) deal with him for a large stake in the state telecom company, netting about \$1 billion in cash to him, money he could use to pay the army; bribe people, and perhaps move partly off-shore for his own uses and future protection. The United States and the Contact Group offered him a road map" in which in return for full implementation of Dayton he would get the "outer wall" sanctions lifted or suspended on a rolling basis.

This policy was well underway when events in Kosovo derailed everything on both sides. His dreams for re-joining Europe as a full-fledged and accepted member is now gone forever. As this realization sinks in, as it must already have, I suspect that it will significantly affect Milosevic. He will never again be the man of Dayton, the Elysee, and the road map - and he surely knows it. He will never again eat the Packy's All-Sports Bar in Dayton, or even be able to leave his country without risking arrest. Milosevic must realize that he has crossed an invisible line and cannot get back again. Trapped by the enormity of what his forces have done, at his instructions, he is isolated for the rest of his days inside Yugoslavia. With this bleak prospect facing him - one I suspect he is beginning to understand - his behaviour has shown little of its previous cleverness or tactical flexibility. Although both General Anderson and I told him and his senior generals that the bombing would be "swift, severe, and sustained," it is quite possible (as Jim O'Brien suggested during our trip) that he thought it would be something along the lines of Desert Fox- short and survivable. Now that he realizes the extraordinary level of destruction his country faces, he must also begin to realize that he cannot survive long enough to re-build Yugoslavia's economy, that the international community will never give Belgrade financial assistance until he is removed, and that he will probably lose power either during or after the bombing ends. Perhaps for this reason -or because of some- Milosevic has pursued a policy in Kosovo that will cause the Albanians the maximum pain in the short run, but doom him in the long term. is one of the theses of this memorandum that he understands what he It has done, and has embarked on this policy even though, at some level, he knows he cannot survive it.

Although it may not have been a conscious policy, he seems to have decided to destroy the Albanians as fast as possible before he falls; no more creeping repression from Belgrade. hostile psychological factors in his make-up have taken over from his deeply rational sense? He never showed any remorse or concern for human suffering, which was far detached from his anti-septic presidential surroundings. The Milosevic we negotiated with, while dangerous and cruel, was rational. The behaviour of this Milosevic is not. The fact that both his parents committed suicide may be particularly relevant now. It is my guess that Milosevic will not survive these events, that one way or another he will not only fall, but die as a result.

What About His Associates? They are not men of strength or courage. While they all owe their current positions to Milosevic, many of them have told Chris Hill, Wes Clark, and me over the years that they held views different from those of their leader. At times each tried to suggest to us that he held "softer," more reasonable views than Milosevic. Nonetheless, they will want to save their own skins. Whatever their individual views on the sacredness of Serb soil in Kosovo, none are going to be ready to sacrifice themselves. I believe that the early signs of dissension within Serb ranks (Montenegro) are real, and probably reflect even greater unhappiness (and with than we are aware of. This may be an exploitable opportunity, but must be handled with extreme care and confidentiality.

For: Secretary of State, National Security Advisor, Secretary of Defense

From: Holbrooke. Subject: Kosovo Next Steps [Excerpt]

Slobo's Choices. While we control the bombing, Milosevic controls the timing and nature of the first political/diplomatic response. However, none of his options are attractive...

One way or another, there will almost certainly be NATO ground troops in Kosovo later this year. And once there, they will stay along time. But everything depends on whether they enter by invitation, along the lines of Dayton, with the formal agreement of the national authority in Belgrade - or whether they enter as an invasion force which will then become an occupation force. Talk about something in between a "permissive" and "non-permissive" force is wishful thinking; in the real world the troops are either invited in--which means low or no casualties- -or they have to fight their way in. If they invade, they will not be able to stop in Kosovo; given the realities of the situation, they will have to pursue Serb forces deep into the rest of Serbia and Montenegro, perhaps as far as Belgrade itself. Under the permissive scenario, they should be able to restrict themselves to Kosovo (as well as Macedonia, Albania and perhaps Montenegro), and take low casualties as in Bosnia.

An invasion can, of course, succeed, but only at substantial cost. NATO is far too powerful, and the Serbs far too weak, to repel an invasion. If we undertake such a policy, we will surely prevail. But it could mean serious casualties, and at the end of the process NATO will "own" Yugoslavia, Albania, and Macedonia just as surely as the World War victors owned Germany and Japan. They will have to occupy the land and defend themselves against possible attacks, including Somalia and Beirut-style terrorism. To be sure, even without an invasion NATO will be in the region for the indefinite future. But how they enter makes a huge difference. To put it somewhat melodramatically, will it be Dayton or D-Day?



By 1999 Milosevic's mentality was well understood. Paris in 1995. Photo: Clinton Library.



23 March 1999. Holbrooke and Clark, NATO HQ. Photo: NATO

21 April 1999.

3:15 a.m. NATO bombs the 23 floor Socialist Party headquarters in Belgrade with four cruise missiles. The attack destroys offices of several companies with ties to Milosevic's inner circle, including television operations run by Milosevic's daughter and wife. Bombs also strike one of Milosevic's private residences. Targets had been subject of complex, contentious negotiations between allies. On the eve of the NATO summit, Clinton and Blair meet for a three-hour White House dinner. Blair surreptitiously signals he wishes to speak with Clinton alone by announcing a visit to the bathroom. Blair and Clinton disappear for over an hour of private discussion where Blair argues for the need of ground troops.

22 April 1999. Speaking before the Chicago Economic Club, British Prime Minister Tony Blair unveiled his "Doctrine of the International Community." His philosophy outlines six principles including one that underlines that leaders oppressing civilians within their own borders should be held accountable, including, if necessary, through military means. Blair declares: "We are all internationalist now, whether we like it not."

25 April 1999. With the largest number of heads of state ever gathered in Washington the NATO 50th Anniversary summit gets underway. Although British moves to press for a ground invasion are quashed top-secret planning for a ground invasion subsequently starts at the U.S Army's European headquarters in Germany. Nineteen national leaders unite behind the line: "we're going to do whatever it takes to win."

10:35-11:15 a.m. NATO Summit Building. As final speeches are about to begin Yeltsin, perceiving NATO unity, phones Clinton. He proposes to reopen contacts between Gore and Chernomyrdin. In an extraordinarily edgy, sometimes rambling, hour-long conversation Yeltsin sets out to quell calls from home for all-out war against his desire to be cast as a leading player in 'stopping the war.'

[Abridged]

Yeltsin: Hello, Bill.

Clinton: Hello, Boris.

Yeltsin: Well, I am calling on Sunday, and this is a traditional day off for us. But it is not a day off for you and me.

Clinton: No, not today.

Yeltsin: This is because of the situation in the Balkans and the continued military action by NATO against Yugoslavia. We have agreed with you to step up efforts in all directions to find a way out of the Kosovo tragedy. This is also an ecological problem because the Danube is flowing into the Black Sea and it is extremely important to us that the sky over Europe is not clouded over again. You know I have sent Chernomyrdin as my special envoy on this Yugoslav problem. You know him and trust him.

Clinton: Yes, I do.

[Yeltsin recaps: areas of agreement; disagreement over timing of entry of security force; presses for suspension of air raids. Presses for acclaim via a Russian-American peace deal with details brokered by Gore-Chernomyrdin].

Yeltsin: We are working in all areas and directions, including our government delegations and the visit to Belgrade by our Patriarch who had a successful mission. So we are attacking Milosevic from all sides, and there was also assistance from our Parliament. Let us forget at this stage all other issues and get to solving this one because this problem is worse than the others, and it is worth dozens of billions of dollars.

Clinton: I think that we should have Gore and Chernomyrdin talk on the phone tomorrow, and what I would like to do is to have Strobe Talbott fly to see Viktor Stepanovich Tuesday or tomorrow or whenever you want him to go. And let me comment now —

Yeltsin: [Interrupting] Well, I thought that after today's conversation we can tell the media that myself and President Clinton have found a common point of view on how we can solve this problem together and then the details can be worked out later, and we' will continue to work actively with Milosevic on all these questions. You know that I have decided not to send seven military ships to the Mediterranean as we have agreed, and I will continue to comply with what I promised. And what assistance we have given to Yugoslavia is only humanitarian in nature and delivered by road. There were some difficulties on the Hungarian border, but now these have been settled. Milosevic is insisting that we supply to Yugoslavia the anti-aircraft system S-300, but we shall not give this system to him, and you can believe me on that.

Clinton: Thank you.

Yeltsin: Because it will not allow any planes close to the borders of Yugoslavia. Well, I am listening to you Bill.

Clinton: [Discusses a peace keeping force to protect both Albanians and Serbs]. The measure of success is bringing all the refugees home. Now, on the question of a bombing pause. There was a huge debate at the NATO meeting, well, not a debate, but a discussion, and there was a unanimous feeling that there could be a pause only if all the refugees could come home and secondly, agreement on an international security force and third that the Serbs must begin their withdrawal. I agree a bombing pause might be helpful, but we have to work on getting the security forces out and get the beginning of a withdrawal - not just you and me, but Milosevic also has to agree because all 19 members agreed to this, and I am bound by the decision the group has taken. And I think it is a good decision. You have made so much progress, we might be able to get this done in the next few days if we just work on it.

Yeltsin: [Emphasizes putting pressure on Milosevic to agree to ground force peacekeepers]. We shall help and aid Chernomyrdin in working with Milosevic, so as to make Milosevic agree to the solution of the remaining issues. And finally, so that everyone gets the impression that it is you and me that stopped that war. This would influence the domestic political situation in your country and especially in this country, but what is most important is that it will help put an end to this conflict.

Clinton: Yes.

Yeltsin: You know that I am hearing concerns by our military who are talking about getting military servicemen to go and help Milosevic. You know I have condemned this in the strictest terms and convened my Security Council and said there should be no talk about that. Any General that speaks of sending troops to help Milosevic will be summarily dismissed from the military.

Clinton: Thank you.

Yeltsin: Well, there is one commander in the Military District of the Far East, Colonel-General Chechevatov, who was going to get a battalion which would go to Yugoslavia to help Milosevic. I dismissed him from his post. All our law enforcement agencies and ministries are strictly under my command and report only to me. So there will be no surprises here, and no unexpected things will come. We shall maintain contacts with you at all times. Well, let us by today's conversation solve two problems with two tasks. Let us resume the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission and instruct them to take up the Yugoslav problem. As soon as the Commission, at the very hour and minute it starts working, the air raids should stop. Of course, Talbott will be involved in that as a member of the Gore team, and he will deal with technical matters, not the big politics. So let us decide on these two questions, and if we can announce this in the media, this will mark an end to the tragedy.

Clinton: But...

Yeltsin: [Interrupting] You understand, you see what a difficult situation I am in, and I am holding myself and stifling my emotions, and I am talking with you in a constructive way. I also am leaving room for our subsequent cooperation. Well, of course this cooperation should not be abruptly stopped by the many Russians who write me letters on this issue. Let us do this Bill, and we should consider our conversation today constructive and a useful one.

Clinton: Well first...

Yeltsin: [Interrupting] Do you agree?

Clinton: Boris, first of all, I agree this has been a useful conversation, and I am encouraged by your energy and personal involvement you have put into this. We cannot solve this without your leadership, but I have to make three points that make it impossible to make the announcement to the press as you suggested. I hope you will listen to me carefully.

First of all, I cannot get Gore into this publicly until I at least talk to him about it. He has had very limited involvement at this point, and I owe it to him to have a conversation with him before I put him into the middle of this. I know you understand he has been my partner for six years now, and he is running for President, and I can't run. I don't want to do anything that involves him in this way without talking to him.

The second thing is, as I said, we just voted — all 19 leaders of NATO — to have a pause only when agreement on the security force, refugee return, and when withdrawal of Milosevic's forces can begin. I cannot unilaterally change that, and I don't want to say in public anything that implies I have abandoned what the others have agreed to.

Now, there is a third problem that you and I both have if we do this. We have got to decide how to deal with the European Union because they have been very involved in this and, if we resolve this we need them to come up with most of the money to rebuild Southeast Europe and to provide economic aid for everyone involved. So if we do this —

Yeltsin: [Interrupting] You should...

Clinton: Let me finish...

Yeltsin: [Interrupting] Understand, Bill, the work of this Commission has an international reputation and they could invite both NATO leaders and Milosevic to take part. I can guarantee you that on the part of Milosevic.

Clinton: Yes, I understand that but wait...

Yeltsin: [Interrupting] And you can guarantee this on the NATO side and this would form the basis for the end of the war.

Clinton: Yes, but what I am saying is...

Yeltsin: [Interrupting] So, do not push Russia into this war. You know what Russia is. You know how it is equipped, but don't push Russia into this.

Clinton: Wait a minute, Boris. I am agreeing with what you are trying to do, but what I am saying is you have got all of the Europeans here taking the lead in this initiative, and we have to figure out how to deal with this before dropping it on them in the newspaper. They are our allies and our friends, and they have to come up with most of the money to rebuild the region. We just can't have them wake up in the morning and read it in the newspaper no matter how good it would be for us and our countries. [Clinton repeats points made, asks for more time and reiterates that Europeans need to be included in any deal making].

Yeltsin: We should decide that the very moment the commission starts working, there will be an end to the air raids, and at the same time the troops in the Yugoslavian units will pull out of Kosovo, and we will get Milosevic to do this. You can depend on me to get Milosevic to do this. Then we should re-establish Kosovo autonomy so all the populations that inhabit the region, no matter the ethnic origin, Albanian or Serb, could get back there and live together. Serbs are also fleeing to save themselves from NATO air raids. You know that Kofi Annan is coming to Moscow, and I will meet him, and I will do so in a way that we have a common position. Just a moment. Well, in this way, we shall unlock the situation and give the commission a chance to work. And it will work only when air raids stop. Milosevic will not slip out from our influence — he will do everything we tell him to do. I hope your line of communication is a closed one like mine.

