

International Decision Making in the Age of Genocide: Srebrenica 1993-1995
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Session 2: Testing the “Safe Areas”



Bosnia Lines of Control and Safe Areas Late 1994

TOM BLANTON: Our working title for the session this afternoon is "Testing the Safe Areas." We intend to look at issues of close air support, the crises around Goražde and Bihać, and the pattern of threat, escalation, hostage-taking, and de-escalation which will take us right up to the July 1995 crisis in Srebrenica. After the coffee break we will look at the Dutch perspective, starting with the conversations with Boutros-Ghali in January 1994. What were the expectations? What were the promises? What were the commitments?

To get us started, let me call on David Harland, who did a spectacular job with the UN Srebrenica report, to raise some of the key questions. We are talking about the 1994 period. David, will you lead us off?

DAVID HARLAND: We heard from David Hannay that, love it or hate it, most of what you needed at the mandate level for robust action was in UNSC Resolution 836.¹ The question is how that played out. One of the first things that happened was the negotiation of the arrangements under which air power could be used. Mr. Akashi, would you be willing to say a little bit about the dual key arrangements and how you felt about that as the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General [SRSG]?

YASUSHI AKASHI: Thank you. In your list of discussion items you start with Goražde, in April 1994, but I would like to go back two months and start with the Sarajevo crisis of February 1994.² In both these cases, I think that UNPROFOR made rather skillful use of the threat of air strikes. The Markale market massacre of 68 people on February 5, 1994 shocked the world. We felt that we had to capitalize on the sense of shock as an opportunity to make the situation more peaceful and stable. At that time, the overall Force Commander was General Jean Cot of France. He was a brilliant general but he did not like to obey the civilians.³ The Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali, negotiated with the French government to replace him with another general who was due to arrive in theater by late February or early March. Cot and I agreed that we should immediately fly from Zagreb to Sarajevo, where we met with our Bosnian Force Commander, Michael Rose, who was a skillful negotiator and former commander of Special Forces during the Falkland War.⁴

¹ UNSC, "[Resolution 836 \(1993\)](#)," S/RES/836, June 4, 1993.

² See Boutros-Ghali to the President of the Security Council, "[Letter Dated 6 February 1994 from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the Security Council](#)," S/1994/131, February 7, 1994. The Sarajevo crisis of February 1994 was triggered by the shelling of the open air Markale market on February 5 with a 120 millimeter mortar shell, killing at least 58 civilians and wounding more than 140. General Rose initially said that the shell had been fired from a Bosnian government position. The ICTY later concluded, on the basis of an exhaustive examination of possible trajectories (see: [Prosecutor v. Stanislav Galić, paragraph 496](#)), that the shell was fired from a Bosnian Serb position.

³ According to contemporaneous news reports, Boutros-Ghali asked the French government to replace Cot in January 1994 in a move to bolster the authority of the newly-appointed SRSG, Yasushi Akashi. Cot had earlier demanded that he be allowed to use air power to protect the lives of UN troops delivering humanitarian aid. (See Jonathan Landay, "[Exit of Another UN General Highlights Disarray of Mission in Former Yugoslavia](#)," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 21, 1994.)

⁴ Rose arrived in Sarajevo in January 1994 to replace General Francis Briquemont of Belgium, who complained about the lack of sufficient UN peacekeeping troops and confusion over the mandate. Briquemont was quoted as saying on December 30, 1994, "[I don't read Security Council resolutions anymore because they don't help me.](#)" He said that a minimum of 7,500 additional troops were required to implement UNSC Resolution 836, but only 2,000 were dispatched.

We went to Sarajevo to negotiate, first of all, with the Bosnian Government side after expressing our most sincere condolences.⁵ We would meet at different times with President Izetbegović, Presidency member Ejup Ganić, and Prime Minister Haris Silajdžić. It was interesting that Izetbegović always appeared with either Ganić or Silajdžić, but never Ganić and Silajdžić together. We found out later that there were serious differences between the two about how to re-open Tuzla airport which was one of our principle aims. After visiting the Bosnian presidency [in Sarajevo], we went straight to the barracks where [Bosnian Serb president Radovan] Karadžić, [Bosnian Serb military commander] Mladić, and his deputy, Milan Gvero [Assistant Commander for Morale, Legal and Religious Affairs], were ensconced. There was very heavy snow. After some strenuous discussions, it was clear that they were ready to accept some kind of ceasefire. Upon our return to Sarajevo, we found that the Bosnian government was only prepared to accept a ceasefire if it was accompanied by some serious measures of disengagement, namely the removal of heavy weapons from Sarajevo.

We told Michael Rose to pursue negotiations for a ceasefire combined with the removal of heavy weapons. We also engaged in discussions with NATO. On February 13, we were visited by the American commander of NATO Southern Command, Admiral Jeremy Boorda.⁶ I think that Cot's successor, General de La Presle, who was very comfortable with the basic concepts of peacekeeping, was with us for some of these negotiations. Of course, we had discussions about close air support versus air strikes. Most of us had a very good understanding of the differences between the two. Close air support is an instrument for self-defense. Air strikes have a more political implication, particularly when the Bosnian Serbs were in control of approximately 70% of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷ We depended on Bosnian Serb consent for our humanitarian convoys to pass through areas of Bosnia that they controlled. Admiral Boorda was diminutive in stature, but his entire approach showed that he had a brilliant sense for analyzing political situations. He also

⁵ See John Kifner, [“Sarajevans Mourn and Rage While Life and Death Go On,”](#) New York Times, February 7, 1994.

⁶ See Robert H. Reid, [“Bosnian Serbs Turn in More Big Weapons U.N. Compromise Keeps Truce Alive,”](#) Associated Press, February 14, 1994.

⁷ NATO launched [its first Close Air Support operation](#) in support of UN peacekeepers in Bosnia on April 10, 1994, to attack Serb positions near the besieged Safe Area of Goražde. Unlike CAS, which was intended to punish specific violations of the Safe Area regime, air strikes were viewed as a strategic weapon designed to promote broader political goals, such as lifting the siege of Sarajevo in September 1995.

showed very good understanding of the collateral damage to the civilian population. He proposed gradually increasing the pressure of threatening air strikes, but at the same time he was ready to provide the Serbs with the possibility of a graceful exit.

As UN peacekeepers, we were quite comfortable working with our colleagues at NATO. We developed a common, graduated plan for enhanced air strikes.⁸ I made conscious use of the threat of force in my negotiations. We had difficulty getting through to Karadžić and Mladić, so I flew to Belgrade [on February 7] and met with Milosević for many hours. Milosević was much shrewder than Karadžić or Mladić. He kept his distance from them at this time, saying that he did not have a direct influence with them. He had a better understanding of the political and military situation than any other Serb leader. His weakness was in his use of his principal lieutenants. For instance, he told me that I must meet Fikret Abdić in Bihać. I was very disappointed later when I met Abdić and the Bosnian Serb leadership in Knin.

[To go back to the Sarajevo crisis,] NATO set a [deadline](#) of midnight on February 20, 1994, for the withdrawal of heavy weapons by both sides to a line of twenty kilometers from the center of Sarajevo.⁹ Karadžić and Mladić were initially reluctant to comply, but they started to withdraw some heavy weapons. A few days after issuing our ultimatum, I went to Pale and was returning from there to Sarajevo with my Force Commander. We saw many Serb tanks and other heavy weapons being withdrawn from the previous areas of confrontation.¹⁰ I was watching the faces of the Serb soldiers for signs of dejection, disappointment or bitterness, but they looked quite happy, quite relaxed. Since there was not much time, we kept the pressure on, and analyzed the situation together with NATO. NATO had a wonderful liaison officer stationed at our headquarters in Zagreb. He had a good sense of humor and gave me a plate with the inscription, “Duel Key,” not Dual Key, a reference to the UN and NATO engaging in a duel.

The Serbs kept withdrawing their heavy weapons. The Bosniak government was asked to put their weapons under UN control and surveillance. Michael Rose developed a plan to station forty to sixty UNPROFOR soldiers at each of the weapons control points. The

⁸ See [North Atlantic Council communique, February 9, 1994](#). 1999. See also 1999 Srebrenica report, [paragraph 120](#).

⁹ See NAC communiqué, op cit, [paragraph 10](#).

¹⁰ See [“Serbs move guns away from Sarajevo,”](#) The Baltimore Sun, February 18, 1994.

Serbs naturally wanted as many such points as possible while the Bosnian Government wanted as few as possible, in case they needed to recapture these weapons. The fewer guards we had, the easier it would be for them to recover these weapons. During one of my visits to Pale, I saw that Karadžić seemed to be having trouble getting compliance and cooperation from some of his military colleagues. I intentionally praised Karadžić for his willingness to withdraw his weapons and troops.

On February 18-19, there was very heavy snow and the weapons withdrawal was not being done very speedily. We considered that weapons that were not withdrawn outside the 20 kilometer zone should be destroyed by UNPROFOR. Ultimately, on February 21, we had a three-way discussion together between UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb, UN Headquarters in New York and NATO Southern Command in Naples.¹¹ We agreed that most heavy weapons had been withdrawn or placed under our control in the case of the Bosnian government, but there were still some Serb weapons remaining, partly due to the heavy snow. David Rose already had plans for the deployment of UNPROFOR soldiers at each of the weapons collections points. We were in touch with both sides, Izetbegović on one side, and Karadžić and Mladić on the other. We were also keeping Milosević in the picture. The common position that we had elaborated with NATO helped ensure compliance with our requests. All of us were satisfied with the progress that was achieved. That was essentially what happened in February 1994.

DAVID HARLAND: That is very useful. Shall we pause there for a second? David Hannay told us there was an adequate mandate [in UNSC Resolution 836], very messily and confusingly developed but actually sufficient for everything that needed to be done. Mr. Akashi has told us that, in the case of the [Sarajevo ultimatum](#), it worked quite well. It had a deterrent effect on the Serbs. They did move out their weapons. Six weeks later, [on March 30, 1994], the assault begins on Goražde. I think that many of the weapons that you saw moving from Sarajevo were on their way to Goražde. Do we have any views as to why the [836] mandate of June 1993, which was effectively executed around Sarajevo at the beginning of 1994, was not effectively used in Goražde just a few weeks later? Rupert Smith, is your card up?

¹¹ See John Pomfret, [“Deadline Passes Without Airstrikes,”](#) Washington Post, February 21, 1994.



Rupert Smith

RUPERT SMITH: It was up to answer the first question you posed, about the dual key. I will try to do both if you like. To go back to the first point, we need a bit of context. The use of air operations begins almost simultaneously with the deployment of UNPROFOR in Croatia [in February 1992].¹² There is a NATO operation both on land and in the sky. There is a WEU operation in the Mediterranean and on the Danube, all part of monitoring what's going on. The air operation morphs into a no-fly zone following a great deal of media exposure about events in the Brčko corridor.¹³ We will not have the Serbs shooting up refugee columns, we will have a no-fly zone. I am part of the conversation from that time onwards [as Assistant Chief of the Defense Staff], albeit from an entirely British point of view. I'm trying not to be wise after the event. My staff and I, in London, see a problem. We are about to do something for which you would be thrown out of military staff college

¹² UNSC, "[Resolution 743 \(1992\)](#)," February 21, 1992.

¹³ The UN Security Council declared a No-Fly Zone over Bosnia on October 9, 1992 under [UNSC Resolution 781](#), following reports that the Serbs were using helicopters to ferry troops into the strategically important Brčko corridor. Pursuant to this resolution, NATO launched Operation Sky Monitor to monitor numerous breaches of the No-Fly Zone. NATO commenced Operation Deny Flight on April 12, 1993, in response to [UNSC Resolution 816](#) of March 31, 1993. The first serious challenge to Operation Deny Flight occurred on February 28, 1994, when six Serb jets bombed a Bosnian factory. In response, U.S. Air Force F-16s shot down four of the six Serb jets over Banja Luka, the first combat engagement in the history of NATO. In June 1993, the No-Fly mandate was extended to provide close air support to UNPROFOR units patrolling the safe areas.

anywhere in the world if you proposed it as a solution to a problem.¹⁴ We are about to propose that two forces subject to different political controls operate in and over the same space [UN forces answerable to UNHQ in New York and NATO forces answering to NATO HQ in Brussels]. Offensive action in the no-fly zone [carried out by NATO] would obviously have an impact on a completely different operation [delivering humanitarian aid under the auspices of the UN] on the ground. This is a no-no, but this is what we began to do.

Every time we get into this debate, we try to see how we can stitch this thing together. We keep making assumptions [that prove to be unfounded]. We say, “We’re not going to attack helicopters, we’ll just ignore the helicopters, we will only act against jets attacking refugee convoys,” and so on. So, it goes through, and we get the no-fly zone enforcement. At about the same time, we have UNPROFOR in Bosnia being shelled.

We (Brits) want some artillery, we want to shell back. The UN—Cedric Thornberry [Director of UNPROFOR Civil Affairs] and General [Satish] Nambiar [Force Commander of UNPROFOR] were there at the time, I believe—say it would better to have close air support. Their logic is that close air support can be supplied to everybody while only the Brits and the French will have guns. It must be the same for everyone in UNPROFOR. We then go through another stage when we use the no-fly zone regime to provide UNPROFOR with close air support for self-defense. But not all UNPROFOR units have NATO-qualified forward air controllers so we get another set of problems: making sure that this can really be handled by everybody.

Then it morphs into the Safe Area and Exclusion Zone policy.¹⁵ There is a long argument that runs from the end of 1993 into 1994 over what an “exclusion zone” is and how you do it. You are now trying to be coercive. It is at this point that the tension of having two different political directions and two different forces really begin to pinch. It

¹⁴ In his book, *The Utility of Force*, Smith describes the conflict caused by [instituting a NATO no-fly zone within a larger UN operation](#). He writes that NATO planners “had to find a way to link the two command chains so that UN-authorized flights were not attacked, and when NATO attacks were made, UN units were alerted to the possibility of retaliatory attacks.”

¹⁵ The North Atlantic Council declared an [“exclusion zone”](#) around Sarajevo on February 9, 1994 following the shelling of the Markale marketplace, pursuant to UNSC resolutions 824, 836, and 844. The NATO statement set a [deadline of February 20](#) for the removal of heavy weapons from the Sarajevo exclusion zone. (See Akashi comments above.) The North Atlantic Council added an additional [“military exclusion zone”](#) around Goražde on April 22, 1994, and threatened to extend the policy to other Safe Areas, including Srebrenica, in the event of “concentration or movement of heavy weapons.”

gets harder and harder to make assumptions that are at all credible about where this is all going. We arrive at the “dual key” as a means of linking whatever is happening together on the ground.

The “dual key” is a NATO decision.¹⁶ It is promulgated in something called an “IMSM” which you can probably find in some archive. IMSM stands for International Military Staff Memorandum. It is signed by none other than Field Marshal Sir Richard Vincent, who was Chairman of the NATO Military Committee. That is how the no-fly zone enforcement policy came into being. I went from NATO with one set of instructions to David Hannay in New York with another set of instructions to help stitch this together. It was the only time I have flown on the Concorde.

TOM BLANTON: What date was that?

RUPERT SMITH: The IMSM is sometime in early 1993, just before the no-fly zone comes into effect in April 1993.

JENONNE WALKER: The North Atlantic Council decision that included the dual key was August 1993.¹⁷ It was meant to be not just for the Safe Areas but in retaliation for any shelling of civilian centers throughout Bosnia.

RUPERT SMITH: By the time we get to enforcing the exclusion zones [in February 1994], using air power for coercive purposes, it is extremely difficult to know what to hit in order to coerce. You are no longer dealing just with a gun, you wish to make the other person change his mind. His guns are part of his stock in trade. You have invented a completely different logic path if you are going to use air power for coercive purposes. It just did not fit with the mission of the UN and the priorities that they had been given. We built this dichotomy into our structures, and you see the result in 1994 and 1995.

¹⁶ According to the NIOD report, the dual key system was created after the NATO council meetings on August 2 and August 9, 1993, when it was decided that [“air strikes would only be launched if the UN Secretary-General authorized them.”](#)

¹⁷ Manfred Wörner, [“Press Statement by the Secretary General,”](#) August 2, 1993. The “dual key” arrangement dates back to the institution of a no-fly zone over Bosnia in Operation Deny Flight, which began on April 12, 1993. See Brian G. Gawne, “Dual Key Command and Control in Operation Deny Flight: Paralyzed by Design,” Naval War College, November 1996. Approval for “Deny Flight” operations [remained with the UN Secretary General](#), although operational control was delegated to subordinate commanders.

DAVID HARLAND: Nevertheless, it worked quite nicely around Sarajevo in February 1994.