Clinton: Yes. Let me ask you something, Boris. I need to talk to Gore and do some more work on this. Can we talk again tomorrow, and then have Gore talk to Chernomyrdin tomorrow?

Yeltsin: Let them begin the work, and then we shall continue efforts to work together so it looks like we stopped the European war, the World War. I realize that ground forces do not carry nuclear weapons now but of course they are capable, and if you bomb the power plants and fuel sites that would mean that there will be ecological instability in Europe for a long time. Well, I am listening to you Bill.

Clinton: Boris, this might work if we can get the agreement on the security force and the beginning of withdrawal, then we could get a pause. If we get an agreement

on the return of refugees, agreement on the security force and the beginning of a withdrawal, then we can have a pause in the bombing and a process that could work. I think it is very important what we say and how we say it. I know the Europeans would support that kind of process and would finance the reconstruction that needs to be done in Kosovo. It is important that you and I not say this will happen just because you and I agree, because Milosevic has to agree as well. That is why I believe you and I have to talk again after Gore and Chernomyrdin talk.

[Broken Conversation]

Clinton: We lost telephone communication for about five minutes. I have not heard the last three translations. Can you repeat them, not Boris, just the translator.

Yeltsin: OK. We have agreed?

Clinton: No. No. I have not heard the last three translations. Can we just have —

RUSSIAN INTERPRETER: Mr. President, you should be assured that we are not taking sides with Milosevic. My only aim is to stop the war and stop the air raids and form the political basis for all sides to negotiate. And that we should use the same approach to all the sides of the conflict no matter how great their force. But it is most important that we find a solution to this most painful problem. We should stop the air raids. That would form the basis for the political solution of this tragedy.

So, I say again, of the five points enumerated by Albright, we got Milosevic to agree to four of them, and we have a statement signed by him on that. So probably we might change our second point in our information to the media, to say the first point will be that Gore and Chernomyrdin are working on this problem and the second point is that we have agreed on the conditions of the cessation of the air raids without going into details. So I don't also exclude if everything goes okay that this could help Chernomyrdin climb up the service ladder. Well, we also got a written request from Milosevic forwarded by his people regarding the union between Russia and Belarus and Yugoslavia. I tried to delay this, and we are saying we are not ready for this. I can tell you confidentially that this will never happen.

Clinton: That is good. Let me say this, Boris. I think we are a little closer here in that I have no problem saying we have clarified conditions for a bombing pause. The most important thing is to say we have talked for an hour and committed ourselves to pursuing peace and that in the days ahead we will explain how we are going to do it. I will say again, I will have to talk to Gore before I can put him in the middle of this.

Yeltsin: And also you should take into account anti-American feelings are growing in our society. I should put an end to this, but this will not be possible to do while

the air raids continue. So that is now the risk for you or me to get this Gore-Chernomyrdin to work with Milosevic and NATO so they elaborate on a short document that could be signed publicly.

Clinton: Boris, I will work on nothing else but this for the next day. I will send Strobe tonight and have Gore get on the phone with Chernomyrdin. I will do nothing else but this. but we have to be careful not to say something else in public that might make it impossible to work.

Yeltsin: I think our discussion was frank, constructive, and balanced. So we did not let out our emotions surface.

Clinton: No, and we won't. Goodbye friend, I will see you.

[Followed by a long series of goodbyes with Yeltsin hanging on – (drunk?)]

29 April, 1999, 5:22 - 5:43 p.m. Oval Office...

[Abridged and redacted]

Clinton: How are you?

Blair: Fine, how are you?

Clinton: Great. I thought your trip went very well, and everyone loved the DLC event we did later. So I think your trip went great. I called to follow up a little bit on the memo you gave me and what we're doing here. Let me make three or four points to respond to your memo and tell you what we are doing, then we can talk about whatever else we need to.

First, on your statement. We've got a small group working to develop an integrated strategic plan that will merge our military and strategic objectives and focus on putting pressure on Milosevic, his cronies, integrating military targets, covert action, psychological operations and public affairs. And it is my understanding we're already in touch with you. We'll have a detailed plan ready sometime this weekend and share it with your people. We will coordinate two to three times a week in a telephone conference with people in a group led by John Sawers and Sandy Berger. So, we'll deal with that issue. [The media] affairs thing is in much better shape now; the war room you and I set up has a 24-hour capability and a rapid-response element, and I think Joe and Alistair are talking two or three times a day, including with the people in Brussels. I think that's good and we're trying to bring in the guy who used to work as my communications director to work our operation here for 30 days to make sure we've melded our political and diplomatic efforts together. On all those areas, we're doing pretty well.

Blair: That sounds great.

Clinton: The last item you raised is the need to do joint planning on the ground force option. I personally believe it can be done under the umbrella of the assessment. As I told you, we're working with our guys; they're so afraid it will leak. We have to work through it, because there's no point in doing this in detail unless we know how it will mesh together. I will keep working on that, but I think we've made reasonable progress on what we discussed and I wanted to see where you are on that. If he means we won't assassinate him or bomb him or extract him from Serbia, I think we can make that commitment. I don't think we can make a public commitment on war crimes, because that is an independent body. Louise Arbour is here, by the way. I said we're cooperating with the tribunal, so that is a more difficult issue. He's looking for some assurance, but that's a pretty dicey thing. So, that's all I have to report. I do think Chernomyrdin has the bit in his teeth to do something, but whether he can, I don't know. They are very anxious to play a role in a diplomatic settlement and go in with their troops.

One other point: the Russians might want to be in an area of Kosovo where the Serbs are dominant in population. I said I personally had no problems, as long as the Russians had a hard and fast commitment to protect the Kosovars. I had never discussed this with the American people, not one time, without saying that if the United States has a role, it will be providing protection to the Serb minority as well as the Kosovar/Albanian majority.

The second thing - and Sandy raised the red flag on this - I asked him to make it clear to Chernomyrdin that having Russians and Greeks, Ukrainians, or other Orthodox denominations could not become a de facto partition, because the EU has taken a strong position on this, as has the United States and as has NATO. As long as there's no partition, I think we could work that out. Basically, that's a read-out of what D'Alema said.

Blair: Right. That is very helpful, Bill. First, I think on the bit with the press side, and NATO and SHAPE working together, we have a lot of people working well with your people. That is working better and will get better still. On the military side, I think that is great, to help SACEUR with what he is doing. On the video conferencing, I think that's fine. The thing to do is have a constant updating of all the different issues so they know exactly where we are, feeding through the information we are getting to your guys, and vice versa.

Clinton: I agree.

Blair: On the ground troop thing: I understand all the problems, and we don't want this to start running in the press and everything. We have done some work we are fairly confident of, and your guys will have to get in touch as you want, really. [xxxx*]. So that is my only worry, is not to get caught by the winter.

Clinton: Yes, I'm watching the calendar pretty closely. We're back to the efficacy argument here. The public in America, in the latest survey yesterday, is against ground troops; it supports bombing, but doesn't think it will work. I think whatever I decide is right, we can go forward with. I think what we don't want to do is not do what we need to do in terms of planning. They're asking when this will be over. I looked at the weather map and said, "May is better than April, and June is better than May, and July is better than June." That had the right effect. It wasn't lost on them, to talk about how the weather is getting better.

Blair: I think it is important, also. xxxx*

Clinton: I don't know. I just don't know. We have to wait and see. We may have to talk again before the weekend is over, when we see how he does. We'll have to wait and see. My guess is Milosevic will offer a little more tomorrow, but not enough, and then come back and say, "How about a pause in bombing?" He's still trying to stiff the Alliance. I want you to think about two things with your planners, if you've got a pretty good military plan now on the ground troop option. There are two things. Life is not perfect but I basically had three objectives going in: one is to win in Kosovo, to have the people come back to a protected area and give them autonomy and then to have the larger approach to south-eastern Europe that we discussed. The second thing is, to get from beginning to end with the NATO alliance intact. When you think about it, this is the first thing NATO has had to do in 50 years. In Bosnia, we had a lot of help on the ground from Croatian and Muslim forces; we didn't have to do as much as we do here. The third thing is, I was so happy about Chernomyrdin being back in harness. In talking to all our people, I've said that I want this to come out in a way that enhances Russia's diplomatic role and strategic partnership with us. That would be a real boost to the forces of progress and those who want a partnership with us, rather than those who want to go off by themselves angry, hurt and humiliated. One thing you need to have your best Russia people dealing with: if it comes to a troop option, what the hell are we going to do with Russia if it leads to the collapse of our relationship.



3 May 1999. Blair visits refugee camp in Macedonia, escorted by Lt.Gen Mike Jackson.
Photos: NATO



May 1999, Ground Prepared

1 May 1999. NATO accidentally bombs a civilian bus on bridge near Pristina. Serbian volunteers wearing targets take a stand on potential bombing targets such as the 'rock and roll' bridge over the Sava River in Belgrade.

2 May 1999. Jesse Jackson secures freedom for 3 US soldiers captured in Macedonia. Milosevic reportedly gives Jackson a letter calling for a face-to-face meeting with Clinton. A US F-16 crashes in Serbia.

3 May 1999. After midnight: small parachutes carrying a dispenser containing carbon graphite threads are dropped from the skies over Serbia. As they reach Yugoslav power grids they unravel into a web, causing instantaneous short circuits.

Chernomyrdin arrives in Washington to meet with Clinton and Gore; as soon as he hears the proposition of enlisting Finnish President Ahtisaari to assist with negotiations, he bangs the table and endorses it. NATO mistakenly kills at least 17 in an attack on civilian vehicles near Peja. Blair visits refugee camps in Macedonia.

4 May 1999, 1:29 - 1:48 p.m. Oval Office...

[Abridged and redacted]

The President: Hello, Tony.

Blair: Hi, Bill. How are you?

Clinton: How did you do on your trip?

Blair: It was good. It was extraordinary, really. They've got a lot of problems in the refugee camps, and I am trying to help them set up another in Macedonia. Things are pretty difficult there, because the refugees keep coming in. But no, it was good. And the thing with the Romanian parliament went well. It was good. We have also got good contacts with the Kosovar people now. I met some leading people there, and they've got quite a formidable network there, so we tapped into all that. How are you doing? How are you getting on?

Clinton: Fine. I met yesterday with Chernomyrdin for a long time, though he met for an even longer time with Al Gore last night, and Sandy, and then they met again this morning. I think that Chernomyrdin's involvement is a chance to move Belgrade toward our position, but we need to get Moscow moving in that direction. I explained to him what was necessary for this to be a success. I told him we need a timetable on withdrawal, as well as a commitment to an international security force. We said he has to commit to get all of his forces out, then we can talk about a

presence symbolic of Serbian sovereignty. We had a long talk about the rationale for an international security force with NATO at its core and the rapid deployment capability, to keep the Serbs and Albanians from clashing. I do think he understands that if we are not in there, the peaceful Albanians won't go back and the guerrillas will, and we'll all be back where we are in six to eight months. I think he understands.

The only other thing is, the G8 political directors yesterday was pretty good, except they talked about an international presence authorized by the UN. But Madeleine is to have it redrafted to avoid any implication that we're undermining the common requirements of NATO. That is kind of where the diplomacy is. Sandy and the rest of the Foreign Policy Team will review this 30-day strategic campaign plan - and I got your message the other day - and we'll share it with you. And we're making the arrangements for the secure video teleconferencing between our teams. So, we're kind of rocking along here. But I'm concerned with Milosevic's peace initiative and his release of the POWs and the collateral damage, which is getting publicity. I'm worried about Allied unity. I feel good about continuing this for months, if necessary, but we've got to keep everybody else in harness. Milosevic is in more trouble than we think, or he wouldn't be going to all this trouble to stop the bombing.

Blair: Yes.

Clinton: What do you think?

Blair: I agree entirely. First, the military campaign is going a bit better, and I think it's beginning to do real damage. Taking out the power stations and blacking out Belgrade really made a difference.

Clinton: They were too wimpy on the NATO thing.

Blair: You've just got to be careful. I think it's necessary to have constantly - and I am trying to get it sorted out this end - people who go up and talk to those refugees - everyone has a horror story to tell. The most horrible things have been going on in there. I don't know whether public opinion in other countries is different - ours is pretty solid - but most people, if they think the campaign is beginning to work, will hold with it.

Clinton: Also, there is going back, and there is going back. If they don't think it's strong and reliable and gives them autonomy, even if you and I were there, we would have a problem with the military elements.

Blair: I agree. But, Bill, what is your frank assessment about how much damage we are prepared to do in the next month to two months?

Clinton: I think we should stick where we are. The Europeans feel strongly about it. I don't feel strongly, I could go either way, but I have been publicly strong about leaving it in the country, because I don't want to be accused of having a campaign for a greater Albania and disrupt the front-line states. I think we ought to hang in there. The rest of the EU have been pretty adamant against independence and we ought to hang in there with them on that.

Blair: True. xxxx*

Clinton: First of all, I strongly agree with that, and we hammered Chernomyrdin on that. Let me tell you how I look at this; I think it might also be helpful on the presentational aspect in Europe. I rarely talk about Kosovo now that I don't talk about Bosnia. It took us almost four years to get that together and get Dayton. We defeated ethnic cleansing, but we did not reverse it, because so many refugees were not going home. The Kosovars have to be able to go home. We not only have to defeat it, we have to reverse it. When I remind people of our work in Bosnia, I think it reinforces it. I've got a full-time person now doing nothing but Kosovo public affairs and getting these stories out. What I think we need to look at is, either we should have some more of those people - should we put more people on it? It's delicate; it's in other countries where this problem exists. I don't want to mess on people's turf. Maybe talk to D'Alema and others about it. It would help if there were more of these people in the Italian press and other countries that are getting a lot of pressure, in the Spanish and Portuguese press and others.

Blair: Is your thinking that public opinion is going soft in those countries?