RUPERT SMITH: It starts okay. Then, of course, the Serbs learn. They are sentient. By the time we get to Goražde in April 1994, they create a situation where it is close air support rather than coercion that becomes the *raison d'etre* for the use of air power by UN/NATO. Then we get all the problems of bringing in aircraft for close air support, and what to do about the local air defense weapons. We lose one or two airplanes during this period.¹⁸ This makes the NATO air commanders want to pull back and do it differently. You enter into another push and pull between the two commands of the UN and NATO.

At the same time, although I did not start using this phrase until a year or more later, the dilemma of UNPROFOR serving as a hostage or a shield to one party or the other becomes exacerbated as air power is used. When this weapon is threatened, the local commander always finds himself in a position of being a hostage of one party or the shield of another. This places him in a very difficult position as to whether he agrees with turning a key or not.

DAVID HANNAY: Just two observations. One on the dual key. I do think you have to start with the implementation of UNSC Resolution 836. While I agree that the no-fly zone had some dual key implications, they were not the same at all as air strikes in support of ground forces. That was not what the no-fly zone was about. After 836 was adopted [on June 4, 1993], there was immediately an intensive series of discussions with the UN Secretariat about how to implement the resolution. Of course, 836 contains a [provision](#) for air strikes.¹⁹ I got instructions very rapidly, probably written by Rupert that said that the UN had to ask for them. No description of dual keys or all the subsequent complexities, just a simple principle: the UN had to ask for them. You could see why. There was doubt that NATO would act in a way that was consistent with the UN mandate and mission if they acted autonomously without the UN. Nobody objected. The United States didn't object, none of the troop contributors objected. They all said, "Fine, absolutely, yes UN must ask

¹⁸ See, for example, John Kifner, "[Rocket Hits NATO Troop Transport Over Croatia](#)," New York Times, March 9, 1994.

¹⁹ See UNSC, "[Resolution 836 \(1993\)](#)," S/RES/836, June 4, 1993.

for it.” That is where the dual key came from, but not its complexity and subsequent really disastrous developments.²⁰

Second point. We did not discover how dangerous the dual key was straight away. The first time air strikes were threatened was February 1994 [over the Sarajevo crisis]. The procedure then was very simple. The Serbs (I assume the Serbs, although there is some faint doubt about this) shelled the marketplace in Sarajevo on Saturday, February 5, killing 58 civilians.²¹ The three western members of the Security Council, Britain, France, and the United States, agreed that something really serious had to be done about it. Madeleine Albright, Jean-Bernard Mérimée and myself met in my flat on Sunday evening. We agreed that NATO had to be asked to give an ultimatum to the Serbs to withdraw their heavy weapons. We sent Mérimée around to see the Secretary-General because all our missions were staked out by the press at that time and we had no wish to start premature excitement.

At Mérimée’s suggestion, Boutros-Ghali wrote a [letter](#) to the Secretary-General of NATO [on February 6], asking for the threat of air strikes unless the Serbs withdrew their heavy weapons, under the authority of Resolution 836.²² There was no need to go to the Security Council. Yasushi has described the sequence of events that occurred after that. At the last moment, the Serbs blinked. There was never any need at that point to discover the inadequacies of dual key because the political level operated properly and the military level never had to operate because the Serbs blinked. It is only after this incident that all the trouble starts, beginning with Goražde, moving onto Bihać and then onto Srebrenica.

TOM BLANTON: Why did the trouble start? Did we not learn the right lessons from the Sarajevo experience?

²⁰ The dual key arrangement described by Hannay was formalized in a letter from UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali to Acting NATO Secretary-General Amedeo de Franchis on July 21, 1993, confirming that air support for UNPROFOR “will only be initiated upon by specific request.” Boutros-Ghali informed NATO that he would communicate such requests through the UNPROFOR Force Commander “should I determine in consultation with the Security Council that the need for such support has arisen.” Boutros Boutros-Ghali, [“Letter to Amedeo de Franchis,”](#) July 21, 1993.

²¹ See Footnote 2 above. The ICTY eventually concluded that the shell was fired from a Bosnian Serb position. The February 5 shelling followed a similar attack on the suburb of Dobrinja on February 4, in which 10 civilians were killed.

²² See Boutros-Ghali letter to President of Security Council, February 6, 1994, [S/1994/131](#).

DAVID HANNAY: The Sarajevo experience was successful. [UK Foreign Secretary] Douglas Hurd telephoned me on Saturday morning [February 5] while I was staying with [New York investment banker] Felix Rohatyn in South Hampton. He said, "What are we to do?" I said, "We can go and tell the Secretary-General to ask the NATO to intervene. Do you want me to do that, Foreign Secretary?" And after a bit of humming and hawing, he said, "Yes." I had to point out to him that as we had always been more reticent about using force than either the French or the Americans, if I said to Madeleine and Jean-Bernard that we were in favor of threatening force, it would happen. That was all done at a policy level by ministers in reaction to a horrifying event on the ground in Sarajevo. The military follow-up was carried out from the political level down through the NATO Council to the NATO military committee, which drew up all the things they would have done if the Serbs had not blinked. That worked. I do not know why this was not applied in Goražde and Bihać, but it wasn't.

DAVID HARLAND: That is very clear. So here we have a mandate from 1993 that is very ugly but sufficient. Here is a dual key arrangement that is ugly but sufficient for the purpose at least when it is first put to the test in February 1994. So now the question is, "Why didn't it work?" I would say two basic words. Michael Rose. I simply quote his own book where he says that he felt that the UK was beginning to "wobble seriously" in its opposition to American demands for air strikes [in February 1994.]²³ He says with pride that he worked very closely with Viktor Andreyev [the Russian Civil Affairs advisor to UNPROFOR] and others to undermine the use of air power or the use of it as a credible dissuasive action.

JENONNE WALKER: David and I are touching different parts of the elephant. It's not true that Washington always thought that the request for air strikes should come from UNPROFOR or from the United Nations. NATO's first meeting on this, on August 2, 1993, came up with an agreement at 2:00 a.m. in the morning [on August 3] that did not include a dual key. There would be consultation and coordination with UNPROFOR commanders on the ground obviously. We were very sensitive about not putting our NATO allies even more at risk than they already were, but there was no dual key. [NATO Secretary-General] Manfred Wörner, who was dying of cancer, left the hospital to chair this meeting against his

²³ See Michael Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, 46.

doctors' recommendations. About midnight, some members said, "This is too difficult, let's go home and talk about it in capitals and come back next week." Manfred said, "No, NATO cannot leave this meeting a failure."

So we went on until two in the morning on August 3. We addressed the problems of the allies who had forces most exposed, particularly the Dutch and the Canadians. At the last minute, John Weston, the British Ambassador said, "We have all agreed on substance, let's get a good night's sleep and polish up the language." This meant there was going to be a meeting the next week. I made the huge mistake of saying that we did not need the whole interagency community to spend taxpayer money traipsing back to NATO just to polish the language. We all had an open line to what was happening in the Council meeting on August 9.²⁴ We heard Weston propose what was in effect the dual key, and we were shouting to [US ambassador to NATO] Robert Hunter, "No, no, no!" Either he didn't understand what was happening or he agreed with John Weston. At any rate, the dual key snuck in there without Washington's agreement.²⁵

²⁴ [An August 2, 1993 press statement by NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner](#) specified that air strikes would be carried out in "full coordination" with the United Nations. After a follow-up meeting on August 9, the North Atlantic Council said it "[agrees with the position of the UN Secretary-General that the first use of air power in the theatre shall be authorized by him.](#)"

²⁵ In his 1999 memoir "Unvanquished", UN Secretary-general Boutros-Ghali wrote that he blocked an attempt by the Clinton administration to use NATO air power to break the siege of Sarajevo at the end of July 1993. (See pages 89-90). In an August 2 letter to Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Boutros-Ghali wrote that the use of air power would have "far reaching consequences" for the security of UN troops, the progress of peace negotiations, and the delivery of humanitarian aid. He demanded the right to approve air strikes "in consultation with the Security Council." A [telegram from Hurd to Hannay on July 30](#) makes clear that Britain also opposed granting NATO a "blank cheque" to take military action in Bosnia. Hurd stressed the need for consultations with troop contributing nations and UNHCR prior to air strikes. He followed up with a [message to Christopher on August 7](#) insisting that the UN draw up "appropriate contingency plans" for the protection and possible withdrawal of UNPROFOR prior to the commencement of air strikes.

A *New York Times* report dated August 8, 1993, "[U.S. allows a veto for Boutros-Ghali,](#)" quoted U.S. officials as saying they were "prepared to agree with the UN Secretary-General that the first such attack would require his approval." The North Atlantic Council announced agreement on procedures for approving air strikes in support of UNPROFOR on August 9, 1993. An August 10 report in the London Guardian described the procedures for responses to Serb attacks as "unwieldy in the extreme." The NATO military committee stipulated that the response should be "selective, carefully targeted, and precisely delivered" and "preceded by clear warnings."

Once the UN Secretary-General gave the green light for the first air strikes, in consultation with the Security Council and UN mediator Thorvald Stoltenberg, operational decisions would be made by the UNPROFOR force commander, General Jean Cot, a Frenchman, and the commander of NATO Southern Command, Admiral Jeremy Boorda, and an American. Either man could block a decision. The NAC decision also established a series of "triggers" for approving air strikes, including the safety of supply routes and access for aid convoys.

It was not until very late in the game, August of 1995, when the UN key was transferred to the UNPROFOR commanders on the ground that it began to work better. By then, Michael Rose was no longer in the picture.

DAVID HARLAND: Yes, people do matter. Peter?

PETER GALBRAITH: Having listened to Rupert and recalling my contemporaneous discussions with Yasushi, my question is: if one knew that the risk from air strikes was that UNPROFOR troops were going to be hostages or shields—the problem was really not shields but hostages—why weren't they withdrawn from Serb areas prior to the strikes?

MICHAEL DOBBS: Are you talking about 1994 or 1995?

TOM BLANTON: 1994. The hostage taking began in Goražde.²⁶

PETER GALBRAITH: This was not a one-time thing. The problem was even worse in May 1995.²⁷

DAVID HARLAND: In the case of Goražde, General Rose felt that UNPROFOR should have personnel in Republika Srpska territory as a sign of confidence that we wanted to be even-handed. I think that was precisely what undermined it. During General Smith's time, the question arose as to how to get UNPROFOR people off Serb territory at a critical moment, but a conscious decision was taken to leave them there.

RUPERT SMITH: You had this thing constructed in such a way that you had a dichotomy of priorities. What were we in Bosnia for? To deliver aid or to bomb? To be a peacekeeping force or to carry out bombing? It didn't really matter which. What mattered was that we had to decide one way or the other. We were in a situation where, as I said, you became a hostage or a shield.

²⁶ Bosnian Serb forces detained 150 UN personnel in the Sarajevo- Goražde area on April 14, 1993, after US warplanes attacked Serb targets near Goražde on April 10-11.

²⁷ Bosnian Serb forces took nearly 400 UNPROFOR personnel hostage on May 25-26, 1994 after NATO carried out air strikes against a Serb ammunition dump outside Sarajevo in response to violations of the Sarajevo "weapons exclusion zone."

PETER GALBRAITH: But once you have decided to bomb, you know that they are going to take your people hostage...

RUPERT SMITH: We can decide that we are all going to bomb, or we are all delivering aid, or whatever it is. But to split the force, and think you can behave in one way in one place and it will be alright, and in a different way in another place...it is very unlikely that it is going to work.

PETER GALBRAITH: I had this discussion with Akashi in Zagreb.²⁸ What I still don't understand is: once you know that your people are going to be taken hostage, once the decision's been made to bomb, and you know that the hostage taking is going to lead to a reluctance to bomb again, why not withdraw all your people from Serb territory before the bombing? This certainly was a factor in what later happened in Srebrenica.

DAVID HARLAND: Because they did not want there to be any bombing. As General Rose says very explicitly in his book, the whole point of the exercise was to take it off the table. He describes the process of drafting a cable back to London where he makes the case why there should never be the use of air power.²⁹ It's very instructive.

SHASHI THAROOR: I wanted to draw your attention to two documents in this thing. The first is an [April 8, 1994 cable](#) from General de La Presle [UNPROFOR force commander in 1994], describing his understanding of Safe Areas.³⁰ Then there is a report from the Secretary-General on May 30, 1995, which I wrote, putting the dilemma squarely to the Security Council.³¹ [Paragraph 63](#) partly answers Peter's question: "The threat of force also helped to establish the Sarajevo heavy weapons exclusion zone in February 1994. But the

²⁸ In a diary entry on May 26, 1995, Galbraith noted that he had "repeatedly urged Akashi" to pull UN military observers away from places where they could be captured by the Bosnian Serbs. "[I can't believe this wasn't done.](#)" In prior discussions with Akashi, Galbraith was a strong advocate of air strikes. General Smith made sure that UK troops were [all withdrawn from](#) Goražde on the night of August 28-29, 1995, prior to authorizing air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs in retaliation for the August 28 Markale marketplace bombing..

²⁹ See Rose, *Fighting for Peace*, page 46, referring to a "UK Eyes Only" paper in February 1994 "reiterating the dangers of abandoning peacekeeping for war-fighting." He writes that this paper finally convinced UK defense secretary Malcolm Rifkind to "stand firm against the Americans."

³⁰ De La Presle to Annan, "[Definition of Safe Areas.](#)" UNPF-HQ, Z-545, April 8, 1994.

³¹ Boutros-Ghali, "[Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolutions 982 \(1995\) and 987 \(1995\).](#)" S/1995/444, May 30, 1995.

Bosnian Serb side quickly realized that it had the capacity to make UNPROFOR pay an unacceptably high price if air power was used on its behalf. That capacity was demonstrated after close air support was provided in Goražde in April 1994...On all of these occasions, large numbers of United Nations personnel were taken hostage, further restrictions were placed on the Force's freedom of movement and negotiations were brought to an abrupt halt, except for the lengthy negotiations required to secure release of the hostages. These events demonstrated the perils of crossing the line from peace-keeping to enforcement without first equipping the Force with the manpower, armament, logistic and intelligence capacity and command and control arrangements that would give the necessary credibility to its threat to use force by showing that it had the ability to respond decisively to any hostile reaction."

We said in the previous paragraph that the Security Council had to decide whether UNPROFOR was ["about peacekeeping or enforcement."](#) It was clear that the Council wanted us to be a peacekeeping operation, but in that case they should not expect us to do peace enforcement. If we're a peacekeeping operation, we're deployed as such, in the Serb areas and everywhere else. If we are not deployed in patterns and configurations appropriate for peace enforcement, don't try to graft peace enforcement on to the operation. It was a *cri de coeur* that we kept repeating, ever since our first report in 1992, which said that you [can't do peacekeeping in Bosnia](#).³² We pointed this contradiction out every six months in a report to the Council, sometimes more frequently. We kept on telling the Security Council: assume your responsibilities. If you all agree that what you want to do is bomb the blazes out of the Serbs, then get us out of the way. There's a very interesting discussion in a US Principals meeting on May 28, 1995 in which the US [concludes](#) that "UNPROFOR withdrawal from Bosnia...would be seen as capitulation to Bosnian-Serb blackmail."³³ Therefore, UNPROFOR must be forced to remain in Bosnia. We didn't know you were having these conversations. To my mind, that's perverse logic. It's exactly the opposite.