Clinton: I think it's softer in those than ours and I don't know if they have a strategy for dealing with it. On the bombing campaign, one thing I hope will happen, now we have hit and taken out most of the bridges, I think we may be able to focus more on power systems. And, looking at all hours at more military targets, that will reduce further horror stories about collateral damage, like the bus that got hit on the bridge. That is, we can do more, more freely and with fewer civilian problems. One thing I said here that sends a good message, that shows our resolve: I just comment on the weather, that the weather is better in June than in May and July is better than June. All you've got to do is say that. Psychologically, it's a very good thing to say, and I've said it a couple of times.

One or two other things - we're going to open another camp in Albania, like you are in Macedonia. If it appears we've been too reluctant here and we haven't done enough there, this thing could spin out of control on us and collapse our timetable. We don't want opponents to be able to say we didn't do enough there, so we've got to bring them here. We just have to work on it. I leave this afternoon for Belgium and Germany, so I'll check with you when I get back, or maybe while I'm there. I'll see Dehaene and Schroeder.

Blair: Yes, the Macedonian situation with the refugees is very worrying. We're trying to get unblocked some European money. I talked to Michel Camdessus about the IMF position on Macedonia. I'm trying to get Macedonia to agree to a big transit camp to drain off the problem, and we're also taking some more ourselves. But I think we really have to watch Macedonia.

Clinton: I do, too. I'm worried about the politics of Macedonia. The government could collapse and consensus could disappear. The country is so small and so poor. These numbers could change that.

Blair: We've got to just manage them through this. Kosovo is about the size of the country of Yorkshire in England, that is, it's not small, but it's not vast: it's not unimaginably large. xxxx*.

Clinton: That's bullshit, and we know it. We want, obviously if we could, to get out where Russia plays a bigger role and a positive role. That will reinforce the position of the progressives within Russia and stabilize the situation and have a good lead into the 2000 elections. I also think it will help us keep the Alliance together. [xxxx*]. If we can achieve our objectives of having defeated and reversed ethnic cleansing and kept the Alliance together - with the ties between Russia and the West stronger, not weaker. That might be too much to hope for.

Blair: That would be a full hand. It would be a great thing to achieve. That's where the people are on this.

Clinton: I agree.

Blair: Hillary is going to the camps, is she?

Clinton: Yes.

Blair: Her presence and the pictures that will come out of that - all the time, we've got to re-persuade people, remind them, really. You know the public attention span. We had a terrible nail bomb thing going off in London, but for four days, Kosovo ceased to be in people's minds. We have to persuade them about it. Littleton happened and obviously the whole of America starts to refocus.

Clinton: We didn't want Jesse to be able to bring out those soldiers, because people would feel we had to do a good turn. I mean, we got three guys going home, but a million can't go home.

Blair: It's a constant, constant business. Her going to the camps will make a big difference. When you go and talk to them, then you realize what you have to do.

Clinton: Alright, my friend.

Blair: Have a good time in Germany. Speak to you soon.

Clinton: Goodbye.

7 May 1999. In a night of extensive bombing, US B52's mistakenly target the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, killing 3 and wounding 20. UN Security Council meets to discuss the US's "terrible mistake" and violent demonstrations ensue in China. In a separate incident, a NATO cluster bomb misses an airfield and strikes a market and a hospital near Nis, killing 15. Milosevic's villa is located and targeted using Richard Holbrooke's and Wesley Clark's memory of a previous visit to meet Milosevic at a hunting lodge nearby. Notwithstanding the air campaign continues to ravage Yugoslavia's lifelines – its roads, bridges, railways, factories, airports, TV towers, fuel depots and power plants. By the end of the war NATO will destroy 24 bridges; 12 railway stations; 36 factories; seven airports; 16 fuel plants and storage depots; 17 television transmitters and several electrical facilities. One-third of Yugoslavia's military weaponry will be destroyed: 93 tanks; 153 Armoured personnel carriers; 339 military vehicles; 289 artillery pieces and mortars.

8 May, 1999, 3:26 - 3:46 p.m. Air Force One...

Clinton: Tony, can you hear me?

Blair: Yes, you're on Air Force One are you?

Clinton: Yes. This was a "great" day wasn't it?

Blair: I am afraid these things happen.

Clinton: That's what I said too.

Blair: It is bad, but we have just got to steady our nerves on it, really.

Clinton: Yes, that's what I did. I just went out and made a statement saying that we hit several important command and control targets, and that the damage to the Chinese Embassy and the death and injuries were completely inadvertent. I extended deep regrets to the people and the leaders of China but said it is important to remember why the strikes were necessary and how to put an end to them.

They asked about the Chinese and Russian reactions and whether it could derail the diplomatic efforts we're making toward a peace deal. I said I hoped not because that was the quickest way to get it over with and I restated the conditions and pointed out that we'd done over 10,000 sorties and because TV is in Belgrade, they could

cite every time there's unintended consequences, but our pilots have literally risked their lives to avoid hitting innocent civilians in Serbia - shot at from rooftops and in the middle of civilian areas, they have not responded. They have done everything they could to dodge the weapons and go on. We have to remember what caused these strikes and what could end them, but our conditions have to be met. No one would like to stop them more than me.

Blair: That is absolutely right. The TV cameras are not in Kosovo but if they were, they would be seeing people killed every day by Serbs, by Milosevic.

Clinton: Yes. If we had one TV picture of the 15 men being roped together and burned alive, they would be demanding that we bomb the hell out of them, people would be wondering why we haven't levelled the place, but our people need to be telling that to the media all the time.

Blair: What I did today was to get the NATO conference to go through all the atrocities in the last two weeks in Kosovo. We did a press conference on the same theme. I understand when something like this happens, people get very nervous about it, but day after day after day, things are happening without any cameras and no one reports a bit of it. Milosevic can take the cameras to wherever he likes and point to these things. But in Kosovo this is a daily happening, as a result of deliberate policy, not as an accident. [Abridged]

Clinton: That is right. They asked, 'What about the Russians and Chinese saying this was barbaric? I said it was not barbaric but a tragedy. We ought to take that word and turn it on them.

Blair: Absolutely, it got a lot of coverage.

Clinton: I think we all need to do more of that, reaching into other countries. One other thing, when I was there, I did a lot of spade work with our people working on humanitarian stuff about Macedonia, with the view as quickly as possible of turning Macedonia into a way-station and you know telling them we would move all of the refugees through there. We would need to get Turkey to agree to take about 100,000, get safe passage for them to Turkey. I believe we have enough money to do this. If my supplemental passes the Senate this coming week, and I think it will, what we would like to do is go to Turkey, with whatever help we get from Europe, and build these camps. We could build camps for 20,000 which are quite comfortable with public space, schools. They are tents, but nice tents. Also, if worse comes to worse, they can be winterized with wooden floors and heaters. They would be quite adequate. Obviously, it would be better to get them to Turkey anyway because the climate is better. Then we could build a couple of camps in Macedonia; it would be easier to secure a throughway if we could get them direct cash ... to the government in a hurry -which you could do quicker than me through the EU - then tell them we

want to make Macedonia a throughway, not permanent stops for refugees. We will be able to get the numbers manageable and stabilize this thing in the next few weeks. If they know where we were going, they'd do a lot better to hold and fend off domestic opponents.

Blair: I totally agree. That is an excellent idea and I will do everything to facilitate it. I spoke to Santer about getting European money released. The critical priority is to get money as quickly as possible that will buy their goodwill for forward transit to Turkey. We need to talk to Greece as well, but that is an excellent idea and exactly what we need to be doing.

Clinton: When does Prodi take over?

Blair: It's not quite clear, not for a couple of months. I should think we need to get Santer to work on that. If necessary, we can get the money ourselves and then get it back from the EU. They really need some money quickly. I will speak to Santer in the next couple of days.

Clinton: If I get my money this week; I will ship some too.

Blair: If I get the money there, we'll have the goodwill to facilitate all of this. I totally agree this is the right thing to do if Turkey is willing to do it.

Clinton: We can put these camps up in a hurry for 20,000 people for about \$20 million by the time you clear the land, work sewage, water and all that. That is \$1,000 a person, that's not all that much.

Blair: When you consider weapons and everything, it is a pretty sensible investment.

Clinton: I will work on this and get your guys in touch with our guys. We have to get money to Macedonia and Turkey to take 100,000, build transit camps in Macedonia that are physically separate and secure a commitment to build camps in Turkey and then get safe passage. We also need to get money to Albania. They've taken a lot in homes now, but we need better camps now.

Blair: Right. We need to watch in Albania, particularly because a lot of refugees are living with families and are not getting any support. [xxxx*] If necessary, we can do it ourselves with Germany and France and get it back from the EU.

Clinton: Do we need to call anyone else about this incident with China to buck them up?

Blair: I was going to speak to D'Alema anyway.

Clinton: Okay, I will call Jacques.

Blair: I still think that in the end, the public understands that in war these things happen. We have this operation in NATO and SHAPE working better now. If necessary we can do it [fund the camps] ourselves with Germany and France and get it back from the EU.

Clinton: Okay I will work on that. I don't have any great ideas but I'll work on it.

Blair: There are ways we could do it. looking at, but I think people, all the time, need to be reminded of the basic principles. When I went to Macedonia and saw those people, any doubt immediately leaves you. What has happened to these people is just dreadful. We need to make all the right diplomatic moves, but just carry on.

25 May 1999. NATO votes to increase ground forces in Macedonia to 48,000. Based at Skopje Airport, Lieutenant James H Blount (James Blunt) composes the song "Kosovo, here we go!" His commanding officer noted: "Thankfully the words never really deviated from the title so everyone was able to sing along."

26 May 1999. In a joint call between US and European foreign ministers the German Minister Joschika Fischer lets out a shriek of anguish. It turns out he was watching the Manchester United v Bayern Munich UEFA Champions league decider game during which the Brits scored two goals in the last thirty seconds.

27 May 27, 1999.

3A.M. A motorcade sweeps through downtown Bonn carrying US Defence Secretary William Cohen. The defence ministers of Britain, France, Germany and Italy have gathered at the German defence ministry to secretly discuss a ground 'invasion' of Yugoslavia. Following six and half hours of discussion they come to a momentous decision: they must ask their governments to assemble ground troops. British Defence Secretary George Robertson indicates he is prepared to commit 50,000.

On the same day Milosevic and three other Serb leaders receive an indictment from the war crimes tribunal for Former Yugoslavia for crimes against humanity including murder, deportation, and persecution. The ratchet straps of international accountability are being severely tightened across Milosevic's chest.

27 May, 1999, 10:10 - 10:22 a.m.

Blair: So, anyway, I sent you a note setting out my thoughts. I don't know whether it's reached you yet, I just finished it this morning, but I think the situation is, we are doing a lot of damage, but I think we're right to be stepping up the pressure. We've got to be.

Clinton: This planning process has got to proceed, because we only have a few days before deciding what else to do but I think 45,000 troops for KFOR is quite good. The more people we have deployed in the area, the more quickly we can move. I agree entirely with you; we obviously can't afford to lose and have to keep doing everything necessary to make him think that we're ready to intervene and no matter what we can't afford to lose. But the combination of the impact of last week's strikes and the fact that the North Atlantic Council has voted to let NATO increase the number of targets that will be hit and the nature of them and the build-up will give us maximum pressure. I agree with you, I don't care what happens to him, whether he stays there or goes someplace as you've said, like Belarus, it's all right with me if we get our objectives met.

Blair: Yes. [xxxx*] Because you save lives by doing that. I think we are in just about the right frame and it probably hasn't reached you yet, but I have set out in a note what I think you can do if we have to go a step further - how you would explain that and how you would take people with you. You can set it in a bigger vision for the Balkans and how it's good for people. xxxx*

The problem is, until you see a real plan, you're a bit in the dark on this. So, I think if we get a clear military consensus, I think people would go with that.

Clinton: The military consensus is 175,000 to 200,000 troops, at least that's what our people say, so we could probably do it with less. But one thing we've found out is the more we send in, the fewer will die. So the more unattractive we make it, the safer it is for everyone.

Hillary and I are taking a couple of days off, and I am mulling that over right now. My gut feeling is that I have to give something sooner rather than later. Unless it cracks in two or three days, it's better to say something very strong, that we have no intention of losing this. Now the good news about the indictment, Tony, is that it makes it less forgivable for us to lose it. No one can say, 'Oh well, they're just nationalists.' I think it is interesting that apparently the whole indictment is premised on Kosovo and shows a systematic government policy. I thought in the beginning that if she (Louise Arbour) did do this, some might be based on his role in the Bosnia slaughters. But apparently, it's all based on Kosovo. It's quite interesting. And apparently, I haven't seen it, but apparently it says that it's more than chain of command, it's specific personal things he ordered, not that he was just

the head of the apparatus. This will be quite helpful in making that case. I agree with you but this is making it impossible for everyone to walk away and making him see people are not going to walk away.

Blair: I think that is right. As I say, you haven't got this yet.

Clinton: I just got it, I just read it. Just this second. I will be back in a few days and get back with you on that, and we'll keep our fingers crossed. I think the North Atlantic Council did the right thing by approving a new range of targets.

Blair: Yes, I think it has been a good few days.

Clinton: Alright, I will talk to you soon.

Blair: Alright, Bill, all the best.

June 1999, Deal at Dawn

1 June 1999. NATO maintain a pace of over 300 strike sorties a day over the weekend. Allied planes attack infrastructure and Serbian troop concentrations on the Albanian border. NATO spokesman Jamie Shea stresses that NATO has "no direct relationship" [Legalise use of the word 'direct'] with the KLA, but that "certainly they have been the indirect beneficiaries of NATO actions."

3 June 1999, Dawn: following high level meetings through-out the night in Bonn, Ahtisaari and Chernomyrdin fly to Belgrade to present Milosevic with a peace deal.

6:30 a.m. White house situation room operators begin tracking down Clinton's national security team to report that Milosevic is ready to capitulate. Clinton, advisers and allies greet the news cautiously. The deal states that there must be: "a verifiable withdrawal from Kosovo of military, police, and paramilitary forces according to a quick time table," an international security presence, "with essential NATO participation, under a unified control and command," and suspension of NATO strikes to take place after a verifiable withdrawal has begun.