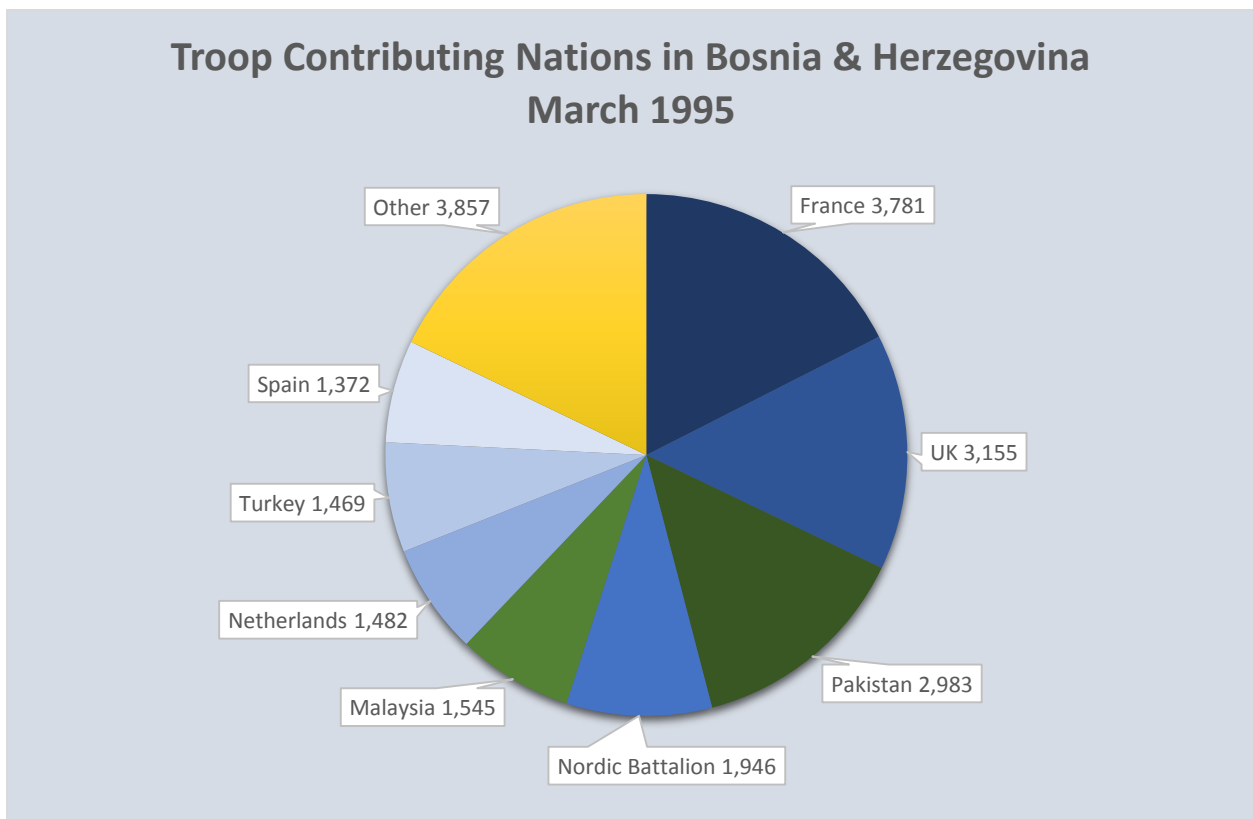
What was going on was that the member states wanted to keep us in Bosnia as a fig leaf or a band aid or both while they were unable to make up their mind as to what they

³² See Boutros-Ghali, ["Further Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 721 \(1991\),"](#) S/23363, January 5, 1992, paragraph 29.

³³ Lake to Clinton, ["Policy for Bosnia – Use of U.S. Ground Forces to Support NATO Assistance for Redeployment of UNPROFOR Within Bosnia,"](#) The White House, May 29, 1995.

really wanted. They wanted both: the fig leaf/band aid on the one hand and the appearance of belligerence/muscular air power on the other. UNPROFOR ended up bearing the worst of the burden.

DAVID HARLAND: If you wait for purity in the UN, you can wait a long time.



NATO/Nordic countries are shown in blue, non-aligned countries in green. Does not include Support Staff.

JORIS VOORHOEVE: This is a very important conclusion from our discussion. It seems to me that a choice should have been made in the spring of 1994. If we go for air power and deterrence, we should have been ready to pull out all blue helmets in order to prepare the way. But there were no preparations for that.

SHASHI THAROOR: You could have actually re-hatted the NATO country members. We had a lot of NATO troops in UNPROFOR including the British and the French. You could have re-hatted them in camouflage gear rather than blue helmets and pulled out the developing countries.

JORIS VOORHOEVE: At that moment indeed the blue helmets should have been re-hatted into green helmets. The protection of the eastern enclaves should have become the number one task of NATO.

CARL BILDT: Based on my experience in 1995, taking UNPROFOR out could have solved certain problems when you started bombing. But we needed to have a supply column going to supply the enclaves with both with food and water, and also supply the UN forces. This was not only the three eastern enclaves and Bihać. It was also Sarajevo, which also had to be supplied. To go from blue helmets to green helmets and assure supply of all of these enclaves would have been possible but then we are talking about the need for a major combat operation.

JORIS VOORHOEVE: But that could also have been done by air. That would have been consistent.

CARL BILDT: It could not have been done by air. In order to get into the three eastern enclaves, you had to have land columns, lorries to deliver humanitarian aid, not to speak about the supply of Sarajevo, which is a fairly big town.

PETER GALBRAITH: It is completely true that the missions were inconsistent and that troops might have been re-hatted. What Carl is saying about supplying Sarajevo is also correct. My point remains: once the decision is made to carry out air strikes, once the key is turned, then what is the possible logic of having troops in places where they are going to be taking hostage? It didn't happen once, it happened a number of times: you do the air strikes, your troops are taken hostage, and you must then have a negotiation for the release of the hostages. That's quite independent of whether you're going to supply the enclaves or even have flights into Sarajevo. I can't understand, to be honest, how that made sense.

RUPERT SMITH: Let me jump to May 1995. There's a time and distance problem that I actually addressed. I could not do what I wanted to do with the bombing in May and pull everyone out. I would have abandoned the weapon collection points, which were the very

things I was trying to re-impose with the air strikes.³⁴ I couldn't pull our people out from anywhere else in time because of the time and distance problem. My opponent had a shorter time and distance with which to react to what I was doing. My solution was to ring up the capitals of the troop contributing nations and say, "I am doing this. There is a risk of hostages. Are you okay with that?" They said, "Yes, yes, go ahead and bomb." Two bombings later, they were not ok. That's why I called it "[breaking the machine](#)."³⁵

JENONNE WALKER: It never looked as simple in Washington as Peter is suggesting. At the beginning of the administration, we did what any new administration does and explored every imaginable alternative option to see whether they made sense or not.³⁶ One of them was pulling out UNPROFOR, and undertaking serious military action.

We looked at the logistics and it just wasn't possible to do the humanitarian supply by air, as Carl says. Also, UNPROFOR was keeping a lot of people alive—at great cost in terms of what we could do against the Serbs, but it was keeping a lot of people alive. I'm not proud of my government's position but it was a lot more complicated than Peter is suggesting.

YASUSHI AKASHI: I wanted to close the gap between Sarajevo in February 1994 and Srebrenica in July 1995. What happened in Goražde in April 1994 may help us understand why what was accomplished in February 1994 could not be accomplished in July 1995. You asked about the distinction between close air support and air strikes. I felt it was vital to distinguish between these two concepts as much as possible. I regret that, in a few cases, even some of our commanders failed to make the distinction between close air support and air strikes. Close air support is an inherent right of self-defense. I hesitated in the case of

³⁴ Acting on the initiative of General Smith, NATO carried out air strikes against Serb ammunition supplies beginning May 25, 1995, in response to Serb violations of the Sarajevo "Weapons Exclusion Zone." Smith's superior, General Janvier, was in New York at the time.

³⁵ Smith used the phrase "I've broken the machine" in a conversation with US ambassador to Sarajevo Robert Menzies on May 27, 1995, two days after launching the air strikes. In order to succeed, he told Menzies, there must be a "clear plan" and a willingness, on the part of NATO and the UN, to cross the "pain barrier" and decide "whether you are prepared to fight or not." (Menzies to SecState Washington DC, "[I've Broken the Machine](#)," American Embassy Sarajevo, SARJ 00204, May 27, 1995)

³⁶ Daniel Wagner, "[Principals Committee Meeting on the Former Yugoslavia](#)," CIA memo, January 29, 1993. See also transcript of [Principals Committee meeting on Bosnia, February 5, 1993](#).

Bihać in March 1994 about whether I should go along with General Cot's request for close air support.³⁷ He was on the verge of leaving his duty station in Zagreb. There were some doubts about whether Cot was trying to contest the supremacy of civilian authority in the theater by insisting on the use of close air support. As soon as his successor, General de La Presle, arrived in Zagreb, I had no such hesitation at all. I remember making use of close air support for fifteen or sixteen times. By that time we had established in our headquarters a mixed committee of civilians and military people. I think even a UNHCR representative was included. There were more civilians than military representatives on that committee. We had a good overall appraisal of the situation in invoking close air support.

What complicated the matter subsequently was the creation of an intermediate category between close air support and the air strikes. There was a strike against the Udbina military airfield on November 21, 1994 that was clearly not an action in self-defense of our personnel.³⁸ In order to carry out close air support or an air strike you had to destroy the radar and other air defense instruments. This created an intermediate category between close air support and air strikes that could have confused the Serb leadership.

In the case of Sarajevo, in February 1994, we introduced Egyptian troops as part of UNPROFOR as a confidence building measure for the benefit of the Bosnian government side. Since this was a gesture towards the Bosnian government, we counterbalanced it by introducing Russian troops, also into Sarajevo.³⁹ This took quite a bit of persuasion on my part with Vitaly Churkin, who is the Russian representative on the Security Council today.

³⁷ On March 12, 1994, French troops in Bihać requested Close Air Support after being shelled by Bosnian Serb artillery for days. More than four hours passed from the initial request to the authorization of CAS by Akashi, as NATO aircraft circled uselessly over Serb targets. By the time permission was granted, the Bosnian Serb forces “had disappeared,” according to the [NIOD report](#). Akashi later ordered that authorization procedures be streamlined to reduce the response time.

³⁸ NATO aircraft attacked the military airfield at Udbina, located in the “Republic of Serbian Krajina” in Croatia, on November 21, 1994, disabling the runway. NATO acted under the authority of UNSC resolution 958, which allowed NATO aircraft to operate in Croatia. The attack was a response to Serb violations of the no-fly zone. Serb aircraft operating from the airfield used napalm and cluster bombs to halt a Muslim-Croat offensive around the town of Bihać, in northwest Bosnia.

³⁹ A battalion of Russian troops was transferred to the Serbian-controlled suburbs of Sarajevo from Croatia in February 1994. According to the [United Nations Peacekeeping website](#), a total of [1,130 Russian troops](#) and [430 Egyptian troops](#) were serving in UNPROFOR as of February 28, 1994

He said, "Yasushi why should we provide fodder to NATO attack by introducing Russian troops?"

Negotiating the withdrawal of Serb troops from Goražde was not so easy. The negotiation actually took place in Geneva [in June 1994]. Even when Karadžić emphatically told me that he had withdrawn all his troops, our military observers in Goražde found that there were still some remaining troops, contrary to his claim. When you see these examples of bad faith you begin to wonder whether they are indeed trustworthy. What tipped the balance was again Milosević. We had a long negotiation in Belgrade. Initially, we had a big meeting of forty to fifty people. I asked Milosević to negotiate with a much smaller team. On his side, Milosević kept Karadžić and Mladić only. On my side, there was General de La Presle and myself only. Milosević acted like the great professor trying to persuade two recalcitrant students, [Karadžić and Mladić]. He twisted their arms to make them realize the seriousness of the situation on the eve of a full scale NATO air strike over Goražde.⁴⁰ I remember that I also did my best to make them realize the seriousness of the situation by referring to their historical responsibility. That helped. The increasing distance between Milosević on the one hand and Karadžić and Mladić on the other, and Karadžić's estrangement from Mladić, made it difficult to repeat this formula later, [in the case of Srebrenica]. That is just my guess.

VERE HAYES: A little reality check on the discussion about air strikes and dual key in August 1993. There's a great military saying, "big hands on small maps, that's the way to kill the chaps." We had various problems at UNPROFOR headquarters in Kiseljak because we were becoming much more operational and needed to react more quickly. First, there was a language problem. Staff officers fill positions at headquarters, according to the troop contributions their countries have made. Not everybody had English as their first language or were fluent in English. Consequently, you could not pass orders quickly.

⁴⁰ [NATO warplanes attacked Serb targets near Goražde on April 10-11, 1994](#) in an attempt to halt a major Bosnian Serb offensive. The UN Security Council [adopted Resolution 913](#) on April 22, establishing a heavy weapons exclusion zone around Goražde, to be extended to other "safe areas," in the event of a "concentration or movement of heavy weapons".

Second, we were in range of the Serbs if they wanted to shell us. We were operating a headquarters out of a glass-roofed, glass-sided casino that was painted white.⁴¹ If a shell had landed there, we would have been in severe trouble. We also had a problem with communications. On the weekends, Zagreb was on skeleton manning. I am not quite certain what was happening in the UN, but we couldn't even speak to Sarajevo sometimes. There was an uplink to a satellite that came down to a station in America, which went to another satellite and down to Sarajevo. There was one instance where it was bucketing with rain around the downlink position in America and the area flooded, so we were unable to get through because it was raining in America. You could not speak fourteen miles away because it was raining in America.

When we got the word about the dual key arrangements for air strikes, in August 1993, we thought that we should make arrangements to exercise the procedure, to try it out in case we ever needed to call for an airstrike. We actually put together a command post out of vehicles. We painted out the white and put them back into camouflage. This gave us a mobile command post from which we could command and call for air strikes. We practiced a command post exercise calling for airstrikes. We ended up calling it "Exercise EBBSTREAMS." That is an anagram for "Must be a Serb," with one letter left out so that you don't get it too easily.⁴² At that time fighting between Croats and Bosnians in central Bosnia was preventing aid convoys from reaching Sarajevo. Had we painted an imaginary scenario based on that situation, of an attack on a humanitarian convoy by a Bosniak force as the reason for aid not getting through, you would not get an air strike authorized. If you said it was a Croat force, you would not get authority for an air strike. If you said the Serbs had attacked the convoy, then the system went through and you got an air strike. It was not a very happy period realizing that we were becoming more operational at that time but without the ability to prosecute operations.

⁴¹ UNPROFOR headquarters was established in Kiseljak, about 25 kilometers west of Sarajevo, in the Dalmacija hotel that had been built for the 1984 Winter Olympics, on a crossroads leading to Mostar, Vitez and Tuzla. The commander of Bosnia-Herzegovina command operated from the "Headquarters Forward" position in Sarajevo at the Delegates Club, the former residence of the president of the Bosnian Communist party.

⁴² Mixed-up anagrams for operations were common practice in NATO. While practicing for the overthrow of Cuban leader Fidel Castro in 1962, the US Army conducted an exercise known as Operation ORTSAC, Castro spelt backwards.

DAVID HARLAND: Thank you. So we have gone through 1994 and the muddle characterized with a political mission, dual lines of command, disagreement over air strikes, and hostage taking. Now let's get towards the events that led to the fall of Srebrenica. Rupert Smith, do you want to say a word about your venture into air strikes in May 1995 and the hostage taking, and what conclusions that led you to?

RUPERT SMITH: I wrote a memo [on May 29, 1995] for my commanders, which is also a summary of the situation as I saw it at the end of the bombing.⁴³ To give a bit of the background, the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement of December 31, 1994 had completely collapsed by that time.⁴⁴ There was increasing shelling and fighting around Sarajevo in particular. I did not call for air strikes in the first of these incidents but subsequently shells definitely fell on civilian areas so I called for it then. For reasons that were partly my fault, it appeared that I said I would not ask for air strikes and now I was asking for them. The general time frame of doing these things that was denied. By the end of the month of May, we had reached a situation where weapons were being taken out of the collection points or being fired from within the collection points into civilian areas of Sarajevo. We were either going to do what we were mandated to do or we were not.

I had long discussions with the NATO Southcom commander, Admiral Leighton "Snuffy" Smith, about the targeting. Up until this point, we had understood both in NATO and in the UN that the targets you were attacking should be very proximate, if not directly involved, with the incident that caused the bombing. I did not think that was the way to use air power. I wanted a different set of targets. I felt you had to start influencing the senior decision makers, not the local commanders. The chosen target was an ammunition depot close to [the Bosnian Serb capital] Pale. I wanted the government to hear it, see it, and so on. There were lots of targets, each bunker was a target, so we had the ability to escalate. Without the ability to escalate, you will never deter anybody.

I contacted any capital that I thought might have potential hostages to make sure they knew this was going to happen and it was okay. We made the threat in public and we

⁴³ See Rupert Smith, "[Post Airstrike Guidance](#)," May 29, 1995.

⁴⁴ The Bosnian government and Bosnian Serbs signed a [cessation of hostilities agreement](#) on December 31, 1994, brokered by Akashi and former US president Jimmy Carter. It provided for a ceasefire, separation of forces, and withdrawal of heavy weapons from safe areas.

carried out air strikes on May 25.⁴⁵ The immediate reaction was counter-shelling into the Safe Areas. From the Bosnian Serb point of view, the most effective was the attack into Tuzla [on May 25], which managed to kill over seventy people in one salvo.⁴⁶ There had to be a response to this attack, quite apart from the fact that the weapons were not back in the collection point. So, we bomb again. I can't remember whether we doubled the number of bunkers that were attacked that time. This was an escalation which led to the counter-escalation with hostage taking in much greater numbers across the board. This was not just in places like collection points, this was right across the board. We had something around 400 people hostage. At that point, I was told to stop.

TOM BLANTON: By whom?

RUPERT SMITH: It came down from Zagreb and New York. So we stopped.

YASUSHI AKASHI: One correction. Rupert, you will remember that I supported your request for air strikes for May 25, 1995. I supported you again on May 28, 1995. The consequence was that I was deprived of the right to have one of the dual keys.

TOM BLANTON: Who deprived you?

YASUSHI AKASHI: The Secretary-General. It was transferred to the Force Commander, General Janvier. Since his approach and mine were if not identical, very similar, I was very comfortable to do so.