President Clinton is reportedly on brink of backing the mobilization of ground troops in preparation for an invasion.

June 3, 1999, 6:42 - 6:57 p.m. Oval Office...

Clinton: Hi, Tony.

Blair: Let's hope it sticks.

Clinton: Yes, I hope it will. I think you and I gave the best answer.

Blair: Here [Cologne] it's like trying to stamp down a bush fire.

Clinton: There are a lot of unanswered questions. Maybe 72 hours from now we can celebrate, but we will all look stupid if it turns into a red herring by Milosevic. My response today was "welcome, but cautious."

Blair: We should only rejoice when the refugees go home.

Clinton: Chernomyrdin has been good too and for the Russians this is good too. They have come out well.

Blair: Yes, I think it is a good thing for Russia. They came out extremely well.

Clinton: It makes them look like a world leader. They don't want to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. This should help them with their economic stabilization. He's getting a lot of criticism at home.

Blair: I mostly agree with that. Absolutely right, people tonight are talking far more positively about them and asking what we can do to help the Russians in economic terms. It really changes the atmosphere there, doesn't it?

Clinton: Yes, it certainly does. The other thing that they and the Serbs should think about is that this saves us a hell of a lot of money that can be used on development, the money we would save from putting in a ground force. Also, the main thing we need to do is look like we remain determined.

Blair: Absolutely right. I think, as well, that the stronger message is our support for democratic Serbia. I think that is helpful the more it is emphasized. So there we are, Bill.

Clinton: The main thing we all need is to stay strong. We need to share the responsibility for the credit as well as the blame, and we can all dance if we get it done. I did call Schroeder and make the same argument.

Blair: I was having a bit of trouble with it, but I think we are right on it.

Clinton: I don't want Milosevic to think that we are so hooked on this deal.

Blair: About the success – I am absolutely delighted, but only when it is complete.

Clinton: I have made a bunch of deals with this guy over the years. The Dayton accords is the only one he kept and he kept that because we had bodies on the ground.

Blair: We shouldn't forget and people shouldn't forget what this guy has done.

Clinton: We may know Sunday or Monday where we are. Maybe you and I could talk on Sunday. I need to talk to you about the other option. There is good news and bad news.

5 June 1999. Lt. Gen Michael Jackson situates himself within a portable hanger in Kumanovo to begin technical talks about the entry of NATO forces and withdrawal of Serb forces from Kosovo.

6 June 1999. UK 5th Airborne Brigade flies to Macedonia.

12:32 - 12:42 p.m. Camp David, Maryland...

[Abridged and redacted]

Clinton: Hi, Tony. How are you?

Blair: I'm anxious until this thing is properly tied down.

Clinton: This is exactly what I was afraid of. A bombing pause and then they would try to steal the peace now that we have won the war. The position is that the Russians and Chinese won't let a Security Council Resolution go through until there is a bombing pause, but we won't pause unless there is clear evidence of withdrawal. Funny, but I understand the Serb position; they don't want a vacuum so when their withdrawal starts, they want us to come in. Yesterday, our guys said you begin withdrawal, we will pause and try for one day to get a Security Council Resolution. If the Chinese and Russians won't, we'll get a NATO accord and move in immediately. That was our position yesterday. Today, the Serbs came back and said they couldn't live with this. They want a Security Council Resolution that links the authority to deploy and the authority to run the country under the UN; if there is a delay, we'll return to our pre-conflict force levels before we invaded until the Security Council works it out. That's a nightmare and we can't let that happen. They're trying to steal the peace after we won the conflict. I know you agree with that. I am going to call D'Alema. I don't know what to do except tell our guys to hang tough. Ahtisaari delayed his China trip.

Blair: I just talked to Ahtisaari.

Clinton: What did he say?

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: Good for him.

Blair: My guy down there, Michael Jackson, is a good bloke, but he is a general not a negotiator.

Clinton: I think Ahtisaari made a good impression on Milosevic. I haven't talked to Sandy, Madeleine or anyone about him going down. But I worry about this thing dragging on. I'm not worried about sending a signal; we need to get this going while the iron is hot.

Blair: I told Martti I'd get back to him in an hour. If we want to have a chat to our folks and have them chat.

Clinton: I agree. I've been waiting for this. I've been nervous as hell all day. We can't let him take the peace away from us.

Blair: I agree 100 percent.

Clinton: We owe it to these people (the Kosovars), and don't forget that they (the Serbs) are asking us to eat a hell of a lot of shit. Now that they want us to sweep out Thaci and the KLA and give this Authority five years to work, our crowd is going to be at some physical risk too. We have to think down the road here. Look at Bosnia four years later. We're taking on a lot of water here. If we can spring some money from the IMF and the World Bank... but there are all kinds of hurdles with that. Well, you and I are in the same place. We can't let our folks get weak on this. If the Europeans stay hitched on this, we should be okay in a day or two. I might give Chretien a call too. He has a lot of friends over there in Europe. I know he agrees with us. We may have to do some hand holding on this.

Blair: I agree.

Clinton: I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll call Sandy now and talk to our guys and then I'll try to call D'Alema and decide who else I should call. If there is any other problem, I'll be available. It's sunny here. I may go out, but I'll have phones with me.

Blair: I have some people I really trust out there at the negotiations. Okay, our people will be in touch.

Clinton: If this thing is going to be drug out for another 72 hours or so, we may also need a story about how our planning is continuing. We have to put a squeeze on and we can't let them get the peace. Okay, we have a vigorous agreement going here, so we don't need to waste time. I'll talk to Sandy and we'll be in touch. Goodbye.

Blair: Goodbye.

7 June 1999, 9:55 - 10:06 a.m. Oval Office...

[Abridged and redacted]

Blair: Hi Bill. Now do you want me to tell you what I know?

Clinton: Yep.

Blair: The talks broke off. [xxxx*]. Do you see what I mean?

Clinton: Yes. I completely agree with everything you've said. The key here is where the Russians are on this. We just have to be tough as hell with them, I am completely in accord with where you are. We are in the same place Tony, and we've got to tough it out and get a good UN draft. Maybe I am super sensitive, but let me say something: [xxxx*] ok?

Blair: Ok Bill. xxxx*

Clinton: I am going to call Yeltsin as soon as I hang up with you.

Blair: Alright. All the best. Thank you. Good-bye.

Clinton: Goodbye.

7 June 1999. Yugoslav commanders refuse NATO's terms for a pull-out. Bombing continues and in the evening US B52s drop bombs on Yugoslav troops in support of 250 KLA soldiers pinned down on Mount Pastrik.

11:07 - 11:14 a.m. Oval Office...

Yeltsin: Good afternoon. Bill.

Clinton: Hello, Boris. Thank you for taking this call. I think we are on the verge of a very important achievement to get an end to the bombing and the return of refugees, as we discussed last April. As you remember, on that day you suggested that Viktor Stepanovich engage with the Vice President, and since then he has worked with Gore, President Ahtisaari and Strobe Talbott and has come up with an excellent plan, which President Milosevic accepted last Friday.

Yeltsin: I think. Bill, we have come a long way together, and the only thing remaining is for us to finalize this work.

Clinton: I agree with that. If we can get agreement today on a UN Security Council resolution covering the peacekeeping force in the G-8 meeting going on now in Germany, I think everything will work out all right. I think it's important that Ivanov do everything possible to reach an agreement. Your role has been indispensable until now. This can all be over very quickly and will set the stage for the G-8 meeting in Cologne in two weeks and a great Russian diplomatic triumph.

Yeltsin: I have been thinking a lot and with concern about the possibility of losing the positive experience we gained together with you. This would be extremely dangerous.

Clinton: I agree with that. I have told our people, and I know the other Europeans have been told, that we need to reach agreement today, and I hope you can tell Ivanov this. If we can get agreement on a Security Council resolution, we can work the sequencing out, so they begin to withdraw, then we have a bombing pause, then we pass a resolution, then the peacekeeping forces go in, and we can all go to work. That's what we have to do. But we have to make sure nothing happens to make Milosevic think he can stall; we can't let him stall or backslide. If he had done what he told Chernomyrdin Friday, there would be no bombs falling today. We have to go forward, we need to pass the draft resolution today. I hope you will do all you can. The G-8 needs to approve it.

Yeltsin: I fully agree with you. If we fail to join our efforts together, we will certainly have failed.

Clinton: I will call Madeleine right now and tell her to redouble our efforts. Will you do the same with Ivanov?

Yeltsin: Of course, of course. Bill, and immediately.

Clinton: Good. Let's keep working at it, Boris. We can do this today, and it will be a great triumph for Russian diplomacy, and then when we get to the G-8 in Cologne, we will have something to celebrate rather than worry about. And I will lead the ovation.

Yeltsin: Okay, agreed. I agree with this. If any misunderstanding would exist between us, I would be able to get in touch and give the necessary instructions to my minister, Ivanov.

Clinton: That is very good news. Thank you, Boris.

Yeltsin: Goodbye, Bill. Thank you for this conversation.

8 June 1999. 8:50 Oval Office. Clinton-Yeltsin telephone conversation clarifies Yeltsin's misunderstandings about the anticipated sequence of events: i.e., Serb with-drawl, NATO bombing cessation, UN resolution, peacekeepers go in.

9 June 1999. In a British Army hangar near Kumanovo, the Serbs refused to sign the Military Technical Agreement governing the withdrawal from Kosovo. NATO ground forces Lt. General Sir Mike Jackson declared he was going for a stiff drink but was called back when Milosevic telephoned to give the go-ahead. After more discussions, NATO and Serbian officials finally initial a Military Technical Agreement to govern the Serb withdrawal.

10 June 1999. UN Sec. General Solana requests suspension of NATO bombing, and the Security Council adopts resolution 1244 permitting the deployment of the international civil and military authorities in Kosovo. As Serb forces begin withdrawal the airstrikes are suspended. Clinton makes multiple congratulatory phone calls to all the leaders involved, starting with Blair, Solana (NATO) and Yeltsin; followed by: D'Alema (Italy), Chirac (France), Aznar (Spain), Chretien (Canada), Guterres (Portugal), Kok (Netherlands), Schroeder (Germany), Dehaene (Belgium).

10 June 1999, 9:09 - 9:27 a.m. Oval Office...

Clinton: Hey, I just called to say thanks, it's been a good run. Life's greatest curse is the answer to our prayers; now we have to figure out how to get all those people back in, without getting blown up by all those landmines. I had Elie Wiesel here - do you know him?

Blair: Yes.

Clinton: He's a Holocaust survivor, and an advisor. I sent him to some of the camps, and he said, boy, there is so much anger there. Every Kosovar believes he knows the Serb who ousted him.

Blair: Yes, it's going to be tough, isn't it? I tell you what, it could be a lot worse.

Clinton: Well, it's quite wonderful.

Blair: At least now it will be a problem of construction instead of destruction.

Clinton: We've just got to hold everybody together and keep working on it.

Blair: [The line drops, and is re-established]

Clinton: Hey, Tony, I'm sorry.

Blair: No, no, it's our fault. I'll have the person who dropped the line executed.

Clinton: [Laughs] We're trying to think through the obvious questions, about how fast we can get people back in and clear out the landmines, and we need to flush out Macedonia first.

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: I am, too. There are not a lot of places he can go, given his indictment by the war crimes tribunal. Maybe Russia or Belarus would take him, or maybe he'd get a Pinochet deal and leave him in Serbia. Let me say this: we sent out our top

people to NATO for Kosovo, we need to do the same thing with getting the refugees back and setting up a government. Whatever the formal structure, we have to put our best people in to set up the mechanics and make this thing work. There are literally thousands of detail questions that we have to answer. The major concern I have about the person on top is I want someone with confidence and energy to do this thing. I want someone to go there and stay.

Clinton: The commander of the overall military is going to be British, isn't he? I think he's good. I haven't met him, but I've seen him on TV.

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: Anyway, this won't require our obsession like the battle, but it will require our attention for the next 10 days.

June 10, 1999, 10:03 Oval Office...

Clinton: Hello?

NATO Secretary General Solana: How are you? Good morning to you.

Clinton: It really is a good morning.

Solana: Good morning, in all the sense of the phrase. You have done a really great job. It would not have been done without your leadership. It succeeded because we really maintained the line to the last minute. And we were able to maintain the allies until the last minute. It was fantastic. Thank you very much for everything you have done.

Clinton: We could not have done it without you. You kept them all together.

Solana: When we have forces deployed on the ground in the next few days it will be a memorable picture that will be unforgettable. We will see what we have done. We have established Allied links of friendship among ourselves that cannot be broken. We must maintain that forever.

Clinton: You've got it. Thanks very much.

Solana: Thank you so much.

Clinton: Have a great day.

10 June 1999. 10:40 - 10:50 a.m. Oval Office...

Yeltsin: Good afternoon. Bill.

Clinton: Hello, Boris. I just called to thank you very much for your leadership in bringing this conflict to a conclusion. The withdrawal has begun, the bombing has stopped, and now we are waiting for passage of the UN resolution, but I am looking forward to working with you there.

Yeltsin: Well, I know we have common work. It was most difficult to achieve that. I am sorry if in some cases I was nosy.

Clinton: No, I am just pleased that it happened and I am looking forward to our people working together on Kosovo and I'm looking forward to meeting you in Cologne at the G-8. It's a great triumph for Russian diplomacy, and now we have to work to help you achieve your other objectives with the economy and your continuing efforts at political reform. I just want to say again, we couldn't have brought this to a good conclusion without your leadership and the role Mr. Chernomyrdin played with President Ahtisaari. That was the key to breaking this open, and I am very grateful and I just wanted to call and thank you.

Yeltsin: I'm very glad about that. You know, it would have been a real tragedy for us if our ways had gone in different directions, because we have been working for many years. But I am very glad about the fact that we will be able to continue working together and cooperating. That is just great. So, I would like to hug and kiss you, and I am sincerely glad that in such a difficult situation our friendship wasn't broken.