⁴⁵ NATO warplanes bombed a Serb ammunition dump near Pale on May 25-26, 1995. The Bosnian Serbs responded by shelling the safe areas and taking nearly 400 UNPROFOR personnel hostage in order to deter future air strikes. A Bosnian Serb leader, Momčilo Krajišnik, told reporters [that "the UN mission is on the side of our enemy, and we have to treat our enemy equally, whoever they are."](#) (For Milosević reaction, see Perina to SecState DC, ["May 26 Meeting with Milosevic: Air Strikes, Bosnian Recognition, Zotov Visit,"](#) American Embassy Belgrade, Cable No 02572, May 26, 1995.)

⁴⁶ A Bosnian Serb artillery attack at 8.30 p.m. on May 25, 1995 killed 71 Tuzla residents, mainly young people celebrating the end of the school year at the Kapija coffee house. For contemporaneous UN reporting, see Ken Biser, ["Shelling of Tab and Tuzla old town, 25 May 1995,"](#) June 7, 1995. Other safe areas, including Srebrenica, were also targeted.

RUPERT SMITH: That transfer didn't occur until after the London Conference in July.⁴⁷

DAVID HARLAND: Rupert, while you have the floor, can you answer Peter's earlier question. If the goal somehow in all this muddle is to try and create the conditions for using air power more effectively, would you try to keep people off Serb territory where they could easily be held hostage rather than simply going through this cycle again and again and again?

RUPERT SMITH: You see me giving [orders to that effect](#) in the May 29 memo.

DAVID HARLAND: I thought your little contribution to history should be on the record.

RUPERT SMITH: We were operating on a set of assumptions that have now been found to be false. That is what I think I meant by the phrase, "I've broken the machine" (everyone else remembers it, I don't remember saying that). You can't do it; that is carry out air strikes in this way. You see in this memo that I'm already starting to pull people out wherever I can. I don't have any orders to do this. I just started extracting these people. There was one brave Frenchman who refused to surrender. He stayed at least a fortnight holding a weapon collection point all on his own. It takes some time and Carl appears and we start to get the hostages back. I'm starting to pull our fingers out of the pie.

DAVID HARLAND: That's what I wanted to hear you say. Having lived at the bottom end of the UN food chain, it seemed to us that you were unlikely to get a very clear mandate or a clear decision to wage peace or war. It was not realistic in the spring of 1994 to get a consensus on whether we should all be going into camouflage and fighting. The international community was simply too divided for that. What I found really inspiring (and this has never repeated itself in my professional life) is that you Rupert actually began doing the common sense things that Peter put on the table, i.e. slowly clearing the ground and preparing the way to use force in a very imperfect way in the middle of this muddle.

⁴⁷ General Smith is correct. The US and Bosnia troop contributors agreed to the transfer of authority on July 21 at the London conference. See [Lake memorandum for President Clinton](#), July 22, 1995. UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali agreed to turn over his authority to initiate air strikes on July 25, 1995 to Gen. Janvier, the senior UN commander on the ground. See Barbara Crossette, ["U.N. Military Aides Given Right to Approve Attacks."](#) New York Times, July 26, 1995.

You do this without orders and without officially asking, which would have covered your ass but would not have given you a clear answer. Although it was very imperfect, the Serbs were rather responsive to such actions, as we will later see.

RUPERT SMITH: Thank you very much. Let us be quite clear, however: I arrived at this point because I could see that either we were going to leave or we were going to fight. In either case I had to take my potential hostages out of the way. I did not know we were going to fight at that stage. It was just as likely that we were going to do a runner.

DAVID HARLAND: You did the least bad option, which turned out to be very good.

RUPERT SMITH: This was something that covered all the options.

DAVID HARLAND: I agree. Can I ask one question which becomes very important later when Srebrenica comes under attack? This is whether absolute priority should be given to the protection of UN personnel? If they come under attack, should they fall back, including in the Safe Areas?

TOM BLANTON: [Point 7 says](#): "I have been directed, today 29 May 95, that the execution of the mandate is secondary to the security of UN personnel.⁴⁸ The intention being to avoid loss of life defending positions for their own sake and unnecessary vulnerability to hostage taking."

DAVID HARLAND: Who directed you?

RUPERT SMITH: I don't recall, but I imagine it was General Janvier.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Smith to HQ UNPROFOR, "[Post Airstrike Guidance](#)," UNPROFOR HQ Sarajevo, May 29, 1995.

⁴⁹ The 2001 French Parliamentary Commission report (page 91) cites [the following passage from Directive 2/95](#) issued by Janvier on May 29, 1995 (translated from the French): "The execution of the mandate is secondary to the security of UN personnel. The intention is to avoid all loss of life in the defense of dispensable positions and to avoid all hostage-taking. Positions which can be reinforced or which can be recaptured through a counter-attack should not be abandoned. Positions which are isolated in Serb territory, the support of which cannot be guaranteed, can be abandoned when superior commands take such a decision, at the discretion of the superior command, when the positions are threatened and when the superior command considers that lives are at risk. The

TOM BLANTON: In another document, dated June 27, General Janvier appears to refer to this order. He [writes](#), "Since I sent my directive to you on May 29th..."⁵⁰

RUPERT SMITH: Yes, he sends me a letter. This sentiment is repeated at a meeting in Split on June 9, when we are discussing how we should conduct operations into the future.⁵¹ We hadn't got all the hostages back by that time but some were back.

DAVID HARLAND: While we are completing your part of the pre-Srebrenica part of the story, can I ask you about your discussions with the Serbs in early 1995 or the spring of 1995 and their plans with respect to the eastern enclaves? What did you know and when did you know it, as they used to say in the Watergate days?

RUPERT SMITH: It is not what I knew, it's what I thought. What I thought was rather closer to being what they were trying to do, although we did not discover this until later. It is my habit to put myself in the position of my opponent, to think what I would do if I was him, and then try to understand what he would do. My intelligence collection would then prove my idea right or wrong. I called this "my thesis." By early March 1992, one of the things that was becoming clear to me was that the [Cessation of Hostilities Agreement](#) was going to fall apart. Put simply, the Bosnians now had enough men and arms, and were keen to alter the situation on the ground before negotiating anything.

The Serbs had so few people, and such a large area to control, that they had to do two things.⁵² First, they had to fight to hold what they had got or they would have no position to negotiate from. Second, in their own minds, the Serbs felt threatened by the eastern enclaves which, to their understanding, were enemy positions in their rear. These positions were soaking up manpower they needed to defend against Bosnian Army attacks from central Bosnia. I started to tell everyone that I thought the eastern enclaves would be

sites must not be abandoned until the population can be transferred to other locations. In all cases, the greatest care must be taken to avoid being surprised by Serb forces utilizing equipment belonging to the United Nations."

⁵⁰ In his [June 27, 1995 letter](#) to Smith, Janvier reiterated that it was necessary to ["resist the temptation, no matter how inviting, to use force except in self-defense."](#)

⁵¹ During their June 9 meeting in Split, Janvier told Smith that it was no longer possible ["to use air power because of the obvious reason that our soldiers are on the ground"](#) and the Serbs controlled the situation "whether we want it or not." (Source: ICTY). This sentence was omitted from [the version of the document](#) released by the 2001 French Parliamentary Commission on Srebrenica.

⁵² According to the [NIOD Report](#), the Serbs had "60,000 men to hold a front that stretched over 1600 km."

["squeezed."](#)⁵³ I never imagined a complete collapse. Up to a point, it was advantageous to the Serbs to trap the UN in these places for reasons we have discussed, to serve as potential hostages. I anticipated that they would just be squeezed. The point that Vere Hayes has made about Srebrenica actually being a Safe Area within a larger area was explained to me by Mladić sometime in early March. His position was that the only safe place was the little bit in the middle, not the whole of it.

ZLATKO LAGUMDŽIJA: General Smith mentioned that the Serbs started shelling the Safe Areas, Tuzla to be precise, after the first air strike on May 25. The General is referring to Kapija coffee house massacre in Tuzla [in which 71 people were killed] which deserves a little more attention and investigation. It was the first shell that was dropped on Tuzla since the beginning of the war, and the last one. This shows how everything spiraled downwards so it would be good to document. It shows that the Serbs started behaving in an even more brutal fashion after General Smith started serious action.

I would like to refer to the document dated June 4, 1995 concerning the meeting between General Janvier and Mladić.⁵⁴ I would like clarification because the chronology refers to "rumors, never confirmed, that Janvier agreed to drop threat of air strikes in return for the release of hostages." But wait a second. Here we have a document released by the French Parliamentary Commission which clearly states in [point 2](#) that UNPROFOR agrees not to conduct air strikes in the territory of Republika Srpska.

MICHAEL DOBBS: Let me give you the French position on this. This document was released by the French Parliamentary Commission. According to Janvier, this was a demand by Mladić. Janvier says he did not agree with the request. Whether that is true or not, I do not know. There were only two people at the meeting, Janvier and Mladić. According to Janvier, this paper is not proof that he agreed to Mladić's demand.⁵⁵

⁵³ See Tony Banbury, ["SRSG's Meeting in Split."](#) June 9, 1995, paragraph 3.

⁵⁴ ["Meeting between General Janvier and General Mladić."](#) June 4, 1995.

⁵⁵ Janvier [denied that he had reached an agreement with](#) Mladić on a release of the hostages in exchange for a promise "not to use any type of force", including air strikes, against the Bosnian Serbs. He told the 2001 French parliamentary commission that he relayed Mladić's demands to the UN in New York as "an atmospheric element,

ZLATKO LAGUMDŽIJA: My point is very simple: this shows the overall chain of events. We cannot find out what happened with Janvier. But if Mladić understood it this way, if that was his impression of what happened at the meeting, Srebrenica was the logical consequence from his perspective.

DAVID HARLAND: The leadership of UNPROFOR, including Akashi and Janvier, were actively opposed to the use of force, even when Mladić was in clear violation of the Chapter VII mandate. The circumstances under which the UN might resort to force was a common theme in discussions with Mladić, and there was an effort to find an accommodation in which the use of force by UNPROFOR would not be necessary.

HASAN MURATOVIĆ: I was the first to publicly release the news that Janvier made this promise to Mladić. I had dinner with [European peace negotiator Thorvald] Stoltenberg in Vienna several days after the June 4 Janvier-Mladić meeting in Zvornik. We stayed up until 2 a.m. Stoltenberg probably had a lot to drink. Sometime after midnight I brought up that there were secret meetings between Mladić and Janvier. I pretended to know everything and questioned Stoltenberg further. He confirmed [the report of a bargain]. He confirmed that General Janvier promised not to ever call for airstrikes against Serbs in return for liberation of hostages. The bargain was: no hostages, no airstrikes in the future. I gave a statement on this to the French and Dutch (both Government and Parliamentary) commissions which investigated the Srebrenica tragedy. I did not tell them how I knew this. When I came from Vienna to Sarajevo, after meeting with Mr. Stoltenberg, I called a press conference and said that Mr. Akashi is dead to us.⁵⁶ We are not going to trust him anymore because of this secret meeting between Janvier and Mladić, which was approved by Akashi, and which he kept secret. Akashi's office denied that the meeting [in Zvornik]

nothing more." The French parliamentary commission gave "little credibility" to the reports of a deal between the men. The UN hostages seized on May 25-26 were released in groups between June 2 and 18. In the meantime, a U.S. pilot, Scott O'Grady, was shot down over Bosnian Serb territory near Banja Luka on June 2 and rescued on June 8.

Mladić's version of the conversation, recorded in [a June 4, 1995, diary entry](#), appears to support the Janvier version. It quotes Mladić asking Janvier to "suspend all decisions on the use of force against the Serbian people." It makes no mention of a promise by Janvier to suspend air strikes.

⁵⁶ See Tony Barber and David Osborne, "France Accuses US of arming the Muslims," July 1, 1995. Muratović is quoted as saying, "[We do not speak to Akashi any more. Akashi is dead for us.](#)"

happened, without going into details. After my later statement, Mr. Akashi called a media conference and recognized that the meeting between Janvier and Mladić took place in Zvornik but did not talk about the subject or outcome of it.

DAVID HARLAND: Please go into details.

HASAN MURATOVIĆ: I talked to some friends in the UN office in Sarajevo about my knowledge about the secret meeting and asked them to obtain confirmation from Zagreb. They reported to [the UN HQ in] Zagreb. Several hours later, Zagreb recognized that the meeting took place. I think this was a major cause of the fall of Srebrenica. Mladić was absolutely convinced that he would never be attacked from the air. When you follow what happened day by day, and request by request, you see a series of rejections of requests for air strikes, all with different excuses. My opinion is that the agreement between Mladić and Janvier is reflected in this document released by the French parliamentary commission. I am convinced that the lack of action by General Janvier, as a result of his promise to Mladić at the meeting in Zvornik, caused the fall of Srebrenica and all of the tragedy that followed.

DAVID HARLAND: Yasushi Akashi, can I ask you two questions. One, can you confirm what Hasan said, were you aware of such an agreement? Second, a general question: were you generally in favor of this type of arrangement, where the Serbs would stop taking hostages and UNPROFOR would stop using air power?

YASUSHI AKASHI: To your first question, a small correction to what Mr. Muratović just said. General Janvier reported to me on his meetings with General Mladić.⁵⁷ He also confirmed that he did not agree to a bargain of no hostages for no air strikes. One cannot be the head of a major peacekeeping operation without trust with the head of the military component.

DAVID HARLAND: What about the second question: whether or not you supported the view that, if the Serbs would stop taking hostages, the United Nations would stop calling on air power?

⁵⁷ See Mladić diary entries for meetings with Janvier on [June 4](#), [June 17](#), and [June 29](#).

YASUSHI AKASHI: My answer to you may be a bit indirect. Judging from the past conduct of General Mladić, I would not trust his promises.

HASAN MURATOVIĆ: Can I please ask one question? Mr. Akashi, did you know about the meetings before they happened, or afterwards?

YASUSHI AKASHI: Before.

CARL BILDT: This is obviously one of the more controversial issues. The accusations have been there for a long time. I met Mladić twice, on [July 7](#) and [July 14](#) [as recorded in the Mladić notebooks]. His accounts of those meetings are basically correct although I might have phrased it somewhat differently. The second of these meetings were after air power had been used in the case of Srebrenica. He never referred to any such agreement having been concluded. It could mean something, but not necessarily.

DAVID HARLAND: The Mladić notebooks or diaries were seized by the ICTY, but two of them are missing, around the time of Srebrenica.

CARL BILDT: He records my meeting with him in Belgrade on July 14, [three days after the fall of Srebrenica].

DAVID HARLAND: You are right, the Mladić diaries have turned out to be extremely accurate. It seems he was almost obsessive compulsive.

MICHAEL DOBBS: We have some evidence from the documents, including US documents that western governments agreed to a bombing pause. For example, we have a report of a Principals Committee meeting at the White House on May 28 that specifically mentions the US [agreeing](#) to an unpublicized bombing pause.⁵⁸ One of the reasons for this bombing pause was that negotiations were about to restart. There was a small window of opportunity for [political negotiations](#) involving Carl Bildt as the newly arrived international representative. The question is: how long was this bombing pause meant to last, in the view

⁵⁸ Lake to Clinton, [“Policy for Bosnia – Use of U.S. Ground Forces to Support NATO Assistance for Redeployment of UNPROFOR Within Bosnia,”](#) The White House, May 29, 1995.

of Western officials and UN officials? According to some accounts, you [Carl Bildt] requested a bombing pause while you conducted your negotiations with Milosević.⁵⁹ Could you tell us what actually happened.

TOM BLANTON: I refer you to two documents. One is the May 28 readout from the Principals Committee which talks about the bombing pause, but also [mentions](#) support for “regrouping UNPROFOR” to reduce the risk of further hostage taking. This meeting is taking place during the time the hostages are held.

Then, on June 27, you have a letter from General Janvier, after the hostages are all out, in which he repeats his [order](#) of May 29 to Rupert.⁶⁰ He says that the protection of our folks comes first and foremost, rather than protection of inhabitants, Safe Areas, and so on. The discussion in Washington on May 28/29, and the memo from Tony Lake to the President summarizing the Principals meeting, comes against the background of the hostage crisis. It is interesting that it actually recommends getting ready for more robust NATO bombing and re-grouping UNPROFOR to reduce the risk. It looks forward to a more aggressive posture as soon as the hostages are out, but General Janvier maintains his cautious stance on June 27.

DAVID HARLAND: Carl, do you recall any of that?