Clinton: Thank you, Boris. Our friendship will never be broken, as long as we are honest with each other. We had straight talks and we made it work, as we made it work in Bosnia, and I am looking forward to seeing you.

Yeltsin: Yes, I am glad to hear that. So, we will all just work in the same way if the same situation arises.

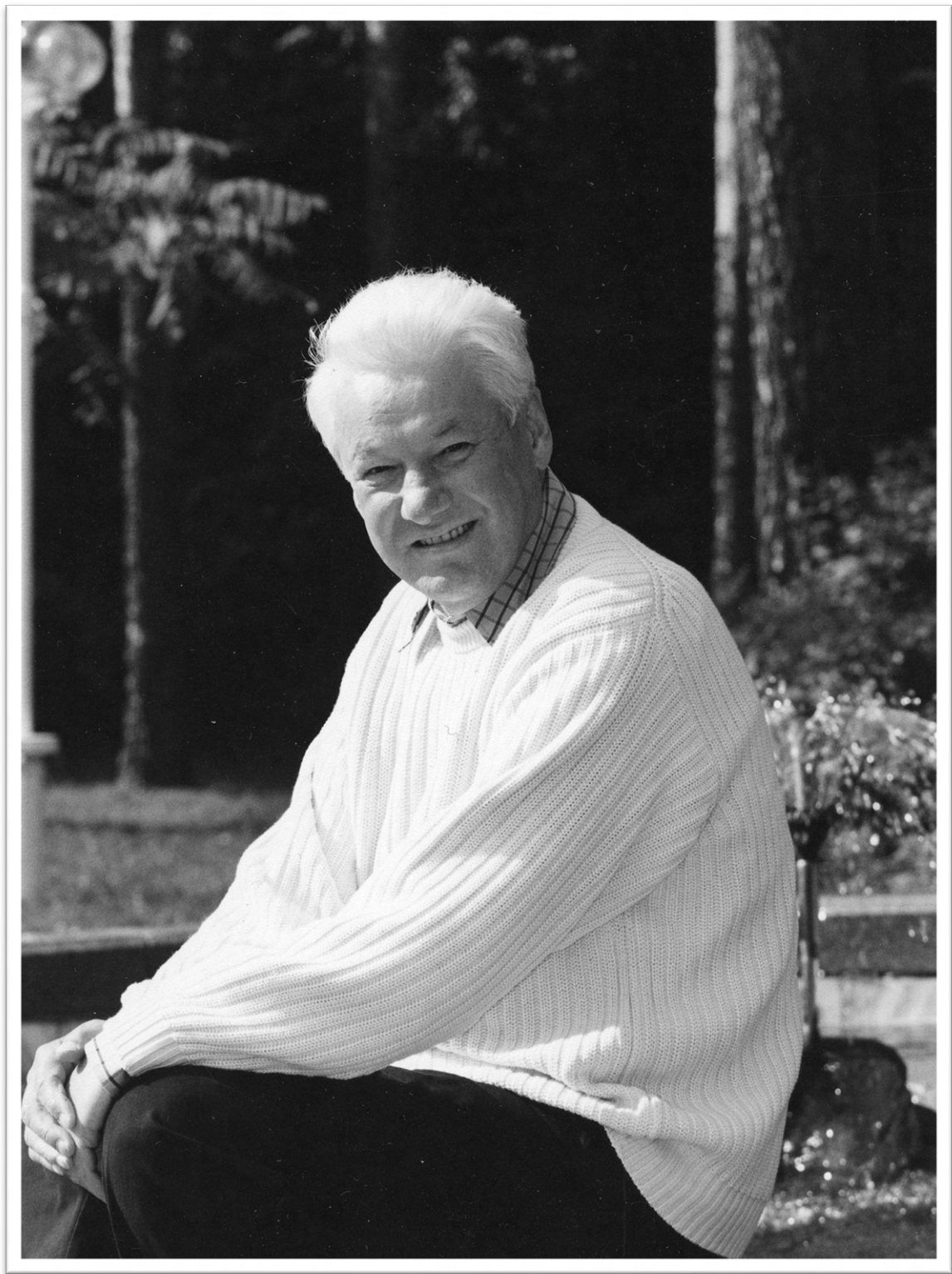
Clinton: Good, and I will see you soon in Cologne, I hope.

Yeltsin: I am embracing you very, very strongly and really glad to share your happiness.

Clinton: Thank you, Boris. I will see you soon.

Yeltsin: That's okay. See you later. Goodbye, Bill.

Clinton: Goodbye.



President Yeltsin. Photo: Wiki

Clinton: "My fellow Americans, tonight for the first time in 79 days, the skies over Yugoslavia are silent. The Serb army and police are withdrawing from Kosovo. The one million men, women, and children driven from their land are preparing to return home. The demands of an outraged and united international community have been met. I can report to the American people that we have achieved a victory for a safer world, for our democratic values, and for a stronger America. Our pilots have returned to base. The airstrikes have been suspended. Aggression against an innocent people has been contained and is being turned back...[Abridged]

...When I ordered our Armed Forces into combat, we had three clear goals: to enable the Kosovar people, the victims of some of the most vicious atrocities in Europe since the Second World War, to return to their homes with safety and self-government; to require Serbian forces responsible for those atrocities to leave Kosovo; and to deploy an international security force, with NATO at its core, to protect all the people of that troubled land, Serbs and Albanians, alike. Those goals will be achieved. A necessary conflict has been brought to a just and honourable conclusion...[Abridged]

...We have sent a message of determination and hope to all the world. Think of all the millions of innocent people who died in this bloody century because democracies reacted too late to evil and aggression. Because of our resolve, the 20th century is ending not with helpless indignation but with a hopeful affirmation of human dignity and human rights for the 21st century. In a world too divided by fear among people of different racial, ethnic, and religious groups, we have given confidence to the friends of freedom and pause to those who would exploit human difference for inhuman purposes. America still faces great challenges in this world, but we look forward to meeting them. So, tonight I ask you to be proud of your country and very proud of the men and women who serve it in uniform. For in Kosovo, we did the right thing; we did it the right way; and we will finish the job. Good night, and may God bless our wonderful United States of America."

Friday 11 June 1999. British troops gather on the Macedonian border with Kosovo awaiting the go-ahead to cross into the province and begin their peacekeeping operation. Members of the 5th Airborne Division set up Piper camp just three kilometres from the Kosovo side. They flatten corn fields to improvise a helipad for the eight Chinook helicopters. Tanks and heavy artillery of the Fourth Armoured Division pass by Piper camp on their way to the border.



12 June 1999. Op. Agricola begins. Photos: NATO



The Parachute regiment enter Prishtina (top) NATO receive an emotional welcome (bottom). Photos: NATO

Saturday 12 June 1999. In a move that surprises allied commanders, approximately 200 Russian troops, backed by Yelstsin, leave Bosnia, travel through Serbia and enter Kosovo before NATO, taking control of Pristina airport. 03:00: A Russian mechanised infantry company of around 200 men reach the outskirts of Prishtina, then push onto Prishtina airport where they immediately secure a connected bunker system and aircraft storage area under Mount Goles.

05:00: At day break Operation Joint Guardian, the advance into Kosovo part of Operation Agricola begins. Eighteen United States Apache gunships lead the way, followed by Puma and Chinook helicopters carrying Gurkhas and Paratroopers of the 5th Airborne Brigade. They fly across the border at dawn to secure bridgeheads; their first tasks being to take control of the border post and the Kacanik defile. The way thus cleared, D squadron of the Royal Horse Guards (Household Cavalry), with medics, bomb disposal and engineers attached, is given the green light to go, forming the 50-vehicle lead of the 4th (UK) Armoured Brigade into Kosovo. Behind them the vehicles of a 10-mile NATO convoy of vehicles, including challenger tanks, armoured scout cars and bridge building equipment follow.

Mid-afternoon: Five Airborne Brigade reach Prishtina airport and establish contact with the Russian Commanding Officer.

16:00: As dusk falls, Challenger tanks of the King's Royal Hussars station themselves on the outskirts of Prishtina. Apache helicopters poke their way into Prishtina's suburbs. A small Special Forces team, with an Irish Guards Liaison officer, enter in Land Rovers, partly tasked with laying the drop zone for the Parachute Regiment to be flown in the next day. After an 11-hour journey from Macedonia, D squadron Household Cavalry joins Paratroopers at Prishtina's Slatina airport.

18:00: D Squadron Royal Horse Guards is ordered to join a Special Forces team in Prishtina before dark. On route they pass three challenger tanks of the King's Royal Hussars just short of, what is to this day known as flag pole roundabout, where the special forces team is waiting in a garage. Here's the story in the words of Officers from the Royal Horse Guards:

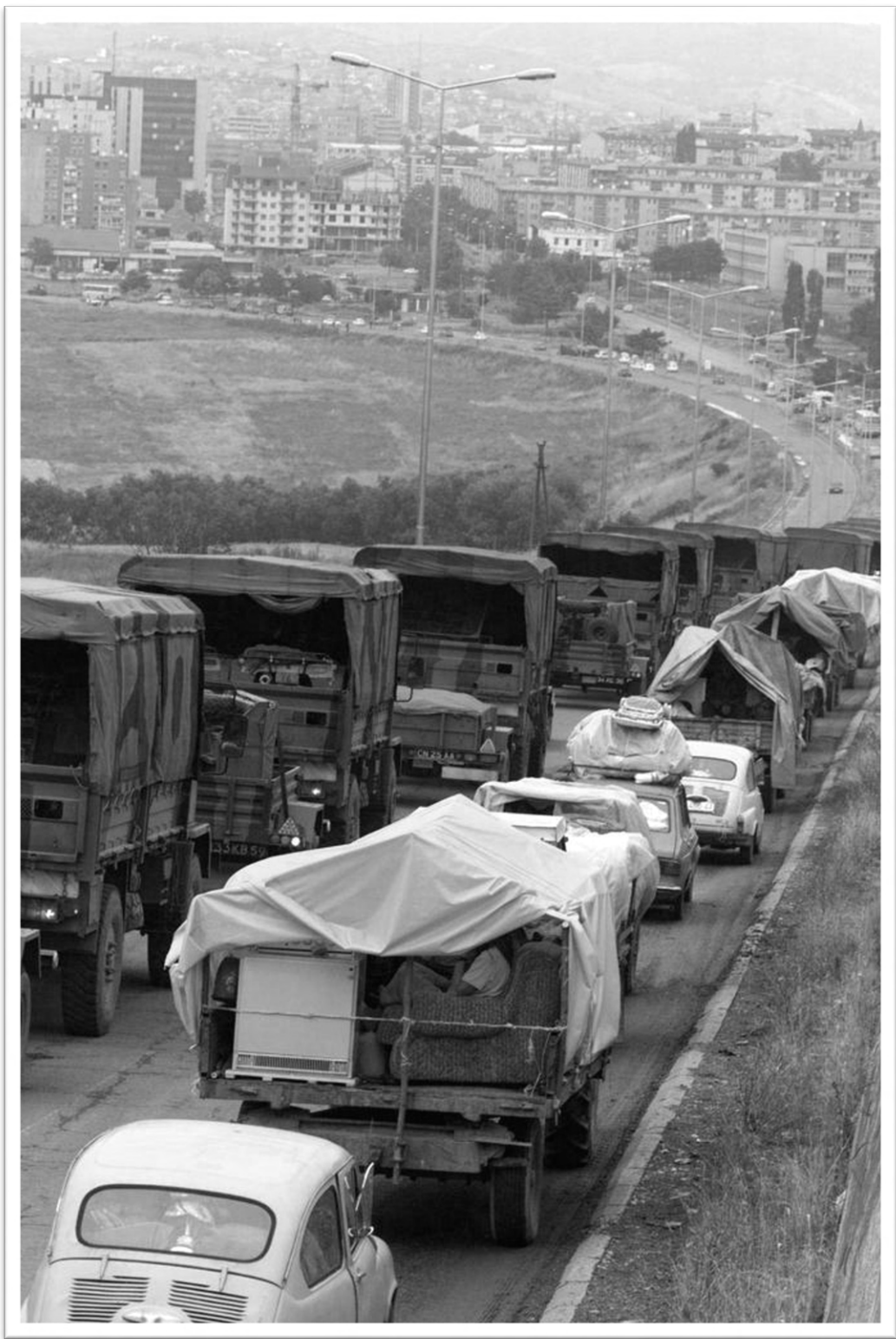
"The race to, and the first night in Prishtina were memorable; we arrived in a thunderstorm just as darkness was falling. Prishtina was grey, Silent and uninviting, interrupted by the rattle of gunfire. The Yugoslav Army was still at large, like some drunken, marauding pack of wolves in the final throws of a hideous and grotesque stag fight. We rendezvoused with the Special Forces team who were sitting in a small room at the garage, talking quietly amongst themselves. In the corner of the room sat a journalist manically typing on his laptop. No-one paid any attention to him and the scene was rather surreal with the long-haired smock wearing SAS team looking more like models from one of those survival catalogues. One of the commanders lit up a cigar. He had kept it in his top pocket since leaving England in

April; he inhaled deeply and muttered something about saving it for the entry into Prishtina."

Elements of the Guards are detailed to escort the special forces team into the centre of Prishtina to liaise with the Serb army commander, while others are deployed around the city.

18:30: In driving rain Lt. General Mike Jackson takes two Lynx helicopters to Prishtina Airport. On route he stops for a brew with British soldiers on the road. He arrives at the airport to hold a press conference and warm relations with Russian General Viktor Zavarzin over a whisky. Asked by a journalist if he was embarrassed by the Russian presence he retorted: "Not in the slightest, I welcome the Russians, they are part of KFOR, thank you very much, good night." With the Russian contingent now isolated at the airport and their airspace closed, Jackson withstood sustained American pressure to block the runway with helicopters. "Sir, I'm not going to start World War Three for you," he famously replied to his superior, General Wesley Clark, the following day.

Sun 13 June 1999. The Royal Irish Guards arrive to help secure Prishtina in the morning. Eight hundred British soldiers from the First Battalion of the Parachute Regiment are air-lifted onto high ground in Prishtina [now Martyrs Cemetery Hill] by Chinook helicopter. Hitting the streets, they are greeted with cheers and shouts of "NATO, NATO!" Some paratroopers are driven into town at reckless speeds, hanging onto the back of Pinzgauers. Relaying the welcome, a British Para commented: "The locals keep coming up, [with] the amount of flowers we have been getting, we could start our own florist. They keep giving us bread, food, water and anything we need."



Refugees return down the hill into Prishtina. Photo: NATO

Mon 14 June 1999. Ethnic Albanians began flooding back into Kosovo; within three weeks over 600,000 return in one of the most rapid refugee returns in history. As many as 200,000 Serbs and Roma begin moving toward Serbia and Montenegro to escape retribution. D Squadron Royal Horse Guards recce further north. Despite the presence of NATO retributive killings of Serbs in Prishtina and surrounding villages takes place. Serb forces loot and torch areas as they leave, their special forces having previously excavated and transported the remains of murdered Kosovo Albanians to mass grave sites in Serbia. Paratroopers prevent an incident of rape against Albanian girls and come to the assistance of three Serb men who had been subjected to torture.

Tue 15 June 1999. Lieutenant General Mike Jackson meets with Russian counterpart General Yefstokovic. Challenger tanks and Warrior infantry carriers from Britain's 4th Armoured Brigade begin moving into final positions along the Kosovo-Serbia border in their last big advance northwards. The armed column move into Podujevo 40 Kilometres north of Prishtina, where there had been heavy fighting. Even as KFOR peacemakers enter, Yugoslav forces were beating a final retreat as they head out of town. Hundreds of jubilant Albanians flood the streets to welcome the KFOR peacemakers. Chanting "NATO! NATO!" In an Associated Press report Major Toby Bridge of the King's Royal Hussars says: "We don't mind having our forces intermingled with the Serb forces, but what we do not want is for there to be any security vacuum. To that end we are moved up and are going to deploy forces throughout the area, so that any attack by either community upon each other can be stopped by our forces."

18 June 1999. After a week of tension, confusion and discussions, Albright, Cohen and Russians reach preliminary agreement over Russian participation in peacekeeping force. In all, over 20,000 international troops have moved into Kosovo.

18 June 1999. The 25th G8 Summit in Cologne, Germany begins.

1:40 - 2:35 p.m. Hyatt Hotel, Cologne, Germany...

[Abridged and redacted]

Clinton: Tony, do you want to talk about Kosovo? I have one big point to make: you had a huge impact on the execution of this campaign and on our ability to sell what we needed to do. You realized the need to improve our communications. Now, the big decision we have to face is making sure that this works. There is a huge effort in bringing people back, in rebuilding lives, in spite of the magnitude of the crisis. There is a mental health crisis. I sent Elie Wiesel to the region to talk to the refugees. I talked to Jesse Jackson about this. All of us agree that we need some kind of systematic, organized effort maybe working through faith groups. We need

to start. But before even all of that, the UN must pick someone we would hire to oversee the civilian implementation. Nationality doesn't matter to me. All that counts is confidence, energy, and organization skills. Those are the keys. The Economist had a fluff piece on Bildt.

Blair: Yes, I fully agree. This is a critical decision. Who are the candidates?

Samuel Berger: No one has emerged that I am aware of. The selection seems to focus on former Foreign Ministers or defeated Prime Ministers. With all respect, that is the wrong mind-set. We need a CEO-type.

Clinton: There must be a terrific European business person who has worked in the Balkans, for example. Someone with imagination and executive ability.

Blair: xxxx*

Clinton: Yes, he is, but of course, the Europeans want a European.

Blair: Well, I am happy with an American.

Clinton: I am afraid that the UN will dither on this for weeks.

Berger: If I could just raise one idea. You both should lay down a marker with the Secretary General on how you see the job. You should imply a veto right. In other words, you together would expect he would not appoint someone without your approval.

Clinton: Anyway, I don't know your politics in Europe. But I do know that this is our deal. If it fails, it will be our failure. My have no preconceived notions and no conditions on nationality. My only concern is confidence. Jacques Klein is tough and good. But I keep coming back to the bottom line - whoever it is has to be up to the job. [Abridged]

Clinton: I don't think the Secretary General is thinking about this in the right way, [xxxx*] he should be calling us to ask who is the smartest businessperson in the United States and Europe. Who can get business people to support this. [xxxx*] My position is don't look for someone who has navigated the shoals of partisan politics and never built anything. This requires special additional skills; I would have loved to have the job myself.

Blair: Yes, it really is rebuilding a country from scratch.

Clinton: If I were head of a company, I would love this job.

Blair: We should start digging for names so at least there is a good choice. Xxxx

Clinton: This must not be about politics.

Blair: In the end this really is a unique position. It's like being the procounsel of a country. You need communication skills, executive skills. xxxx*

Clinton: On the issue of relief, we've got \$1 billion earmarked for the short-term. On long-term reconstruction, I guess we have this conference in the Fall. On the EU's Stability Pact, we want to contribute but since most of the money is European, it's hard for us to shape it. I think we need to take a step back and look at the Marshall Plan, and also think about what we want this to look like in ten years. We need a prosperous Balkans so there is less temptation for conflict. We want it to be more integrated with Europe. With the EU, with NATO. The first thing we need to do is to define the universe: Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo. And Serbia if we can get rid of Milosevic. I think we need to apply one of the central ideas of the Marshall plan which is to get the beneficiaries to meet together and define their own vision of the Balkans, how they would use the money, how they would apportion it. We need to force them to assume responsibility for their own future. They need to have a real plan and develop themselves with our help. There are some real smart people out there that can do this.

Blair: Yes, xxxx*.

Clinton: That's true. We all need to think about what more we can do. We, in the United States, need to think about whether we should say to Congress that we should accelerate accession for some of the Balkan countries into NATO. You might consider the same thing for the European Union. Should there be a customs Union with the EU, like Turkey. Should you accelerate the session process? If you think we, should push the envelope, we can push Schroeder, Chirac and D'Alema to think about this.

Blair: I agree we should push the envelope.

Clinton: We need direct aid too. We've already got some going for Albania and Macedonia. I think we need to structure our assistance in Kosovo in a way that is helpful to the front-line States. For example, using their construction companies. We need to get people on the ground to start turning our roadmap for the Balkans into reality. We need the person, we need the plan, we need an approach that takes into account the whole region. What I think we should do on the Stability Pact is for us and Prodi to convene a meeting in the Balkans maybe in Sophia. Bring all the people together, the U.S., the EU, the concerned countries, and the international financial institutions. We need to forge a common vision and get their buy in. We

need to start a process for them to meet and to plan their own future. It's not like these people are not smart.

Blair: Yes, I agree that would be a very good way to proceed.

Clinton: Similarly, we need to decide whatever we can do with NATO, the EU, and with aid. We need to get to work. If we can get the people in the region bought in, it will change the dynamics and psychology of people and the region.

Samuel Berger: We also have to solve this problem with the Russians. I think we are almost there.

Samuel Berger: Actually, that's been sorted out. The real problem that still needs to be resolved is that Yeltsin continues to want a sector.

Clinton: I think we all need to watch them. If we have something that we can live with, I don't mind letting them declare victory so we can just get this out of the headlines and move on. Right now they are in the way and we need to resolve this. I want to nail this Russian thing down. The other reason is that I am truly worried that Yeltsin might make a dangerous decision. He thinks we are trying to extend our sphere of influence. He just doesn't understand we are trying to make a more peaceful Europe and reverse ethnic cleansing. But I think he will do the right thing at the end.

Blair: We need to close on this today.

Clinton: Yeltsin is the only Russian leader who truly hates communism, believes in freedom and integration with the west. We need a huge effort to move the centre of Russian politics. I think one way to do that is for us to get more parliamentarians there. It's a huge effort to go to them and to bring them to us in a more systematic way but I think it's worth it. That will really help to educate politicians there and move them to the centre. We need to combat their insularity.

20 June 1999. Serbs complete withdrawal from Kosovo a few hours before the deadline, and Secretary General Solana formally ends NATO's bombing campaign. Of the period of operation Sir Mike Jackson later wrote: "It was a hectic, confused and dangerous nine days during which KFOR had to stamp its authority on both Serb forces and their opponents, the Kosovo Liberation Army, while assuring as far as we could, the safety of the civilian population of whatever ethnic origin."

20 June 1999. Under NATO pressure, KLA agrees to disarm.

6:30-6:40 p.m. The Hyatt Hotel, Cologne, Germany.

Clinton: Congratulations on the signing of the agreement for the demilitarization and transformation of the KLA. I am very pleased it happened on the same day that the Serb forces completed their withdrawal from Kosovo.

Thaci: Thank you. It is an honor that you are congratulating us on KLA's demilitarization and transformation. This is also your success. For us it has been a compromise for the sake of working towards peace and stability in Kosovo and the region.

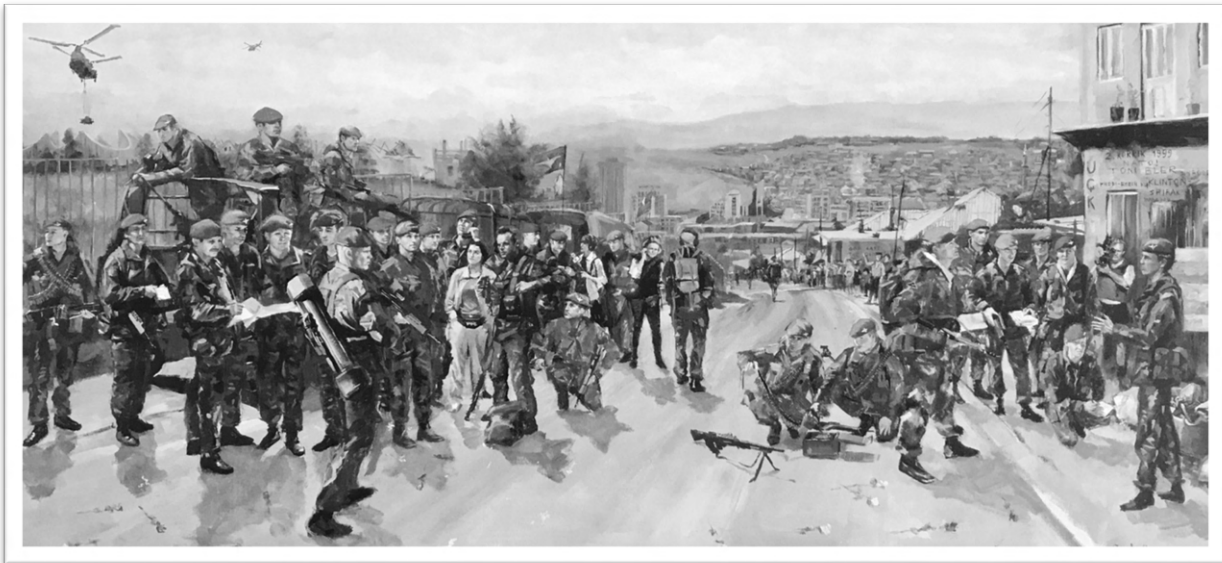
Clinton: I know. And I am grateful for this. I can assure you that we will fully cooperate to bring security, a local police force and true self-government for the people of Kosovo. This is a very important day for Kosovo. I am very pleased that we have managed to change the course of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo.

Thaci: This process is also due to your efforts. We have in the past been committed and will continue to be committed to the peace process. We can guarantee that we will respect human rights, and minority rights in Kosovo. We are committed to bringing freedom, peace and democracy to all ethnic groups in Kosovo. We will also work for a free and open economy. Our conversation today will also be an incentive towards these goals.

Clinton: Your statement about respecting human rights and minority rights is very important. After the suffering of the people of Kosovo, for you to take the lead on these issues means to prove to everyone that our plight is just. Milosevic is not like the others. We will have a good future. I look forward to meeting you and I admire your leadership.

Thaci: Thank you Mr. President. The new battle awaiting us now is the return of refugees, reconstruction, the establishment of a civil society and holding free and pluralistic elections. And we will do this through our mechanisms but also with your help and support. I wish you good health and success in both your life and work.

Clinton: Thank you. Good bye.



Parachute Regiment land on high ground in Prishtina. (Currently situated next to Rugova's grave).



Gen Mike Jackson negotiating with the KLA at Film City, Prishtina, Kosovo

June 21, 1999, 2:26 - 2:33 p.m. Ljubljana, Slovenia

Two British soldiers and two civilians are killed clearing unexploded ordnance in a school yard.

Blair: Hello, Bill.

Clinton: Hey, Tony, I called to tell you I'm sorry about your soldiers.

Blair: Thanks very much. It's very kind of you to call. We're still trying to find out the details.

Clinton: Tony? [Call dropped and re-established.]

Clinton: You're still trying to get the news? All I've seen is what's on CNN.

Blair: We don't know how much more than that at the moment. It appears one of them was a sergeant, and they were trying to demine a school, and a mine went off. I'm afraid we're going to see quite a bit of this before it's all through.

Clinton: Yes. They said it might have been more like a booby trap than a traditional mine. It's difficult to tell whether they're deactivated.

Blair: And it was in a school, I think. Well, they're pretty sick, actually. As more comes out about these Serb soldiers, it really is unbelievable.

Clinton: There was a show on CNN on how mad the Russians are at America and me. Our guys told me this TV station I interviewed with yesterday seems to be the only one that came close to showing the truth about what Milosevic was up to. They're going to have to come to grips with it. I think in the near term we have to check the schedule by which our people are moving in. There was also a special about the French troops trying to separate the Serbs and the Kosovars. Well, I won't keep you. I feel like we had a good G-8. I just wanted you to know I'm sorry about your men.

Blair: That's kind of you, Bill. I thought we had a good G-8, too. So you're off to Macedonia tomorrow?

Clinton: Yeah, I'm going to a state dinner in Macedonia [n.b. the President meant Slovenia] tonight, and Djukanovic, the Montenegrin President, is here. I'll give you a readout in a couple of days.