CARL BILDT: No, I don't. I entered the scene at roughly this time, or somewhat after the May 29 discussion. My thought was a different one completely. I was trying to take over the political negotiations, which were hardly existing, in order to move some sort of political process forward. I became slightly dragged into the operational side of things when I turned up in Sarajevo and saw some of the problems there, but I was never involved in

⁵⁹ Carl Bildt took over as co-chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) in June 1995 following the resignation of David Owen. His immediate goal on arriving in the Balkans was to get the peace talks started again. The issue of whether his negotiations were a reason for the denial of Close Air Support to Dutchbat III is addressed in detail in the NIOD report, (pages 1634 to 1636), [without any definitive conclusion](#). The report quotes General Nicolai as stating that he [refused a request from Colonel Karremans on July 8](#) for Close Air Support based on the fact that Bildt was involved in “sensitive negotiations.” A June 27, 1995 letter to Rupert Smith from Janvier mentions the short [“window of opportunity”](#) for the success of the “political negotiating process”, which “may close in as little as three to four weeks.” He insisted that force must only be used “in self-defense” to [“buy the necessary time”](#) for negotiations.

⁶⁰ Janvier to Smith, [“Letter from Bernard Janvier to Rupert Smith,”](#) UNPF-HQ, June 27, 1995.

discussions on air strikes. That took place at a higher level, for obvious reasons. My impression is that discussion took place primarily between capitals, very rarely reaching those of us who were down in the diplomatic mud. I never heard anything about a bombing pause. I was under the impression that the policy was in place that action would be taken if anything happened. I assumed that one would think through the consequences, given the experience we had just gone through, but that's a separate issue.

JORIS VOORHOEVE: Prior to the Principals Committee meeting on May 28, declassified White House documents show that President Clinton had [telephone conversations](#) on May 27 with President Chirac and Prime Minister Major.⁶¹ At a rare Principals Committee meeting on a Sunday, May 28, officials [decided](#) to quietly suspend the use of air strikes against the Serbs for the foreseeable future as UN peacekeepers were just too vulnerable to Serb retaliation.⁶²

There is an [interesting footnote](#). One official recommended against this, Richard Holbrooke, who at the time was marrying Kati Marton in Hungary. She was interviewed by Dutch journalist Bart Nijpels after Holbrooke's death, and said the following, "Yes I remember very well, we were in the car on the way to our honeymoon. He was on the phone with Warren Christopher saying, 'don't do this, start bombing now, start bombing the Serbs.'" These are the words of Kati Marton. She added that this was a message that any bride would like to hear on her wedding day. [*Laughter*]

Then we see the memo by Tony Lake to President Clinton on May 29. There is a succession of such messages. I must add, for clarity's sake, that the Dutch NIOD commission also investigated this question but found no clear evidence of an agreement between Janvier and Mladić to suspend air strikes.⁶³ However, it needs to be read in conjunction with Janvier's post-airstrike directive to General Smith that we have already mentioned, which says that air power should only be used [as a last resort](#). Then there is also the letter

⁶¹ The phone calls are mentioned in the declassified State Department study, [The Road to Dayton, Chapter 1](#), page 4. The underlying memcons have not yet been released. In a New York Times interview (See Roger Cohen, "[Taming the Bullies of Bosnia](#)," New York Times, December 17, 1995) in December 1995, Holbrooke recalled telling Washington, "[Give the Serbs 48 hours, and if they don't release the hostages, bomb them to hell.](#)"

⁶² See [Summary of Conclusions for meeting of NSC Principals Committee, May 28, 1995](#).

⁶³ The [NIOD report](#) concluded that "it is not possible to directly link the meeting in Zvornik [between Janvier and Mladić] to the fall of Srebrenica" and that "Close Air Support had certainly not been ruled out in advance." For full discussion, see [NIOD Report](#), Chapter 3.

from Janvier to Smith on June 2 which [states](#) that it is necessary to “avoid any action which may degenerate into confrontation with the Serbs,” such as the use of air power.⁶⁴

JORIS VOORHOEVE: I think the succession of actions and memos from May 27, 28, 29, and then Janvier’s letter to Smith of June 2 goes in a clear direction: we will not use air power. It is a decision to suspend the use of air power without saying when air power will be resumed. In effect, it was only resumed after the fall of Srebrenica, for the protection of Gorazde.⁶⁵

DAVID HARLAND: Yes, I think it's very well established in the written record that General Janvier was strongly opposed to the use of air power, as he says that above his own signature more than once. I think the US agreement to an unpublicized pause in late May is super interesting. We should explore the origins of that.

PETER GALBRAITH: Just to be clear, the talk about the withdrawal of UNPROFOR was kind of a red herring. The issue was the re-grouping of UNPROFOR: get people out of the way of hostage taking. At this point, in the period leading up to [the air strikes of] May 25, I am in talks with Holbrooke two, three, four times a day. There is a division in the US Government with Holbrooke and Albright on one side and more cautious types on the other. There is also some personal animosity, which we cannot discount, between Holbrooke and Lake. My instructions are coming from Holbrooke who of course is both the negotiator and the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs.⁶⁶ Part of what I did was to go to the UN and Yasushi to constantly press for air strikes.

One of my arguments, which is reflected my own notes, is that Serb actions were dictated by the fact that the Serb side was getting weaker and the Bosnian Government was

⁶⁴ Janvier to Smith, "[Letter from Janvier to Smith](#)," UNPF-HQ, June 2, 1995.

⁶⁵ Limited CAS was used against Bosnian Serb forces on July 11, at 2:40 p.m., to support Dutchbat III in Srebrenica. On July 21, 1995, at the London Conference, western leaders agreed to respond to any attack on Gorazde with decisive air power. Air power was not used again until Operation Deliberate Force on August 30, 1995.

⁶⁶ Holbrooke was brought back to Washington from a posting as US ambassador to Berlin to become Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs on September 13, 1994, which put him in charge of the Bosnia portfolio.

getting stronger.⁶⁷ The Serbs trying to win the war now because they were afraid of the Bosnians. Therefore, the notion of a pause for negotiations did not make sense. That was my message to Yasushi and the UN. If the Serbs began to realize they couldn't win the war, they might be willing to negotiate. You raise the concerns about retaliation. We had a debate about this as well. I am looking at my notes here. Your point [referring to Akashi] was that airstrikes would derail the ability to secure humanitarian convoys and opening Sarajevo airport. But when was the airport last opened? And when was the last convoy? In one case a month before and in the other two months before.

My diary gets quite repetitive, as is the nature of these things. So we fast forward to the Holbrooke wedding and the bombing pause. I was at the wedding but I wasn't in the car with the bride and groom. What I can say is that even before the wedding took place and immediately after it took place, Holbrooke was on the phone to various people, including [Under Secretary of State Peter] Tarnoff, sometimes Christopher, urging bombing and opposing any effort to have a pause. I only have one other thing from [my meeting with Akashi on] May 25. Yasushi had asked if he should see Senator Hutchison, a senator from Texas, on Sunday. I said, "Yes, you should but I won't be there, I'm going to Holbrooke's wedding [in Budapest]." He said, "I have to get Holbrooke a gift, what would he like?" I said, "Another air strike," which was literally true. [Laughter]

SHASHI THAROOR: I would like to go back to a note I wrote around the time of the Bihać air strike [in November 1994] to Annan and Akashi, which addresses the issue of air strikes. It was strictly confidential and went to nobody else. I do not have the document with me, but it got leaked to David Reiff [author of *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*]. He quotes me as writing: "The arguments we have always used in favor of the continuation of UNPROFOR are, *on the strategic level*, that it alleviates the consequences of the conflict, limits the war from spilling beyond the borders of the former Yugoslavia, and helps create conditions that facilitate the work of the negotiators..." That was on the strategic level.

On the tactical level, "...that its deployment and method of work (through daily co-operation with the parties) gets humanitarian aid through, saves lives, prevents worse

⁶⁷ See Galbraith diary entry on his [May 10, 1995 meeting](#) with Akashi. Galbraith said he [told Akashi](#), "we have tried it your way for three years with no results; now let's try our way."

excesses and is preferable to any alternative.” The problem I added is that “recent Serb actions have served to undermine that case.” I went on to say that if the “pattern of the Serbs blocking humanitarian aid and detaining, harassing and sometimes targeting UN personnel continued, it would render UNPROFOR's mission ‘unviable and remove the arguments in favor of working with the co-operation of the Serbs.’” I therefore recommended that UNPROFOR should take the “harder line with the Serbs. Supplying blue helmets and needy civilians with or without the Serbs’ consent,” arguing that “even if such actions entail calling in NATO air strikes, [it] is ‘the only option available compatible with UNPROFOR's self-respect.’” I went on to say that if we didn't take this action we may, “be doomed to watch helplessly as the United Nations suffers further obstruction and harassment and our hand is forced by events beyond our control, involving either an unavoidable NATO air strike or US action on the arms embargo.”⁶⁸

This was written months before the events we've just been discussing but it encapsulated the one available alternative we had. In other words, we had good reason to be deployed where we were because we were getting aid through and helping various people. If the Serbs would not let us do that, then we no longer had the case to be deployed there. Therefore, we should be doing something different, including delivering humanitarian aid without cooperation, in defiance of obstructions, including the use of force and possible air strikes. However, that was not the course of action that was accepted. But it was an idea on the table months before we came to this point in May 1995. It was sent from New York in late 1994.

DAVID HARLAND: That is useful. It seems that the principal objections to the greater use of air power came from Mr. Akashi and General Javier, as well as Paris and from London.

HASAN MURATOVIĆ: One week after Janvier and Mladić meeting, on June 13, Karadžić called a press conference and said there will never be air strikes against Serbs again.⁶⁹ Why would he mention this at a press conference? Second, I would like to ask Mr. Akashi, why

⁶⁸ See David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*, 241-242.

⁶⁹ Karadžić held a press conference in Pale on June 13 to announce the release of 130 UN hostages from Bosnian Serb custody

did you keep the June 4 meeting between Janvier and Mladić secret? Did Janvier report the meeting to the United Nations, because there is no document here?

DAVID HARLAND: All we have is this document. It is very ambiguous what happened.⁷⁰

JENONNE WALKER: I was in Czech language training by May 1995 but I was still talking to a lot of people in the government. With regard to the May 29 memo to the President, pay attention to the [first bullet point](#) under "background." It says, "We will not press allies with troops on the ground for further strikes now."⁷¹ We were very aware that they were the ones taking risk on the ground and we were not. The word "now" is important. It did not mean no more air strikes forever. Air strikes might again become necessary. This was when Washington was moving toward a position that we may have to use air strikes even if UNPROFOR does not agree. It was by no means a decision to end the air strikes.

The suspension went on longer than it should have, but it should not be misread. Keep in mind Richard Holbrooke's continuing effort to portray Tony Lake as a wimp in terms of standing up to the Serbs. This goes back to the very beginning of the Clinton administration. In part it is a reflection of his bitterness that he didn't have Tony's job [of national security advisor]. He claimed credit for all sorts of things in which he was not involved at all. He did a lot of wonderful things, I liked him enormously, but read everything he says with his ego in mind and in light of his bitterness and sense of rivalry with Tony.

DAVID HARLAND: Thank you. Yes, I agree that Holbrooke's ego, and muscular image, and flair for story-telling get in the way of the truth. There is a spectacular line in his book on how the serious bombing finally begins in Bosnia, in which his own role is wildly overstated.⁷² Holbrooke describes a dinner in Paris, hosted by Ambassador Harriman, at which Izetbegović was present. It took place just after the second Markale marketplace massacre. Holbrooke describes how he made calls during that dinner to ensure that bombing attacks against the Serbs would take place and would be serious. The strong

⁷⁰ ["Meeting between General Janvier and General Mladić,"](#) June 4, 1995.

⁷¹ Lake to Clinton, ["Policy for Bosnia – Use of U.S. Ground Forces to Support NATO Assistance for Redeployment of UNPROFOR Within Bosnia,"](#) The White House, May 29, 1995.

⁷² See Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, pages 99-101.

implication is that it was Holbrooke's own actions had brought about that decisive action. In fact, however, by the time that dinner took place the decision to launch the bombing campaign had already been taken by Smith – whose role he does not acknowledge, at all – and both keys had been turned.

OBRAD KESIC: A point of clarification. When I raised the issue about the difference in perception of the Bosnian Serb civilian leadership and the military leadership, I was pointing out that the political leadership was actually committed to the negotiations. This was the heart of the difference of opinion. When Jimmy Carter was going to meet with Karadžić on a private initiative in December 1994, Karadžić called me in Washington to find out if the administration had endorsed this at any point.⁷³ I asked for a clarification through [White House advisor for public engagement] Alexis Herman, who was the best contact I had in the administration. I was told within twenty-four hours that the administration would gladly look at any agreement that was reached but Jimmy Carter was only speaking on his own behalf.

That had no impact on how Karadžić viewed this mission. He was desperate for a political agreement. He thought he was very close to a political agreement, which is also what Milosević believed. The Bosnian Serb military did not share that point of view. They thought that these were delaying tactics on the part of the US to buy time to arm and train the Bosnian Army, which would then be in a much better position to launch a major offensive throughout Bosnia. So that's the clarification. The political leadership did not share the views of the military leadership. They were at odds.

DAVID HARLAND: [Republika Srpska assembly chairman Momčilo] Krajišnik said at his trial that they felt by the beginning of 1995 that time was no longer on their side for the reasons that Peter and you have mentioned.

[BREAK]

⁷³ See Norman Schindler, [“Deputies’ Committee Meeting on Bosnia,”](#) DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force, December 19, 1994. Clinton’s advisers regarded the Carter initiative as [“not bad.”](#)

TOM BLANTON: We want to start this afternoon with the Dutch decision to deploy peacekeepers to Srebrenica. We have the key decision makers through both the civilian chain of command including the Prime Minister, Mr. Kok, and Defense Minister, Mr Voorhoeve, and on the military side from General Nicolai, the senior Dutch officer in Bosnia, to Colonel Karremans, the commander of Dutchbat III, to one of his company commanders, Captain (now General) Matthijssen. It's an extraordinary group of people who know the context. We would like to start with Prime Minister Kok on Dutch decision making and then come to the actual deployment. What did you see, Colonel Karremans, when you arrived in Srebrenica in January 1995? Reconnect us to the conversation we were just having, which dealt with the crisis of May-June 1995. Prime Minister Kok, would you like to lead us off?



Wim Kok (hand on chin) between Tom Blanton and David Rohde

WIM KOK: Thank you very much. I really wonder why this decision of the Principals' Committee on the May 28 [to agree to an [unpublicized bombing pause](#)] was not

communicated properly to the Netherlands.⁷⁴ We should never forget that the main responsibility for the decision to overrun the enclave should not be borne by our allies or the UN. The Serbs were responsible. But it remains really puzzling for me why this very important decision to have a pause, an unqualified pause—not forever, but at least for the time being—was undisclosed to the government of a country that had huge responsibilities in Bosnia, and particularly Srebrenica. But I abstain from further comments on this as I want to go back to the issue we want to discuss this afternoon. I go back to 1992-1993, when we in Western Europe and also in the Netherlands were discussing our dissatisfaction about what was happening in the former Yugoslavia. The Netherlands had been chair of the European Union in the second half of 1991. Our Minister of Foreign Affairs, later EU Commissioner, Hans van den Broek, was very active, along with our Prime Minister, Ruud Lubbers, in trying to mobilize and organize European support for an international role in bringing this terrible conflict in the former Yugoslavia to an end. A large majority of the Dutch people shared the view that something needed to be done, not only holding conferences and launching peace initiatives, but also having a [Dutch] military presence in Bosnia.⁷⁵ That was a general feeling in my country. There was also a strong will, almost impatience, to give an example to others by sending our military to the region.

From around 1992, we already had a large transport battalion together with the Belgians doing enormously important humanitarian work.⁷⁶ There was a general sentiment that the humanitarian problems were increasing, that the UN had already desperately tried to organize international support, and too few countries were participating. We wanted to play a leading role in getting this done. Discussions started about a military role in addition to the transport battalion.

In 1993, I was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, as well as being the leader of my party [Labour Party]. I was of course heavily involved within the cabinet and also in my party in organizing support for an additional military role in Bosnia. We decided in the second half of 1993 to send a military battalion to the former Yugoslavia, to be more

⁷⁴ [“Summary of Conclusions for Meeting of the NSC Principals Committee,”](#) National Security Council, May 28, 1995, paragraph 2.

⁷⁵ According to the [NIOD report](#), 71 per cent of Dutch citizens were in favor of military intervention to halt the war in April 1993.

⁷⁶ By the end of 1992, the Netherlands had around 940 troops in Bosnia, according to the NIOD Report, [page 582](#).

precise, to Srebrenica. Others had been asked and refused to send troops, which could have caused us perhaps to ask “why us?”, but we found it an honor to be asked.