Blair: Okay, Bill. Goodbye.

Clinton: Goodbye, Tony.

July/ August / September 1999

29 July 1999. US Secretary of State Albright visits Kosovo, meets with KFOR Commander Mike Jackson.

31 July 1999, Blair visits Kosovo.

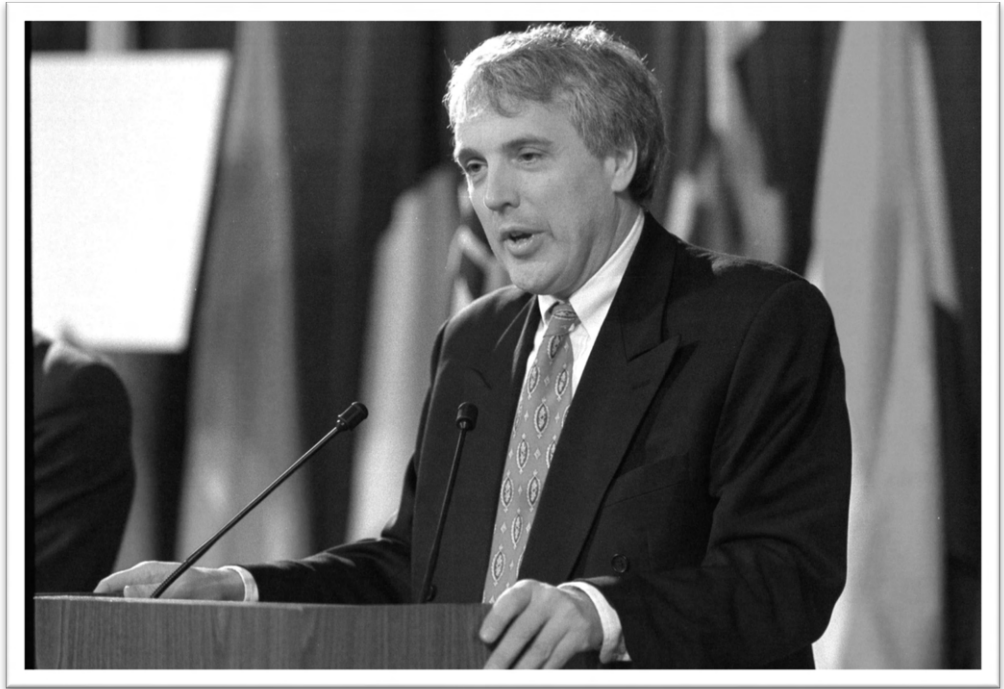
20 Sept 1999. KFOR certifies that the KLA has completed demilitarization.



Collected AK47s. Photo: NATO

EPILOGUE

Jamie Shea, Speaking Frankly



Jamie Shea briefing the press. Photo: NATO

Supplying around the clock information to a hungry press pack during the Kosovo war, Jamie Shea's face became known around the world. Serving as spokesperson for NATO, he became reviled by Serbs but admired by Albanians. Speaking in his office at NATO headquarters in 2015, he delved into the ups and downs of his historic mission.

Perry: When did you first visit Kosovo?

Shea: The first time I was in Kosovo was, believe it or not, in the days of the old Yugoslavia, when Kosovo was still linked up to Serbia as an Autonomous province. I used to drive through, out on my way to Greece for the summer, not realising that one day it would play such a big role in my life. In NATO terms, it was 1998 really when the tensions started ahead of the war in 1999. We had a year of dealing with Kosovo before the international intervention started. The conflict started in 1998 when we had the first rumblings of tension, incidents and the Serb armed forces had been sent down there to impose order and then, of course, the emergence of UCK

and [the questions] what was it ? And who was behind it ? And how powerful was it ?

During the conflict I actually went to Belgrade more than to Kosovo at the time because I was here, up in Brussels NATO headquarters, as the press spokesperson. The thrust here in NATO was not so much with Prishtina, because Kosovo was not at the time an independent country, was not recognised as an independent country, indeed many allies were quite reluctant to encourage separatism for various reasons. We had already seen in the Bosnian conflict a worry about instability in the Balkans and the spill-over effect into Albania and Macedonia. But also the knock-on effect in Europe: Basques, Catalans, encouraging independence movements elsewhere. So our thrust was vis a vis Milosevic, persuading him to negotiate with the Albanians to reinstate autonomy. Trying to bring the parties together at Rambouillet, which eventually did kick off in late 1998, and of course warnings about not using force, not repeating the Bosnia scenario where you get engaged in a conflict that becomes very difficult to stop, which follows its own dynamics.

So, I went to Belgrade quite a bit with the Secretary General at the time, with Javier Solana, Wesley Clark (SACUER), Claus Naumann (Chairman of the NATO Military committee), [and] Dick Holbrooke. It was basically about diplomacy. As Holbrooke famously said once when he went to see Milosevic and he took an American General with him: "Mr. President I have bombing aircraft in one hand and negotiating documents in the other, you choose."

After the Bosnian conflict there was an acute sense here that we had not done a good job in marrying the offer of diplomacy to the threat of intervention, the credible threat. We had been a bit of a paper tiger and there had been too many decisions that had not been backed up with the serious threat of military action. The Bosnian Serbs clearly disregarded many of these warnings. We committed to strategies, such as UN close air support, when we had the dual key arrangement where we couldn't act in Bosnia unless the UN also agreed. And the UN had almost never been on the same wavelength as NATO when it came to the use of force, so we had flown jets around Sarajevo making a lot of noise, but not intervening to stop the shelling and the siege. And so people had drawn the lesson of the Bosnian years in the sense of "Never Again." No more paper tiger, no more dual key. We were never, and I have to say this, not just as a NATO official, but also because I think it's true that we were never trying to come across as an aggressive organisation [in Bosnia]. The aim was not to have a military intervention, the aim was to use force in the service of diplomacy. But there was an acute sense in Kosovo that if we dilly dallied and shilly shallied, we'd have another Srebrenica on our hands. And the Racak massacre in January 1999 was a big trigger: Oh my God, let's not have endless negotiations, let's not have endless ceasefires.

Perry: I suppose by then you understood the enemy by then as it were, I know that's one sided?

Shea: It was not as simple as that. Whereas you wanted to rein in Serb Militarism and Milosevic's inclination to go for a military solution, to crack skulls as it were, you didn't want to go to the other extreme of encouraging the UCK. Several Ambassadors at the time said NATO should not be the air force of the Kosovo Liberation Army. And Holbrooke had this meeting with UCK commanders in a tent, somewhere in Kosovo, that created among many western European countries quite a negative impression because they were then supplying Milosevic with a motive. If they went around shooting policemen Milosevic then had a motive to crack down. So it really was an attempt to reel in both sides simultaneously. It wasn't easy to get them to the negotiating table and the aim wasn't to have Kosovo independence but to come up with some return to the autonomy status via negotiation which at the same time would take any kind of separatist trend out of the armed struggle and through a diplomatic process. The Kosovars had this expression in Rambouillet of a non-binding commitment to hold a referendum on independence but with no sense that this would be immediately recognised by the international community. But the problem was that the agreement was accepted by the Albanians, albeit reluctantly, because it did not offer them immediate independence but it was rejected by the Serbs. The role here was to provide the Military pressure, but NATO itself was not in charge of the negotiations. This was done by OSCE on the ground, and the international group, particularly under Madeleine Albright, and the Brits Robin Cooke and so on.

Perry: So, in a sense you're removed geographically from it all...

Shea: On a personal level, by then I had a very deep commitment to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia because Bosnia had occupied our lives day and night since 1992. I had been down there a lot, a lot, a lot. What happened in Kosovo is that before the air campaign itself we had had no real involvement in the conflict. This familiarity with Bosnia became a framework or prism through which you regarded the situation in Kosovo. And I suppose it was read in the same way: Serb nationalism, repressed minority within Serbia, majority within Kosovo, avoiding the point of no return where you get an all-out war where you get refugees, difficult to resolve later; the Srebrenica memory haunting everybody. Could the same thing happen again? Looking to the international criminal court in the Hague to put down markers and warnings because it was gearing up for prosecutions on war crimes and could you use this as a deterrent for crimes in Kosovo – if you're not careful you will end up in the Hague.

Kosovo was held by the fact that you had a series of leaders who had been there since the latter phases of Bosnia when we had Srebrenica, when the French introduced with the Brits their rapid reaction force. This was Chirac and Blair; so

the more muscular approach to Kosovo came from the fact that it came from the same group of leaders who had also implemented the more muscular approach to Bosnia. So it was a bit of a continuation, and this rejection of the early Bosnia exemplified by Douglas Herd, of avoiding force, and seeing guilt on all sides, not taking sides, going through the UN, trying to dampen down the conflict or contain the conflict, rather than deal with the root causes.

Perry: Despite the more muscular approach I get a sense of Blair's empathy with the plight of the refugees.

Shea: That was definitely true but you have to be honest about this, there was empathy but there was also a sense that the refugees coming out of the country and appearing on the TV screens and telling their stories, also produced a justification for the intervention. There's always a link; if you say I want to intervene, [people say] why do you want to do that? But you heard the refugees describing the terrible experiences they had on TV. That links to the humanitarian justification. Over Kosovo there was no UN resolution so you had to justify that through [things such as] genocide conventions, international humanitarian law. And the refugees provided much of the material for that type of justification. [In Bosnia,] early intervention could have avoided deaths of two and a quarter million refugees, 65% of the infrastructure being damaged. And after a war like that the level of hatred the level of destruction makes reconstruction and reconciliation so much harder. With the refugees if you think of Syria, if you quickly intervene while they are still in the region then you can get them home. If you don't intervene they go from the region to Germany, to Sweden, bingo, and after five or six years no way do they ever want to go back. If you want to solve a refugee crisis do it quickly...[otherwise] it becomes very much more complicated.

Perry: Although we know of all the problems in Kosovo, we think of it as a success.

Shea: I agree with that because although the level of violence was too high for the Kosovars, if you look at Syria today, my God, where we're talking about half a million deaths, an eleven and a half million displaced people, five million displaced outside of the country.

Perry: What was it about the constellation of thinking and people, of that moment at that time, that brought success?

Shea: What brought the success is that the international community, thank God, then, was united. The Americans were for action, which they had not been for many years in Bosnia. Somalia, black hawk down, body bags, Mogadishu, which haunted the US administrations; the preference for being in the air, rather than on the ground. Blair was more successful at bringing Clinton around than had been the case some

years ago with Bosnia. With Kosovo we were lucky to have a set of leaders who were in favour of decisive action. The lesson of Bosnia was a powerful reminder, people wanted to some degree to assuage a feeling of guilt for what had happened in Bosnia and Kosovo provided the opportunity.

Perry: All the critiques of the war, which I'm sure you've read, people go on about the West trying to steal resources or land, and people go so far as saying it was a set up.

We live in an age because of the internet, social media, everyone can invent their own conspiracy theory and advertise it in a way that years ago when you had to write a book and get it printed was impossible.

Perry: People cannot believe it was done for some sort of (benign) reason.

There is the phrase: "No good act ever goes unpunished."

Shea: I can assure you having sat in hundreds of NATO meetings back in 1998 /1999. Never did I hear anybody see Kosovo as some western geo-strategic interest, you know, that we had to be there to keep the Russians out or we had to be there to take over the Trepca mine complex, or we needed coal and Kosovo had a lot. No, I swear to you, that not even in the most private discussions did I hear anybody allude to that. No, for all of the allies the motive was the humanitarian desire to stop another damaging humanitarian disaster.

And that's why it's still immensely powerful, even many years later, when people start to open and tell stories, it's there, raw, still, the feeling of having been delivered, let's say, from the clutches of death.

Shea: By 1998 the ingredients were there: the Serbs had put in more MUP special police with para military, heavily armed with weapons. The violence was breaking out: massacre, revenge massacre, tit for tat. UCK, in particular, with the collapse of the Albanian State in the wake of the pyramid scandal, got access to lots of weapons from Albanian stocks and the diaspora abroad, plenty of cash. The ingredients for a real war with Bosnian levels of casualties were there. Although the air campaign came too late to stop all of the violence, I've seen figures of 11,000 deaths. You think of Bosnia 100,000; to some degree the intervention happened before the worst happened. It's the old what if, counterfactual. If there hadn't been an intervention would those deaths have occurred ? I can't say. 'The future is always uncertain' is not a pretext for not acting on the assumption of the evidence you have at the time. I hear it with Brexit. Elements of uncertainty are not an excuse for denigrating the expertise that is available. If they get it right 60% of the time it's still good enough to listen to the advice of economists. And again, this applies to Kosovo. People often say, "Well you shouldn't have intervened because how could you have known there would be a hundred thousand deaths." But to my mind the fact that violence is

breaking out and a couple of thousand people have been killed is a good enough reason to act. You don't need to wait for the worst to happen to justify an action, otherwise, God, we would have a world of utter passivity.

After the Kosovo campaign I was involved in all of these debates about was it worth it, was it a violation of international law, your air campaign started the refugees. And, my God, you really have to fight hard in this propaganda blitz that happens, where reality and truth get distorted immediately, just to get the facts on the table. It was very easy for a lot of Milosevic apologists to accuse NATO of being responsible for the violence and the chaos, as if before we intervened in March 1999 Kosovo had been a tranquil place, there had been no violence, there had been no refugees, and somehow we stirred it all up. The surgeon is responsible for the illness. These myths die hard. There is also, inevitably, this tendency to rush to immediate judgement and to base the interpretation on the latest twist. So after 1999, finally did the right thing, the refugees are home, 'Ah! but Milosevic is still in power!' - so it wasn't worth it. Well, the aim was never to get rid of Milosevic, never, grateful that the Serbs finally did so, but our aim was not to get rid of Milosevic. You're judged by criteria that you never accept. Forgive me, we don't look like Tom Cruise; but sorry, I never set out to look like Tom Cruise, so why are you judging me in terms of ambitions or objectives that I've never accepted? You've got to stick to some standard parameters. If an Albanian is nasty to a Serb we condemn that, but that's not a reason to think that one Albanian being nasty to a Serb is the functional equivalent of several Serbs killing several thousand Albanians. It's not a moral equivalence. It does not mean that NATO's actions in rescuing lots of Albanians was not justified.