The Ministry of Defense organized an investigation to see if we could carry out the mission. We got a report from the Ministry of Defense that this was not undoable. That is a double negative: not undoable. It was complex and an honor, but not undoable. I remember myself that in our Cabinet discussions, there were not many questions, not so much on the principle of going, there were questions around the mandate, about the security of our military, about the length of the mandate. The decision was taken at the end of October 1993.⁷⁷

We met with then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali who visited The Hague in January 1994.⁷⁸ Van den Broek had meanwhile become Commissioner of the European Union and was succeeded as foreign minister by Peter Kooijmans. Prime Minister Lubbers, Minister of Defense ter Beek and I also took part in the talks. One of the issues we discussed with Boutros Boutros-Ghali was the use of air power [to defend the Dutch battalion]. The in-depth conversations were initiated primarily by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense. I remember that Boutros-Ghali outlined the way in which air power would be used in self-defense, under the dual key system, to be asked for by the UN and applied by NATO. He first gave a [press conference](#) and later confirmed the arrangements in a letter to the Dutch Government.

That was of course a very important reassurance for the Minister of Defense [Relus ter Beek] and a practically unanimous Parliament.⁷⁹ With the exception of one small political party, everybody agreed with the proposal to send our people to Srebrenica. That was how it all started. It was clear to everyone that the Dutch soldiers would be part of a UN chain of command from the moment they arrived [in Bosnia]. We knew that the Safe Area concept was based on the concept of “deterrence by presence” and that the mere presence of Dutch troops might not be enough to secure security. This is why the

⁷⁷ According to the [NIOD report](#), Boutros-Ghali accepted the offer of a Dutch airmobile battalion for the Safe Areas on October 21, 1993. The Dutch government informed parliament of the decision on [November 15, 1993](#). The first Dutch troops [arrived in Srebrenica](#) on February 8, 1994.

⁷⁸ See NIOD report, [page 896](#).

⁷⁹ In a [letter to the Dutch Parliament](#) on January 26, 1994, Defense minister ter Beek said that a promise by Boutros-Ghali to approve air support provided “an important additional guarantee of the safety of Dutch UN forces.”

assurances that Boutros-Ghali gave us about air power, first in the press conference and then in the letter, were so important. Of course there are never guarantees in life, but at that time it looked reasonable to us. You do what you have to do, you try to get other nations on board as much as possible. We felt that the situation there was intolerable and something needed to be done.

Throughout the Netherlands, we felt that we would be making a very good, useful and necessary contribution to humanitarian aid, and also hopefully to a lasting peace. The assurance that air power would be provided if necessary was very important. This was not a 51-49 decision. It was a decision whole-heartedly supported both in Parliament and in public opinion. I do not want to hide behind the backs of parliamentarians and the public, but I note that both the Parliament and the public supported our decision.

JORIS VOORHOEVE: My predecessor, Relus ter Beek, had hesitations because of the isolated position of Srebrenica, deep in Serb territory. But, as former Prime Minister Kok said, he was convinced by the very clear promises made by Boutros-Ghali that there would be air support. There was confusion about those words but the promise was that air power could arrive within two hours after a request from the local commander.⁸⁰ That convinced Parliament that it should agree with the Cabinet's approval of the UN Request.

I took over as defense minister in August 1994. I noticed that Dutchbat was in a very vulnerable position. I asked a number of NATO allies to join us. They were not prepared to do so. I made some other proposals such as supplying the enclave by air to break the convoy terror of the Serbs but this was deemed too difficult and risky by them.⁸¹

I asked six countries for transport helicopters and attack helicopters to protect them. The only country to say yes was Norway but it had no attack helicopters. My American colleague Bill Perry, who sympathized very much with the Dutch position, said, "I can offer Apache helicopters but without pilots." It takes a year and a half to train an Apache pilot so he knew that there was not much we could do with that. Looking back, we all know how terribly it ended.

⁸⁰ See NIOD report, [page 896](#). Foreign minister Koojimans recalled that Boutros-Ghali had a "gadget" with him that showed that a request from a UN commander in the field would be answered within two hours by New York.

⁸¹ Voorhoeve, ["Safe Areas? Failures and Successes in Protecting Civilians in War,"](#) Book Summary, 2015.

I think the Dutch Cabinet and Parliament overlooked a number of important points. First, the Netherlands was the only country prepared to take over from the Canadians, who wanted to go home as fast as possible. The Netherlands might have said to Boutros-Ghali, “We are prepared to go there, but under an important condition, that other UN members, particularly those who voted for these resolutions in the Security Council, join us.” Then we would have a shared risk. Second, the Netherlands had abolished its foreign intelligence service in 1991. It thought that it was not so necessary any more, once the Cold War had ended.⁸² If something happened in the world, our allies would inform us. But that is not the way it works. In the intelligence field, if you don't know anything, you don't hear anything from others. Since then, fortunately, the Netherlands built up a sizable foreign intelligence service. Even a small power with an active foreign policy needs one badly.

The Netherlands has a domestic and foreign intelligence service now, but we didn't have a foreign intelligence service at that time. When the United States very kindly [offered](#) to provide the Netherlands peacekeepers in Srebrenica with listening devices in suitcases, the army leadership [declined](#). The army commander at the time thought such action would be contrary to the neutral position of United Nations blue helmets. These devices would not have given all that much information but would have enabled the army intelligence to listen in on the local communications between the warring parties, through walkie talkie and telephone information. So Dutchbat didn't get this. Dutchbat only saw what it could see from its patrols. Most of these patrols were on foot, and quite risky, as Dutchbat did not receive any more diesel fuel in 1995. A number of proposals were made to strengthen the position of Dutchbat, to make it less vulnerable, but they failed because of lack of support from other states and the UN.

We were happy finally to get an agreement in Paris on June 3 [1995] between Great Britain, France and the Netherlands for deployment of a rapid reaction force for UNPROFOR.⁸³ We made additional forces available. We thought the two big states [UK and

⁸² It was not only the Netherlands that scaled back its intelligence-gathering activities in the wake of the Cold War. The United States [closed down](#) all its CIA stations in Africa during the same period, compromising its ability to deal with events like the Rwanda genocide.

⁸³ For details on rapid reaction force, see UNSG letter to president of Security Council, June 9, 1995, [S/1995/470](#). The force was to consist of a multinational brigade, drawing primarily on troops from France, Britain, and the Netherlands. The 11,000-member force, plus a further 4,000 troops “on standby” in France, was designed to give UNPROFOR commanders a military “capacity between ‘strong protest and air strikes.’”

France] could not agree but we tried to serve as glue between the two, which worked. The UN got a rapid reaction force, but one that was designed for Sarajevo rather than the eastern enclaves. In any case it only became operational in August. It was applied forcefully and worked well, leading to the destruction by Dutch marines of Serb artillery positions on Mount Igman and also of arm stocks near Pale by the Dutch royal air force.⁸⁴

We all know how things went wrong. I think it would have helped if there had been a positive response to the [first request](#) from Colonel Karremans for close air support on July 6.⁸⁵ My understanding of Mladić's position is that he might have halted after the first sign of resistance from NATO. He could create a tremendous humanitarian problem by locking up the enclave and dumping the 40,000 inhabitants on the United Nations. That would have bought some time for the UN to evacuate itself the civilian population from Srebrenica. We would have had an orderly, UN-led evacuation. It happened very differently. There was no sign of resistance and the enclave was overrun.

Instead Mladić carried out his own so-called "evacuation," which was deportation plus mass murder. I do not think this was a failure of any specific person or functionary. It was a collective underestimation of the risk of mass murder in many quarters, many countries, and many organizations. That is why we should analyze these events carefully, to prevent the repetition of similar mistakes in similar situations.

TOM BLANTON: We will talk about that tomorrow morning. Let me call on General Nicolai to take us from the deployment of Dutchbat-III in January 1995 to the crisis in May and June.

⁸⁴ The Dutch air force [participated in air strikes](#), known as Operation Deliberate Force, after the Bosnian Serbs failed to meet a September 4 deadline for the removal of their heavy weapons around Sarajevo.

⁸⁵ According to the UN Srebrenica report, UNPROFOR chief of staff [Gen. Kees Nicolai "discouraged" the June 6 Karremans request for close air support](#) because he did not believe that Gen. Janvier's "very restrictive" criteria for the use of air power, only as a last resort, had been met.

KEES NICOLAI: I was Chief of Staff to General Smith in Sarajevo. I arrived in Sarajevo at the end of February 1995. Before I arrived, while I was still in the Netherlands, I already wondered about the decision to remove the 20 mm canon off the Dutchbats APCs and replace them with .50 machine guns.



Kees Nicolai, chief of staff to Rupert Smith, R

MICHAEL DOBBS: Who took the decision to replace them? Why were they replaced?

KEES NICOLAI: The Army staff took that decision. I think there were discussions with the political leaders but it was made by the Army staff. I realized that defending an enclave like Srebrenica was not a real option with less than a full battalion.⁸⁶ Defense by presence, with the protection of air force, was in fact the only possibility. After I arrived in Bosnia at the end of February, my first surprise was that there was no freedom of movement, which in my opinion is an essential condition for a peacekeeping mission. I learned that there was a

⁸⁶ According to the NIOD report, [page 1473](#), Dutchbat III consisted of 780 troops, 600 of whom were deployed in Srebrenica, and 180 in Tuzla. By June 1995, the Srebrenica contingent had dwindled to 430 troops because of the Serb refusal to permit leave replacements.

cessation of hostilities agreement [negotiated by Carter]. While this agreement was in force, there should be discussions to restore freedom of movement.

I was shocked to read a report about the food situation in Dutchbat a week after arrived in Bosnia.⁸⁷ They only had four days of supplies of food in the enclave. I asked my predecessor if this was normal and he said, “No.” I discussed the problem with General Smith. Our request to send a food convoy to the enclave was initially refused by Mladić. General Smith made clear to Mladić that he had to feed his soldiers and [threatened](#) to do the resupply by air.⁸⁸ At the very last moment, Mladić gave in and gave permission for a food convoy which reached Dutchbat just in time. That was the last time a convoy was conducted at night. Afterwards there were continuous problems in resupplying Dutchbat. The staff received orders from General Smith to develop a plan for resupplying by air.

After completing the plan, we consulted with other troop contributing nations. They told us they would only support the execution of this plan in case of a real emergency, for example if Dutchbat was threatened with starvation. At first, the situation in Bosnia and especially Sarajevo was quiet. After a few months, the situation deteriorated, and there were numerous firing incidents. We negotiated with both warring factions, but were unable to stop it. I was happy at the end of May when we carried out air strikes for the first time. I hoped that would change the situation, but we heard earlier this afternoon what happened. After the hostages were seized, our hands were tied. We could do very little during the month of June. As Mr. Voorhoeve already explained, the situation in the enclave was really bad. There was petrol, insufficient food, and out-of-date ammunition. Dutchbat could not carry out its mission in a proper way, as Colonel Karremans reported on June 4.⁸⁹

In response to this report, Karremans was given the option of pulling back his observation posts which would have diminished the enclave in size. He rejected that proposal and insisted on keeping his people in the observation posts. In fact, he was able to carry out foot patrols as he did not have enough soldiers to control the whole area. He was

⁸⁷ See NIOD report, [page 1481](#), for details on Dutchbat supply situation.

⁸⁸ Akashi to Annan, [“Meeting Gen Smith and Gen Mladic.”](#) UNPF-HQ, UNPROFOR Z-363, March 6, 1995.

⁸⁹ In his [June 4, 1995 report](#) on the “deteriorating situation” in Srebrenica, Karremans said that Dutchbat III had been the [“hostage” of the Bosnian Serb army](#) for three months. He said that “tension has grown to a maximum” because of lack of food and medical aid, and predicted an imminent Serb offensive.

unable to prevent the Bosniaks from carrying out attacks on Serb territory.⁹⁰ I explained to the Bosnian Serb Army by phone and also in writing that Dutchbat would not be able to carry out its mission as long as the BSA blocked Dutchbat soldiers returning from leave and prevented resupply. All this was without any effect. By the end of June, the battalion was not really capable of carrying out its mission. I also well remember General Janvier's letter of June 27 in which he once again stated that force could only be used as a last resort, in self-defense.⁹¹ That influenced our thinking on July 6 when Dutchbat for the first time requested close air support. I explained by phone the restrictions on using air power so the request was refused.⁹²

TOM BLANTON: I saw Colonel Karremans shake his head when Gen. Nicolai mentioned the withdrawal from observation posts. Could you address that?

THOM KARREMANS: If you get an order to withdraw observation posts in the middle of the night when it is raining cats and dogs, you don't do that because of vehicles, terrain circumstances, and so on.⁹³ But that is another point.

Thank you for giving me the floor. I am an armored infantry officer. That was my training. I carried out many exercises in Germany before becoming battalion commander for a mobile brigade. I left that battalion in January 1994. We began preparing for our mission in Bosnia in the summer of 1994. I went to Bosnia for a recce in November and met my predecessor, who had actually been my deputy company commander in Lebanon, Lieutenant-Colonel Everts. I saw what he was doing and what the mission looked like. We had a lot of discussions back in Assen, our headquarters. We did our utmost to prepare

⁹⁰ In [March 1995](#), the Bosnian Muslims resumed the "battle," eliciting worry from General Smith.

⁹¹ Janvier [letter to Smith](#), June 27, 1995.

⁹² According to the NIOD report, page 1620, Karremans [filed a request for Close Air Support](#) at 1350 on July 6 after the Bosnian Serbs began shelling Srebrenica and attacking Bosnian government positions. His superiors did not consider this to be a formal request. Nicolai had earlier told Karremans that Janvier's criteria for the use of air power had not been met. This was a reference to the "[smoking gun](#)" principle that restricted the use of Close Air Support to direct targeting of UNPROFOR personnel.

⁹³ UNPROFOR ordered Karremans to abandon his most vulnerable observation posts on the night of May 28-29, after the Bosnian Serbs began seizing UN hostages. The order was subsequently rescinded. (See Karremans, *Srebrenica Who Cares?* page 300.) The option of withdrawing from Dutchbat observation posts was discussed in early May in response to the fuel blockade of Srebrenica. In a report dated May 10, 1995, Karremans stated that Dutchbat would "[lose its credibility](#)" with the Srebrenica authorities and population in the event of such a pullback and there was "no way back" after positions were abandoned.

ourselves as well as we could for the mission, which started in January 1995. We went to Bosnia with 780 soldiers, of whom 180 were deployed in the area of Tuzla, 55 kilometers north of Srebrenica. That left me with 600 troops in Srebrenica, many of whom did not come back from leave because they were prevented from doing so by the Serbs. I had a very, very small battalion to work with. My battalion was not a combat unit.

Today, when we participate in peacekeeping operations, like General Matthijssen did in Iraq for example, we make sure they have the proper support. That has been one of the lessons that the Netherlands learned from Srebrenica. If we send one soldier to Mali, he has the support of a whole battalion. Twenty years ago, that was not the case. There was no support at all. As General Nicolai said, if you join a peacekeeping operation, you should go in as strong as possible, not with only machine guns on your APCs. That's another lesson to learn. I had no armor, no tanks, no artillery support, no attack helicopters, no situational awareness units, no mortars, and no anti-tank guns. As General Nicolai also mentioned, my machine gun ammunition rounds were rotten. They had expired. I could not use them. That was the situation when I took over the mission in January 1995.

During my time in Srebrenica, I got sore fingers from writing reports. During my six month stay there, I left Srebrenica twice, once for a two week leave in the Netherlands and once to visit Sector NE Command in Tuzla. We were not able to leave the Safe Area because it is in the middle of a valley surrounded by mountains.

The Serbs knew exactly what was going on in the enclave day by day, what we were doing, what the Bosnians were doing. They had their own people in the enclave. We knew that. Talking about reports and reporting, here is my book [*Srebrenica: Who Cares?*] I wrote a book during the three years I spent in the United States at the US Army Training and Doctrine Command. I wrote about everything I saw and what I did, including all the reports I sent. This book is based on five little notebooks. I made notes of everything that happened day by day, all my meetings with my officers, with the battalion staff, with the company commanders. Based on all these notes I wrote this book. I raised some questions about the role of some countries in this book which are still question marks today.

We discussed the situation in Srebrenica this morning. I always call this the “paper war,” we did not have a good exit strategy for the battalion. Talking about peace operations, there was no peace at all in my opinion. I negotiated toughly with both sides, at least I tried

to. The name of Naser Orić has been mentioned a couple of times this morning. He went outside the enclave with his troops. There was a problem of getting food: I have pictures of the garbage belt within the Safe Area, where people were literally killing themselves in order to get food. Orić and his men went outside to steal food for their people, for the women and children. By the way, they also killed Serbs.⁹⁴ Somebody used the phrase "convoy terror." There was a convoy terror from the end of April, beginning of May.⁹⁵ No convoy came in. That means I had no fuel.⁹⁶

I used fuel from the UNHCR which we had in support on my compound. First, by signing for it and then we simply took it.⁹⁷ I needed diesel for my communication systems and for the hospital. Wounded people were coming in and we had to help them. You can't do that at night if you don't have your generators running. Since we had no diesel, all our patrolling was by foot. That is fine, but you can't do that day after day. We responded by creating more observation posts than I had when I took over in January. We had no freedom of movement at all, sometimes not even within the enclave.⁹⁸ There was no room for negotiations. We tried to get both parties together at the command post. It happened only once. They were not willing to talk to each other, and we were in the middle, of course.