Once the Kosovo campaign came to an end it didn't, because when the campaign came to an end, the battle to write the narrative, the history, who provides the interpretation, the meaning of what went on, that started. For about five years after Kosovo I was out giving speeches, purely to try and set the record straight because the interpretation I was hearing bore absolutely no relationship to my experience of the place. Obviously, I'm only one person, like Kanute with the waves, but I had this strong feeling I can't allow this to be the history of Kosovo when it wasn't. And in this day age everybody can write their own conspiracy theories, it's amazing just how quickly this comes out and crowds out people's perception of reality.

Perry: So when did you actually first step foot back into Kosovo?

Shea: In June 1999 immediately after the air campaign. Javier Solana, myself, and Wes Clarke went down to Prishtina to see General Jackson moving into Film City. For me at least it had been a media war, not a real war. The day was split in two. The first half was in Film City, isolated from the population, in a bubble. Then lunch came and Solana said let's go downtown and get a sense of what's going on. And so we got into the Military vehicles and went down the hill and that's when the pandemonium started because we hadn't had any contact apart from a couple of

refugees, a couple of political figures, some Kosovar journalists in Brussels. We hadn't had any contact with the Kosovars. Off we went, the military vehicles parked somewhere in Prishtina, and we all jumped out for a walk about and then suddenly wham! From out of nowhere thousands and thousands of Kosovars recognised Solana, Clarke, myself and the pictures are still very much there. Rather like a football team winning a game, and the fans coming in and putting us literally on their shoulders, giving what the french call a *bain de foule* – a crowd bath. And we literally had to fight our way in a friendly way, through these people to get into the UN compound. But it was the first real sense of the enthusiasm the Kosovars had for NATO at the time and the gratitude to be liberated. But also the sense of how they had spent the war, to hear their stories about being stuck in basements, hiding for several days. But also the influence we had on them because my daily press briefings were really designed for the international media: trust in NATO, give us time, believe in our strategy, counter the Serb propaganda over collateral damage, and we didn't really have any idea that this third audience, the Albanians, existed; because they weren't communicating, phoning up from Kosovo everyday to comment on the press conferences. So this was a bit of a revelation that these briefings had been picked up by these people and had had some usefulness, not just in saying what was going on, but also in keeping morale up. NATO is coming, hang on in there. So that was the big eye opener.

Perry: And you had been almost or absolutely unaware ?

Shea: Yes. Maybe I should have been aware, but again it was a stressful time, we had the tractor convoy at Gjakova, the Varvarin bridge, the Chinese Embassy, constant fire-fighting. [The impact of the TV briefings] only came out when I went to Kosovo and started sitting down with people and hearing how they had perceived it from the ground. And to me also that was the best part of it, because let's be honest, we took a lot of criticism. Not just from the Serbs but from our own western media: "You can't explain why this tractor was struck, why did it happen," I don't know, I need to investigate, it's going to take me a while to find out. There had been accusations that we were exaggerating. There are always tensions with journalists in war, that you're hiding things, you're covering up. They want masses of information and you're in an environment of operational secrecy; sorry, I can't tell you about tonight's air strike. It's like Eisenhower phoning the press and saying, "Guys do you want to know everything about D-day, let me tell you!" In a conflict you have to protect your pilots, so there is a bit of a tension with the media. So for me it was an interesting but bruising experience. I took a lot of criticism personally. There were a lot of people who were saying NATO shouldn't be doing this. It wasn't so much from the left; paradoxically a lot of people on the left felt the struggle for human rights was a good one. A lot of it was from the classical right: why are you bombing little Serbia, our ally in WWII? Why are you doing this without a UN security resolution? NATO, the bully image. As long as you can produce a perfect war – you know, zero casualties, maximum effect, no cost – people are for it. But as soon as the price comes up, the collateral damage, you

make mistakes, you even, yes, kill some of the people you're trying to defend, people say it's not justified any longer. But remember Trotsky: you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs. It's not easy. So to some degree this notion that it had at least been useful to the Albanians in sustaining morale was a bit of a compensation for a lot of the bruising.

Perry: Who did you know in Prishtina?

Shea: Clearly the political leadership that was emerging. I got to know Veton Surroi, Haradinaj, Thaci, most of the political leaders, Ibrahim Rugova I knew very well from 1998, somewhere I still have a stone he gave me. Beton Haxhiu, now a big TV presenter, [then Editor of] Koha Ditore, the great newspaper. I went down there a lot after the air campaign and met with the intellectual/political elite to engage with them. And the message was, you've been through a war, which has radicalised people. The armed struggle is over, now is the time to turn yourself into Nelson Mandelas. Focus on reconciliation, if you want independence show that you can actually function as a state, because that's going to make it easier for the international community to pursue your cause. Don't go out for revenge because in so many places you've seen, in the phrase of journalist Michela Wrong, "it's our turn to eat." We're now in charge, so BAM, we take over the media, we take over all of the financial mechanisms. We're now on top so it's our turn to benefit from the patronage system of the state.

Perry: Certainly, some of that has gone on in Kosovo.

Shea: Let's be honest. The message was: if you start behaving that way then NATO's air campaign, which was done to help you reacquire your rights, is going to look pretty bad. Clearly that's not what any of us particularly wanted. Look at Albania or Macedonia, where you get some bitter contest among the Albanian community themselves – it's a fractious fractured community. So please, no internecine political warfare, try to come together, build a coalition, negotiate with, take the place forward.

Perry: Having been there some time [in Kosovo], you get the sense that a lot of that would be mouthed as platitudes, that we believe in this, that, or the other. I don't want to be too cynical, but nationalism is so deeply embedded within us that it's invisible. And that's going to take a number of generations to...

Shea: Indeed, but leadership is important. The Balkans has not produced many Nelson Mandelas, from any side. In Serbia it took the best part of 20 years for Serb leader Vučić to actually turn up in Srebrenica. Twenty years without saying sorry formally, but on the other hand when he did people threw stones at him.

Perry: When last in Prishtina you said it took 800 years to create democracy in the UK. You were saying have to take the long view?

Shea: Exactly, you do, but on the other hand move in the right direction. The internationals have to show patience but the locals have to show urgency. So often it's the other way around. It's urgency on the internationals but it's patience on behalf of the locals. With independence, Kosovo has made great progress, two-thirds of the international community more or less recognise them. That's great but the best thing you can do is avoid the automatic criticisms: that you're incapable, you're not worthy, you're a mafia state. It's tough to get that message across. I had this in Bosnia, flying in, getting the Serb President, the Bosniak President, the Croat President, around the table. You'd lecture them, cajole and you could see very well that they were just saying, "Yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir," waiting for you to fly out, and then [they'd go] back to the normal thing. So how did you really try to incentivise them, convince them that this was not just to please you, but it was in their own interests? Sometimes it's a frustrating thing.

Perry: You draw on references to [post-WWII] France and Germany, and how that process evolved. Can we learn something from them?

Shea: You can. It takes Nixon to go to China, it takes Sadat to go to Jerusalem. It's the leadership thing, it's someone standing up saying I'm going to take the initiative, and the first part is saying sorry, even if some other person has committed the greater percentage of crimes you also have things you can apologise for. But it takes two to tango – you need some interlocutor on the other side who is willing to say, 'you may have made the first move but I am willing to make the second move. If you're willing, I'm willing to go with you on the journey.' Remember, Sadat was hardly ever going to be accused of being soft on Egyptian nationalism but he went to meet Begin. Sometimes the nationalist figures are the best people because they have more credibility with their electorates. [JS talks about Mandela and his reconciliatory approach of, 'Don't do what they expect you to do – to get revenge – surprise them, embarrass them']. Like the French and German thing, it's leadership. It can be risky. I can meet Serbs who say, 'I know Kosovo is gone, I know it's independent, but don't ask me to be the guy who says that in public,' because look what happened to Zoran Đinđić, he was assassinated by the Serb rogue secret service.

It takes an act of courage.

Freedom of Information response: details of British resources deployed to the Kosovo conflict 1998/99:

ROYAL AIR FORCE

Strike Aircraft: 16 Harrier GR7, No 1 Squadron: 8 aircraft in theatre since January 1999; additional 4 on 28 March 1999; additional 4 on 7 May 1999; 8 Tornado GR1, 14 Squadron, 8 aircraft from 1 April 1999. Stood down 28 May 1999. 12 Tornado GR1, 9 and 31, Squadrons 6 aircraft from 29 May 1999; additional 6 on 30 May 1999. All 12 operational from 1 June 1999. Support Aircraft: 2 Canberra PR9 Reconnaissance, 39 Squadron, From November 1998] (1 remained on standby in UK), 3 E3D Airborne Early Warning, 8 and 23 Squadrons, 2 aircraft were already deployed for operations over Bosnia; 1 additional aircraft from 28 March 1999, 5 VC-10 Tankers, 101 Squadron, 3 aircraft from 31 March 1999 working with Tornados; 2 additional aircraft on 26 May 1999; 4 Tristar Tankers, 216 Squadron, 2 aircraft deployed since January 1999; 1 additional aircraft Operating from Acona, Italy from 28 March 1999, 1 additional aircraft from 15 April 1999, 1 Nimrod, 51 Squadron. Already in theatre. Support Helicopters: 8 Chinook Helicopters, 27 Squadron, 2 helicopters from 5 June 1999; additional 6 helicopters from 10 June 1999, 6 Puma Helicopters, 33 Squadron, 4 helicopters from 5 June 1999; additional 2 from 10 June 1999 Ground Support Team 5-13 June 1999.

ROYAL NAVY

HMS Splendid, Swiftsure class Nuclear Powered attack submarine, 24 March - 11 June 1999, HMS Turbulent, Trafalgar Class Nuclear Powered attack submarine, 17 April — 12 May 1999, HMS Invincible, Aircraft Carrier, 12 April - 21 May 1999, HMS Newcastle, Type 42 Destroyer, 12 April - 21 May 1999, HMS Iron Duke, Type 23 Frigate, 24 March - 11 June 1999, HMS Somerset, Type 23 Frigate, 24 March -26 April 1999, HMS Grafton, Type 23 Frigate, 26 April-29 May 1999, HMS Norfolk, Type 23 Frigate, 6-10 June 1999, HMS Coventry, Type 22 Frigate, 10-24 June 1999, HMS Atherstone, Hunt Class Mine Counter Measures Vessel, 12 June — 26 August 1999, HMS Sandown, Sandown Class Mine Counter Measures Vessel, 12, June — 26 August 1999, HMS Bulldog, Coastal Survey Vessel, 12 June - 28 July 1999.

ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY / FLEET AIR ARM

RFA Argus Aviation Training Ship 24 May - 23 June 1999, REA Bayleaf Support Tanker 12 April - 21 May 1999, RFA Fort Austin Stores Ship 12 April - 21 May, 1999, RFA Sea Centurion, Strategic Sealift Vessels, 14 February 1999 - 2000, RFA Sea Crusader, Strategic Sealift Vessels, 9 December 1998 - 2000, RFA Sir Geraint,

Landing Ship, 28 April 1999 - 2000. 7 Sea Harriers, 800 Squadron, HMS Invincible, Helicopters: 7 Sea King Mk 6, 814 Squadron, HMS Invincible, 3 Sea King Mk 2, 859 Squadron, HMS Invincible, 3 Sea King Mk 6, 814 Squadron, RFA Argus, RFA Fort Austin, 6 Lynx MK 3/8, 815 Squadron, 1 deployed on Type 42 1 per Type 23.

ARMY

In total there were around 10,500 personnel deployed to Macedonia and Kosovo from the following units: Headquarters: HQ Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps, 3rd UK Division HQ and Signal Regiment, 4 Armoured Brigade HQ and Signal Squadron; 5 Airborne Brigade HQ and Signal Squadron, 101 Logistic Brigade HQ and Signal Squadron. Royal Armoured Corps: Household Cavalry Regiment, King's Royal Hussars, The Royal Artillery Regiment, 4th Regiment Royal Artillery, 5th Regiment Royal Artillery, 7th (Parachute) Regiment Royal Horse Artillery, 12th Regiment Royal Artillery, 32nd Regiment Royal Artillery, 47th Regiment, Royal Artillery. Corps of Royal Engineers: 21 Squadron 33 EOD Engineer Regiment, 9 Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers, 21 Engineer Regiment, 7 HQ Squadron, 21 Engineer Regiment, 6 Armoured Engineer Squadron e 1 Field Squadron, 28 Engineer Regiment, 64 HQ Squadron, 42 Field Squadron, 65 Field Park Squadron, 1(UK) Armoured Division CRE, 527 Specialist Team Royal Engineers, 14th Topographical Squadron Royal Engineers, 69 Gurkha Squadron Royal, 2 Battalion Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. Infantry: 1st King's Own Royal Border Regiment, 1st Irish Guards, 1st Green Howards, 1st Battalion Royal Irish, Regiment, 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment, 1st Battalion Royal Gurkha Rifles. Army Air Corps: 659 Squadron Army Air Corps, Royal Logistic Corps: 101, Logistics Brigade, 29 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps, 27 Transport Regiment Royal Logistic Corps, 23 Brigade Support Squadron, 2 Close Support Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, 77 HQ Squadron, 91 Supply Squadron, 9 Supply Regiment Royal Logistic Corps, 19 Tank Transporter Squadron, 8 Transport Squadron, 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, 23 Pioneer Regiment Royal Logistic Corps, 98 Postal and Courier Squadron. Royal Army Medical Corps: 2 Armoured Field Ambulance, 5 Field Ambulance, 22 Field Hospital, Band: Household and Light Dragoon Band, Royal Military Police: 4 Armoured Brigade Provost Company, Tactical Air Control Party.

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