It was part of my mission to negotiate with both parties. We had problems within the Safe Area itself. We had the so-called "Bandera triangle" [in the western part of the enclave], a staging ground for the Bosnians to mount raids outside the enclave [to gather food].⁹⁹ We attempted to stop that, but we were not even allowed freedom of movement in our own territory.

⁹⁴ Karremans reported on one such incident on May 31, 1995, stating that the Bosnian Serb army was "very upset about the killing of seven Serbs by the Muslims." He predicted that this could be a "clear argument" for the start of a Bosnian Serb offensive against Srebrenica. See also his description below of Bosniak attacks from the "Bandera triangle."

⁹⁵ Karremans [reported on June 29, 1995](#), that not "one single person" was able to leave or enter the enclave from April 26 onward. From that date, the Serbs denied permission for rotation of UNPROFOR personnel. He reported that deliveries of diesel fuel and spare parts ceased in February, food in March, and medicines in mid-April.

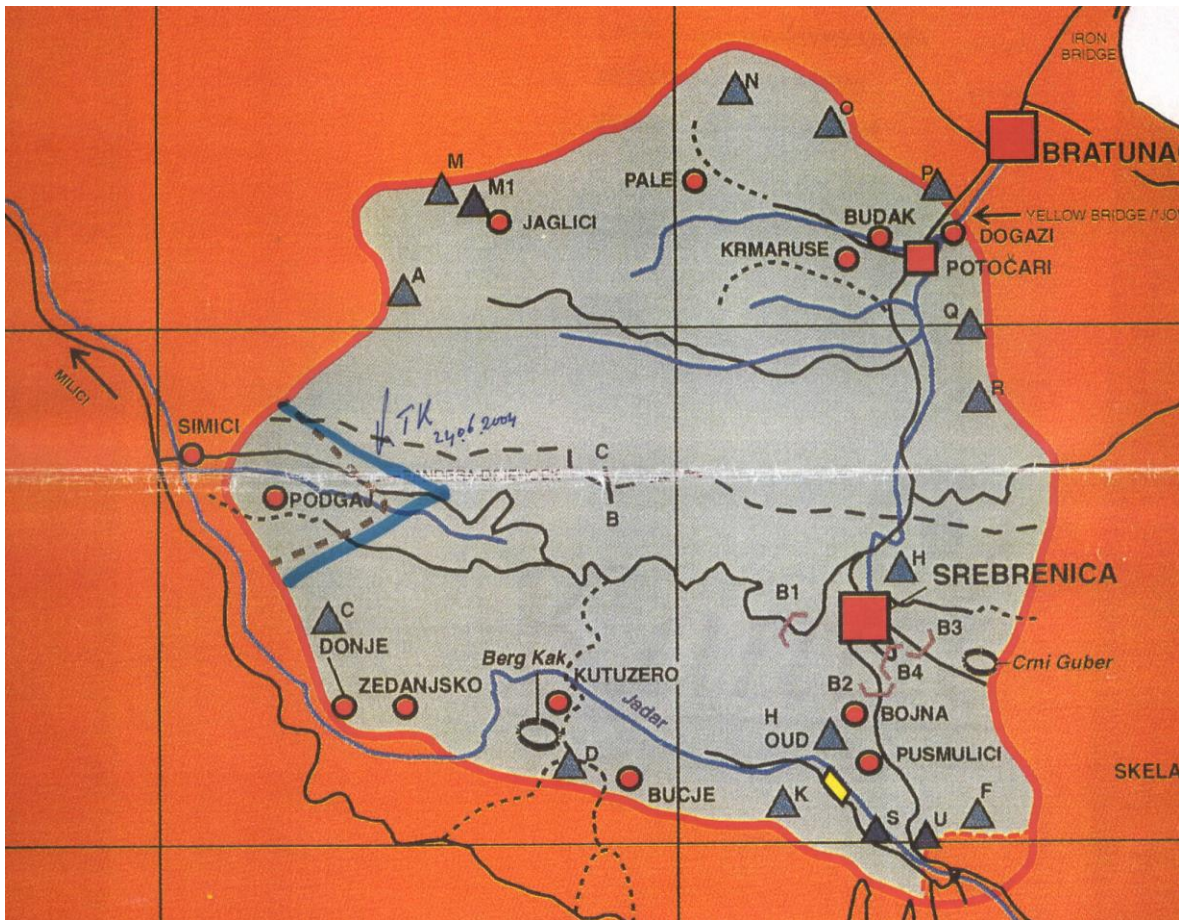
⁹⁶ Karremans reported on May 10, 1995 that he was able to "[execute the mission](#)" for only 10 more days because of dwindling fuel supplies. "After this period the clock will stop running."

⁹⁷ See Karremans to HQ BH Sector NE, "[UNHCR fuel – Srebrenica](#)," May 9, 1995.

⁹⁸ See, for example, [a Karremans report dated January 29, 1995](#) which states that Dutchbat soldiers "remain trapped" behind a roadblock erected by Bosnian government troops in the Bandera triangle, in the western part of the enclave.

⁹⁹ For conflicts with Bosnian government forces related to the Bandera triangle, see, for example, [Karremans report of January 28, 1995](#).

[The map below, showing the “Bandera triangle” was annotated by Colonel Karremans during [June 24, 2004 testimony to ICTY.](#)]



There were three maps [of the enclave]: an UNPROFOR map, a Serb map, and a Bosnian map. We discussed these maps with both parties, but could not agree. I had a huge lack of personnel. At the end, there was no sense of neutrality. After OP Echo fell to the Serbs on June 3, that was the sign for me to say, “something is going wrong.” That is why I wrote the June 4 letter [stating that Dutchbat was no longer able to fulfill its mission because it was a “[hostage](#)” to the Bosnian Serb army]. I call that “the Pentacost letter.”¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Karremans to HQ BH Sector NE, “[Deteriorating situation in Srebrenica](#),” June 4, 1995. The Christian holy day of Pentacost, commemorating the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Christ’s disciples, was marked on Sunday, June 4, in 1995.

I sent that letter two ways, through the military chain of command up to Mr. Akashi and New York, but also to the Netherlands chain of command. I wanted everybody in The Hague to know what was going on and support us. Support not only Dutchbat but, as I have said in many courts over the last 20 years, the local population. I was there for the population, but we had no support. I was willing to support the population in any way I could. But if you don't have food, you don't have the means, then it's over. That is what I stated in my reports.

TOM BLANTON: Mr. Karremans mentioned the lack of support. Lack of support from New York, from The Hague, from the big powers, from NATO. As General Nicolai said, our hands were tied from the end of May as a result of the hostage crisis and the cessation of air strikes. What was the response in The Hague?

JORIS VOORHOEVE: We expected a Serb attack, not knowing when it would happen and not knowing what else we could do. We had proposed a whole series of measures to reduce the vulnerability [of Dutchbat].¹⁰¹ We had convened three conferences in the Netherlands with other troop contributing countries to strengthen UNPROFOR and improve the situation in the eastern enclaves. These conferences were held with the chiefs of defense staffs. They went home with military recommendations to their governments but nothing was done. The first conference was held in December 1994. There was another one under the chairmanship of Kofi Annan in February 1995. We convened the troop contributing countries again in May 1995. The first thing that actually did happen was the conference in Paris [on June 3] that established the rapid reaction force.¹⁰² We could not get supplies into the enclave from the Netherlands, except by air lift. It would have been possible for helicopters to get in. I flew to Srebrenica in September 1994 in a British Seaking helicopter. There is not a regular air field in Srebrenica but you can get there with helicopters. I think approval for a helicopter resupply would have also sent a political message to the Serbs.

¹⁰¹ Voorhoeve, [“Safe Areas? Failures and Successes in Protecting Civilians in War,”](#) Book Summary, 2015.

¹⁰² Meeting in Paris on June 3, European and NATO defense ministers agreed that the new force would include two heavily armed brigades, drawn primarily from France and the UK, supported by the Netherlands. See Srebrenica UN report, [paragraph 213](#).

My proposal was to tell the Serbs: you inspect what goes into the helicopter, no arms, just supplies for the population and for Dutchbat. That would have been an expression of solidarity with the enclave, and with the inhabitants, and would have sent a political signal. But this was not possible because we were part of a United Nations peacekeeping operation [and the UN did not approve of supplying by air]. We could not tell our F-16s to [pull out of the NATO Command], take off from Vincenza and declare war against the Serbs. We were part of two big international organizations, the UN and NATO, that had set the parameters for a peace operation that was, as we discussed this morning, basically mis-designed. It was a blue helmet operation in the middle of a war. That was the original, conceptual mistake. By June, everybody was in a trap.

TOM BLANTON: Rupert Smith had been arguing for a redeployment from vulnerable areas in May. General Janvier, in UN speech on May 24, suggests that the UNPROFOR troops have simply become scapegoats and should perhaps consider a withdrawal.¹⁰³ I am not sure if General Janvier had the same concept as General Smith. As I understand it, General Smith's concept was withdraw from the vulnerable places in order to then come back with far more robust force. My question is whether serious consideration was given to an UNPROFOR withdrawal? What was the reaction internationally? We know from some of the documents that Madeleine Albright's reaction to the Janvier briefing was, "Are you kidding?" Withdrawal would mean appeasement of the Serbs. You cannot withdraw. But opposing withdrawal meant preventing a more robust response. So you have a dilemma. Rupert, would you illuminate?

RUPERT SMITH: In my May 29 "[Post Air Strike Guidance](#)" memo, I am not talking about withdrawing from the enclaves. I am talking about people stuck in weapon collection points. We had lots of little groups of people all over the place. I certainly wasn't considering at that stage abandoning Žepa or Goražde or wherever.

¹⁰³ See Janvier, [Speech to Troop Contributing Nations](#), New York, May 24, 1995. The possibility of an UNPROFOR withdrawal from the eastern enclaves had also been discussed in the White House. A May 17, 1995, memo from Nelson Drew to the NSC advocated a "[retrench and reinvigorate](#)" option under which UNPROFOR would withdraw from "untenable positions," including the eastern enclaves, while "pursuing more robust enforcement of remaining mandates," including breaking the siege of Sarajevo.

I would make the point that everything we have been talking about was going on in all the enclaves, not just Srebrenica. There was mention of an air operation. I could rustle up enough helicopters. In March, I got the nations who had helicopters in the area to agree to use them for resupply. We conduct a great planning exercise. We go to UNPROFOR HQ in Kiseljak, I make it as public as I can, the idea being that it would leak. Sure enough, two days later we got a road convoy in. This told me that there was a way of doing this. In June, I argued that we should start with air resupply into an easy enclave. It would not have been Srebrenica first. We would do close air support over the top of an air resupply operation. Saying in effect, either we resupply this way and we bomb you if you stop us, or you open the roads and we bring it in with trucks. That was my approach. We got no traction on that from UN Force HQ in Zagreb. I was not getting traction from the troop contributing nations either. They did not see this as a risk they are prepared to take.

TOM BLANTON: On June 9, you met with Mr. Akashi and General Janvier in Split. There is an extraordinary conversation in which Mr. Akashi [warned](#) that you were “on the edge of the Mogadishu line.”¹⁰⁴ General Smith [says](#), “We’re already over the Mogadishu line, the Serbs do not view us as peacekeepers.” Mr. Akashi's response seems to be, “can we return back over the line.” Does not this go to the heart of your contradictions?

RUPERT SMITH: This reflects the dichotomy we faced. We were going in two different directions.

TOM BLANTON: Janvier responds to your critique by [saying](#), “I insist that we will never have the possibility of combat, of imposing our will on the Serbs.” He is your commander.

SHASHI THAROOR: Rupert wrote a note already earlier, on May 29, in which he explicitly [says](#), “UNPROFOR no longer has a peacekeeping relationship with the BSA. It has lost the consent of one of the parties.” The memo says that we were “very close to being an ally” of

¹⁰⁴ See SRSG’s Meeting in Split, June 9, 1995, [paragraph 20](#). The “Mogadishu line” is a reference to the disastrous sequence of events that followed the hunt for Somali warlord Mohammed Farrah Aidid in late 1993. By taking sides in the Somali civil war, UN forces lost their neutral status. The term was originally coined by General Michael Rose, the British commander of UNPROFOR in 1994, to distinguish between peacekeeping and taking sides in a civil war. As Rose commented in September 1994, “Hitting one tank is peacekeeping. Hitting infrastructure, command and control, logistics, that is war. I’m not going to fight a war in white-painted tanks.”

one side, namely the Bosnian Government side. This was something we had been highlighting in reports to the Security Council for at least a year and a half. This was a diagnosis by the UNPROFOR commander [Smith] that we have crossed the line. The Force Commander [Janvier] resists. He says we can't afford to cross the line and no longer know who we are supposed to be.

TOM BLANTON: Janvier is supported by Mr. Akashi, no?

SHASHI THAROOR: Yea, sure. The Force Commander and the SRSG are on the same page.

CARL BILDT: I would like to comment on something that Rupert alluded to earlier. We are now focused on Srebrenica because we know how this ended. At the time, however, the problem was not just one of the enclaves, but all of them. In my recollection, Srebrenica was not the number one problem. The Brits were extremely concerned about Goražde, for obvious reasons, because the British forces were there. Žepa was not an issue. There were Ukrainian forces there and no one really seemed to care. Bihać was a different problem; others can speak about that mess. But there was an enormous focus on Sarajevo. We should not forget that at some point in time [May 1995], after these air strikes most probably, the Serbs tightened the blockade significantly.

The supply situation of a fairly major European city was getting very difficult indeed. These supply considerations were not very high up on the agenda of the western capitals, who were much more focused on the question of how to end the war, or how to prevent the mess from getting even worse. But in Bosnia, the focus was very much on supply of the city of Sarajevo. Not only the supply of UN forces but of the population. There might have been up to 40,000 people in Srebrenica, but in Sarajevo we were of course talking about many hundreds of thousands that were starting to be deprived of basic food, and this was a fairly major concern for the international community in Bosnia.

On the question of the regrouping of UNPROFOR, I remember the SG presented a document to the Security Council in April, May, June or whatever, when he essentially said to the Security Council, we need to reconsider this. One of the [options](#), if I remember right,

was to get out of the enclaves.¹⁰⁵ That was of course thrown out by the Security Council. It was more or less dead on arrival. But that document was of course in the public domain and had some significance.

ZLATKO LAGUMDŽIJA: I want to make a short clarification. Carl is absolutely right that there were a lot of places that were of concern, but it is wrong to compare Sarajevo with Srebrenica. Sarajevo was not in the immediate potential danger that Srebrenica was. The siege of Sarajevo could be fairly easily lifted, which was not the case with Srebrenica. It was possible to do this in Sarajevo because there was a big concentration of the Bosnian Army.

PETER GALBRAITH: I wanted to talk about what was happening in another enclave, Bihać, if you don't mind me going back to November 1994. The situation got very complicated with Fikret Abdić.¹⁰⁶ The Bosnian army Fifth Corps defeated Abdić, who fled [across the border] into Serbian Krajina. [Abdić allied with the Krajina Serbs and the Bosnian Serbs to re-establish himself in northwest Bosnia]. There was a moment when it looked as if Bihać might fall. I was on the coast at this point, and was summoned back to Zagreb by [Croatian foreign minister Mate] Granić and [defense minister Gojko] Šušak.

In a meeting at the Defense Ministry on November 12, 1994, Granić and Šušak told me that Croatia was considering military action to prevent the fall of Bihać. Specifically, they said they wanted to create a 10 km wide corridor through Slunj to connect Croatian territory with Bihać. Although they didn't say it, I understood that it wouldn't just be about Slunj but an effort to retake the entire Krajina.¹⁰⁷ They told me that they could not allow Bihać to fall because that would make the military situation much worse for them. Instead of having interior and exterior lines to defend, the Serbs would be able to deploy more troops on the front line between the Krajina and the Croatian government-controlled territory. Their question to me on November 11/12, 1994 was: will the United States oppose sanctions [against Croatia] in the UN Security Council if Croatia goes ahead with the

¹⁰⁵ Boutros-Ghali, "[Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Security Council Resolutions 982 \(1995\) and 987 \(1995\)](#)," S/1995/444, May 30, 1995, [paragraph 72](#).

¹⁰⁶ Fikret Abdić was a controversial Muslim politician and businessman who established the "Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia" in opposition to the government in Sarajevo and in alliance with the Bosnian Serbs.

¹⁰⁷ See Galbraith diary, [November 12, 1994](#). The Republic of Serbian Krajina [RSK] broke away from Croatia in December 1991. The Croatian army regained the territory in July 1995 as a result of "Operation Storm."

operation. I sent a cable reporting the conversation and recommended that the US not endorse the Croatian operation. I did recommend a positive answer on the direct question of sanctions, i.e. that we tell Croatia that we would oppose sanctions as long as Croatia did not engage in massive human rights violations or hurt UN personnel. In reply, Washington instructed me to go in and see Tudjman and warn against the danger of a wider war. The US never took a position on the sanctions.¹⁰⁸

Holbrooke called me up personally and yelled about my recommendation. He relayed the position of Lake and the NSC, which was that we didn't want a wider war, perhaps for fear that this might bring Serbia in. When I presented the answer to Tudjman, he looked at Granić and Šušak, and said, "Ambassador Galbraith is saying is what I told you." It is unclear to me whether his reaction reflected uncertainty about the Bihać operation or was just a bit of theater. But the concern about the enclaves was not only humanitarian which is what we focus on when we talk about Srebrenica. There were broader strategic concerns. In the case of Bihać, there were worries about the risk of a wider war.

YASUSHI AKASHI: I would like to draw your attention to three paragraphs in the Secretary-General's report on Srebrenica which mentions a meeting convened by the UN Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali, in Geneva on July 8, 1995.¹⁰⁹ The UN High Commissioner for Refugees [Mrs. Ogata] was also there as well as the Co-Chair of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia [Thorvald Stoltenberg]. There were three senior officials with the rank of under-Secretary General including [UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping] Kofi Annan and [UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs] Marrack Goulding. The UN Force Commander [General Janvier] and I were there from Zagreb. Rupert was also asked to come even he was on leave at that time.

We discussed the dire situation in which the UN found itself all over Bosnia-Herzegovina. We did not discuss Srebrenica as such, but focused on the general situation we were confronted with. The meeting was characterized by a deep sense of pessimism and full awareness of the serious difficulties that confronted us. As the Srebrenica report

¹⁰⁸ See Galbraith diary, [November 12, 1994](#).

¹⁰⁹ See UN Srebrenica report, [paragraphs 259-260](#).

states, the meeting concluded with a sense that the United Nations would have to consider withdrawing from Bosnia if there were no breakthroughs on the peacemaking front in the immediate future. I had prepared for this meeting by drawing up a list of options. Option one was a maintenance of the status quo ante. Option two was a strengthening of our presence. Option three was withdrawal from Bosnia. The final option was regrouping UNPROFOR in the area of relative peace. But there was no place of complete peace in that country.

Withdrawal was one of the options. We thought that Carl Bildt's peacemaking efforts might bring some improvements, but we were hoping against hope, I suppose.

TOM BLANTON: In effect, you chose an option: the status quo. You were waiting for Carl's negotiating process. Is that correct?

YASUSHI AKASHI: Yes, as a temporary prospect.

TOM BLANTON: Like the Safe Areas had been in 1993.

YASUSHI AKASHI: I would not use the word "choose." It was much more passive than that, I am afraid.

MICHAEL DOBBS: It was chosen for you.

CARL BILDT: Just a short remark. Everything that we are discussing here, the air strikes or Safe Areas or whatever, were holding operations, awaiting a political solution. Everything was holding operations. It was the absence of a credible political strategy since the collapse of the Vance-Owen peace plan [in early 1993] that made our policy somewhat incoherent, to put it mildly. Everything was a holding operation - that should be said.

DAVID ROHDE: If this is allowed, I wanted to ask Mr. Akashi about [the June 9 meeting](#) [with Janvier and Smith in Split]. I wanted to ask you, for history's sake about General Janvier. He [repeatedly talks about leaving the enclaves](#). "What would be most acceptable to the Serbs? It would be to leave the enclaves. It is the most realistic approach and it makes sense from

the military point of view.” He is not here, but you worked very closely with him.¹¹⁰ Mr. Voorhoeve mentioned people underestimating the risk of a massacre. Do you have any sense that General Janvier thought that it would make military sense to let the enclaves go? And maybe he underestimated what would happen? Did he ever discuss that with you?

YASUSHI AKASHI: I would like to come back to what General Janvier said in Geneva on July 8. The [1999] UN Srebrenica report says that the Force Commander assessed that the Serbs were holding all the cards, and that the UN deployment in the enclaves translated into 900 potential hostages to be taken.”¹¹¹ I think he was aware of the extreme danger in which our colleagues found themselves in those areas.

JOHN SHATTUCK: We have not yet talked much about US policy in early 1995. It is certainly true that there was chaos inside the US Government, but I want to take issue with the notion that there were few disagreements among the key policy-makers. There was, in fact, quite a growing minority of people within the US Government who wanted a much more robust Bosnia policy, such as Madeleine Albright and Richard Holbrooke, who was a force of nature, as we all know, and myself. By April-June 1995, this group also included Tony Lake and certain other critical people such as Bob Frasure.¹¹² The other person I would mention is General Wesley Clark [director for Strategic Plans and Policy at the Joint Chiefs of Staff] who became involved in Dayton. Peter Galbraith was certainly involved on the ground. These individuals wanted to create levers for political negotiations to work. The first lever we had was the UNPROFOR extraction commitment, a commitment made initially by George H.W. Bush and subsequently repeated by Clinton, and this commitment became the basis for our proposed new policy of using military force to back diplomacy.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ General Janvier declined an invitation to participate in the conference.

¹¹¹ See UN Srebrenica report, [paragraph 260](#).

¹¹² A July 1, 1995 cable from Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Robert Frasure noted that there were “four or five Bosnia policies all cohabitating amicably inside the administration with little or no sense of discipline.” He urged his superiors at the State Department to make the choice for a diplomatic solution, [“impose discipline and stay the course.”](#) White House aides had reached a similar conclusion by the end of June, according to a later State Department study, *The Road to Dayton*. National security advisor Tony Lake called his aides into his office on Saturday, June 24, to announce [“we cannot go on like this...we need to get this thing off the table.”](#) This resulted in a discussion of an “endgame strategy,” summarized in [an August 4, 1995 paper](#) drafted by NSC officials.

¹¹³ The Clinton administration committed itself in late 1994 to support NATO Op-plan 40104, which called for 20,000 U.S. soldiers to participate in the extraction of UNPROFOR from Bosnia. In his autobiography, *To End a War*,

The second lever we had was the ICTY, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which the US had been instrumental in establishing [in May 1993].¹¹⁴ It was now beginning to indict individuals under the leadership of Richard Goldstone, the first chief prosecutor. It was becoming clear that those committing mass atrocities would be held to some degree accountable.¹¹⁵ The third lever was NATO which, of course, was ultimately deployed in Bosnia [as a result of the November 1995 Dayton Agreement].

You see a big evolution in the political thinking of Bill Clinton as he moves from Somalia to Rwanda to Haiti to Bosnia. Somalia was an enormous embarrassment and a policy failure of monumental proportions.¹¹⁶ In many respects, it was a green light for what happened later on in Rwanda. Rwanda, as Clinton has often said, was the greatest blight on his presidency in a foreign policy context and another huge failure.¹¹⁷ He took that very seriously and began to think about a different kind of response to these post-Cold War crises that were unfolding around him.

The concept of diplomacy backed by force was born inside the US Government on a regional level with [Haiti](#).¹¹⁸ In the case of Haiti [in September 1994], the concept involved trying to remove a dictator and a group of Generals who were causing havoc on the island. There were massive human rights abuses that seemed similar but smaller in scale to what had happened in Rwanda. Clinton reacted quite robustly. He put together a regional military coalition authorized by the UN Security Council to remove the military regime and

Richard Hollbrooke writes [Page 66] that he [reminded President Clinton](#) of this commitment on June 14, 1995, following a dinner for French President Chirac. He says that the President “looked at me with surprise,” evidently unaware of the “high degree of automaticity” of the commitment. In fact, Clinton had mentioned the “[obligations with our NATO allies](#)” two weeks before, in a May 31 speech at the US Air Force academy, adding, “I do not believe we can leave them in the lurch.” On May 29, Clinton endorsed a Tony Lake memo stating that “[U.S. credibility among NATO allies would be seriously damaged](#)” if he turned down a request for assistance.

¹¹⁴ The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia was established on May 25, 1993 under UNSC [Resolution 827](#).

¹¹⁵ Both Karadžić and Mladić were indicted for crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina on [July 24, 1995](#). On [November 14, 1995](#), both were charged specifically with genocide, crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or customs of war in relation to the fall of Srebrenica.

¹¹⁶ On October 3-4, 1993, 18 US soldiers were killed and 84 were wounded when two Black Hawk helicopters were shot down during a hunt for the Somali warlord Mohamed Aidid in Mogadishu.

¹¹⁷ In a [September 2006 interview](#) with *The New Yorker*, Clinton stated that, “...the calamity in Somalia and the crisis in the Balkans had been distractions but that his inaction in Rwanda was the worst foreign-policy mistake of his Administration.”

¹¹⁸ See “International Decision-Making in the Age of Genocide: Rwanda 1990-1994 Annotated Transcript,” [Day 2](#), April 6, 2015.

assist in the restoration of the democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and also deal with all the refugees who were fleeing.¹¹⁹

Meanwhile, the US Congress was pushing very hard in the other direction. Many Congressional leaders did not want the US to become involved either in Haiti or in Bosnia. But the group of dissidents that I mentioned, including Tony Lake, the National Security Advisor, began to move towards an intervention policy. Clinton was responsive to it not because it would be embarrassing to put 20,000 troops on the ground [to extract UNPROFOR under Op-plan 40104], but because he increasingly felt this had to be done.

There was a lot of ferment in the US Government. There was massive failure prior to the summer of 1995, to be sure, but this was a critical moment. The internal dissidents were responding not only to Srebrenica but to the broader crisis that has been described here by General Smith, Colonel Karremans and others. I would say the US was almost ready to change its policy by the time we get to July 10, and the crisis in Srebrenica.

DAVID HANNAY: I would like to endorse what John Shattuck said about the general context of the summer of 1995. US allies were of course well aware that there was a great deal of ferment going on in Washington at that time. They had the same concern that the status quo was less and less sustainable. There was a binary choice between extraction [of UNPROFOR], an infinitely humiliating possibility for which they would have required a lot of American troops. The alternative was a more robust policy based on the rapid reaction force which was being built up on Rupert's advice.

There is one change that has not been mentioned, the substitution of President Chirac for President Mitterrand [on May 17, 1995]. Chirac believed that the policy in Bosnia had failed and needed to be more robust. He leaned toward the rapid reaction force. This affected the British who also were in some despair about the status quo. Srebrenica was basically a trigger that made everything happen quicker. It made the idea of extraction absolutely unthinkable and the idea of air strikes and the rapid reaction force the only possibility. But this was already happening very slowly. As John said, it hadn't jelled at that

¹¹⁹ The U.S. launched Operation Uphold Democracy on September 19, 1994, with the support of Poland and Argentina. Haiti's de facto military ruler, Raoul Cedras, stepped down on October 10, 1994.

time, but everybody knew about it. I would guess that the Serbs knew about it as well. It probably affected their thinking as well.

TOM BLANTON: In the sense that time was running out against them and they needed to take stronger action?

DAVID HANNAY: Certainly, As far as the US policy was concerned, I was always told by Dick Holbrooke and others that the turning point was the President's understanding that he was going to have to send a large number of American troops just to extract his NATO allies. If he was going to do that, why not commit a large number of American troops to a post-conflict situation, as he did with NATO? That is what tipped the decision.

JENONNE WALKER: Clinton knew about the commitment from the beginning of the administration. I don't disagree with what John said, but it seems to me there were several things that were coming together. One was Tony Lake who had always favored the use of air power, not as a holding action but, as he put it, "putting force in the service of diplomacy."¹²⁰ He finally stopped working for a consensus among the major people in Washington. He decided to get the President's agreement first and then present it to the others. This also meant no longer waiting for a NATO consensus and letting people know we were prepared to act alone, if necessary. On the ground the Croatians, and to a lesser but significant extent the Bosnians, were taking back territory from the Serbs. So, a number of things were coming together at that time. The Srebrenica tragedy made it impossible not to change policy, but these other things were happening at the same time, all pushing for a change in policy.

YASUSHI AKASHI: I wanted to call your attention to the fact that in March 1994 we were still enjoying a period of relative optimism and stability in Bosnia, after the successful resolution of the Sarajevo crisis. During a visit to Washington that month, I met with the editorial board of *The Washington Post*. The day after my visit, they wrote an editorial urging the United States to seriously consider sending ground troops, not just attack them

¹²⁰ Lake formulated his ideas for an end to the Bosnian conflict in [a memorandum dated August 4, 1995](#) that became the basis for the Holbrooke mission to the Balkans.

from the air.¹²¹ Madeleine Albright found out that I had inspired them to write that editorial. She chastised me for my behind the scenes lobbying.¹²² It was apparently outrageous for anybody to call for greater engagement by the United States in Bosnia as early as March 1994.

RUPERT SMITH: David Hannay said the Serbs probably understood that the mood in western capitals was changing. I'm not so sure. I did not talk to them in June 1995, but I certainly talked to Mladić afterwards. He was living in a complete Bosnian Serb bubble, unaware of the effect he was having in many respects. They were very isolated. I'm not sure they were reading it right at all.

JOHN SHATTUCK: Mr. Akashi, I am sorry that Madeleine Albright characterized what you did with *The Washington Post* as outrageous. I think it was actually a very heroic thing to do. I'm grateful that you did it, but I would like to correct the record. In the internal discussions of the Clinton administration, Madeleine Albright was the most ardent proponent of the commitment of US ground forces. The group that I mentioned were not simply reminding Clinton of his commitment to extract forces. They were actually using that commitment as a way to introduce the idea that US ground forces should be involved.

CARL BILDT: I agree with Rupert that Mladić was living in his own world. I don't think he really understood what was going on around. My feeling when I came in in June was that everyone understood that we were approaching the end game. The war had started in the spring of 1992. There had been a chance of peace that had failed, everyone was exhausted and everyone knew that the policy was not working. Everyone was maneuvering for position before the political end game. That was the sense, I think, on all sides.

There had been a lull in the fighting. Everyone was expecting fighting to break out and for this to be the worst summer since 1992. That turned out to be exactly correct. I was brought in then to resurrect or save the political process. I shouldn't be too dismissive of what had happened before. We had the Contact Group Plan A that had not even taken off. Then we had the fairly limited Contact Group Plan B, the basic elements of which Bob

¹²¹ See "[Walking the Extra 1,000 Miles.](#)" Washington Post, April 1, 1994.

¹²² See, for example, Paul Lewis, "[U.N. Mediator Rebuked.](#)" New York Times, April 27, 1994.

Frasure had negotiated with Milosević. That had then been shot down in the US interagency process by Madeleine Albright because of a dispute over something called the sanctions re-imposition mechanism. This is roughly what they are trying to agree with the Iranians in Vienna during these very days. My first task as new negotiator was to see if I can get a solution to the question of this sanctions re-imposition mechanism, which I did, even though everything turned out differently.¹²³

I was living at that time with Holbrooke—not physically but, as anyone here who knew Dick knows, he was on the telephone probably more than twenty-four hours every day. A substantial part of that time was with me.

His view was that US policy was coming down in flames from two directions. One was the Senate. In his view, Izetbegović had more support in the US Senate than President Clinton, which was going to lead to disaster in the autumn if something wasn't done. Second was the possible withdrawal of UNPROFOR. I was horrified when I was briefed at NATO headquarters about O-Plan 40104, which was essentially a trigger that Washington had given to London and Paris to bring the US Army guns blazing into Bosnia. If London and Paris said, “we're going to get out,” the US was committed to extract the European force, even if this meant fighting their way in. According to Dick, Wes Clark and others, this was something to be avoided at all cost. They were perhaps prepared to commit the US to a peacemaking effort, but not to going in guns blazing.

This was already to some extent underway before the Srebrenica events forced the policy to come together. We were trying to merge all of the A and the B and the C plans into a comprehensible political strategy.¹²⁴ That would probably have had happened independently of Srebrenica because of all these other factors that were at work. But that's a slightly separate discussion. As I told Jenonne, I learned at the beginning of the Bosnian War that the war in Bosnia was ferocious, brutal and difficult. The only thing that was worse was the political war in Washington.

¹²³ Bildt is referring to nuclear negotiations with Iran in 2015 that included a “snapback” provision in the event that Teheran failed to carry out its end of the deal. Under the “Bildt plan” negotiated with Milosević in July 1995, Serbia agreed in principle to support the Contact Group peace plan on Bosnia in return for a nine-month suspension of nearly all trade sanctions. A [CIA memo dated July 31, 1995](#) expressed concern that “re-imposition of the suspended UN sanctions after nine months would be difficult.” Under the plan, the votes of three out of five permanent Security Council members would be necessary for the re-imposition of sanctions.

¹²⁴ Akashi to Annan, [“Meeting in Belgrade,”](#) UNPF-HQ, Z-1175, July 17, 1995.

TOM BLANTON: A wonderful way to end our session. Thank you Carl, and thank you all.

[END OF SESSION 2]