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REMARKS BY NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER ANTHONY LAKE
"BOSNIA: AMERICA'S INTERESTS AND AMERICA'S ROLE"
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
APRIL 7, 1994

Thank you, President Richardson. It is an honor to be here at Johns Hopkins. Over the last year, I have met with students from around the country with a simple message: we need your generation to be engaged, to care about the wider world, to get involved in the shaping of our foreign policy. I welcome so many community leaders here and welcome your engagement, as well. For this is a time when American leadership in the world is more important than ever.

Today, on a campus that has given so many leaders to the nation, I renew that appeal for your involvement. And I want to talk in particular about the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and about America's interests in helping to resolve it.

For almost three years, the nations of this region have been ravaged by war. Few conflicts in our memory have produced such terrible carnage. We all have seen the images of blood-stained markets and civilians cut down by snipers. We have all been moved by the horrific accounts of mass rape, concentration camps and ethnic cleansing. The challenge for all of us is to harness that outrage to clear analysis and firm action.

The fighting in Bosnia is part of a larger story of change and conflict in this era. In Europe and around the globe, the end of the Cold War has liberated millions and created new opportunities for greater security. But it has also lifted the lid from a cauldron of nationalist hatreds.

Nowhere have the consequences been more tragic than in the former Yugoslavia. There, nationalist and religious tensions, inflamed by Serbian aggression, have resulted in brutal fighting and the massive displacement of civilians.

Over 115,000 people have lost their lives in this war. Several million more have been forced to flee their homes. But there is no way to calculate the hopes destroyed, the bright young lives extinguished, the slow and terrible erosion of basic decency and human civility that this war has caused.

If there is one thing this century teaches us, it is that America cannot afford to ignore conflicts in Europe. This 50th anniversary year of D-Day reminds us that our nation's security remains bound up with the security and peace of Europe. And in this era, our task is not only to maintain necessary balances of power, as we must, but also to deal with a world in which most conflicts are internal.
As the President has so often said, the United States has distinct interests at stake in the Bosnian conflict. First of all, we have an interest in helping to prevent the spread of a wider war that could involve our allies and threaten the stability of newly democratic states in Central and Eastern Europe. There is no region where the success of democratic and market reform today is more important. By engaging in efforts to resolve the war in Bosnia, we help buttress the historic reforms underway in neighboring nations such as Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania -- nations whose security is important to our own.

We have other interests at stake in Bosnia as well. We have an interest in showing that NATO -- history's greatest military alliance -- remains a credible force for peace in this era. We have an interest in helping stem the destabilizing flood of refugees throughout all of Europe. And we have a humanitarian interest in helping stop the continuing slaughter of innocents.

While these interests do not justify unilateral American intervention, they do justify strong American involvement and the exercise of our leadership. That is why candidate Clinton urged the U.S. to be more actively engaged. That is why under President Clinton, we have taken an active part in efforts to bring this conflict to an end.

And that is why the President has made clear that if the parties can reach a viable, enforceable peace settlement, the U.S. is prepared to deploy troops through NATO to help implement it.

If we are to contemplate the deployment of our forces to help implement a settlement, we have to be as clear about the origins and nature of that tangled conflict as we have been about our interests there. Let me give a brief overview.

When a half century of communist rule ended in Yugoslavia in 1991, the Balkans once again began to fracture. Nationalism again caught fire among Yugoslavia's Serbs. The Serb-dominated federal army and Serb irregular forces, under the leadership of demagogues, stoked the flames of war as several republics of the country -- Slovenia, Bosnia and Croatia -- sought independence.

In June 1991, the first fighting broke out when Slovenia and Croatia declared independence. The federal army withdrew from Slovenia after several months, implicitly recognizing that state's independence. In Croatia, after many more months of fighting, and thanks to the diplomacy of Cyrus Vance and others, Serb and Croat leaders agreed to a cease-fire and the deployment of UN peacekeepers. The situation in Croatia has by no means yet been resolved, but it has improved.
In Bosnia, however, the bloodshed continues. Bosnia was once a state where Croats, Serbs and Muslims lived side-by-side in peace. Sarajevo, its capital, hosted the Olympics only a decade ago and was a monument to tolerance and brotherhood. But when Bosnia voted for independence in February 1992, the Serbs reacted violently. Some feared their minority status, despite Bosnia's status as a multiethnic democracy. Others in Bosnia and Serbia saw a chance to advance their dream of a "greater Serbia." The result was to plunge Bosnia into a dark night of terror.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1992, the European Community and the United Nations worked without success for a diplomatic solution. One cease-fire after another collapsed. Throughout that period, the international community grew more outraged at the brutal sieges and ethnic cleansing engineered by the Serbs. Haunting images of emaciated Muslim prisoners tore at our consciences. And the specter of unchecked Serb aggression in other parts of the Balkans threatened our interests. By October 1992, the Serbs had seized close to 70 percent of Bosnia.

It was during this early period, when preventive action might have had the best chance to be effective, that Bill Clinton called for a more forceful response from the West.

Since taking office, President Clinton has pursued several efforts to help bring a peaceful end to the conflict. Have we made all the progress we would have wished during the past year? No. Have we made a difference? I believe we have.

First, the Administration has worked to relieve the suffering of the people of Bosnia. The U.S. initiated an innovative, humanitarian airdrop and participated in an airlift -- the longest in history -- to help relieve the long-besieged residents of Sarajevo. In Operation Provide Promise, American aircraft have worked with UN peacekeepers to fly thousands of sorties, delivering food, fuel, medicine and other relief supplies keeping people alive. And I hope everyone in this room is proud that we have done so.

Second, we have worked with the UN and the European Union to increase sanctions against Serbia and to tighten enforcement. These sanctions have effectively shut down the flow of all but humanitarian goods. They have forced draconian austerity measures and driven Serbia's economy into hyperinflation. Industrial production has collapsed. Shipping has ground to a halt. And as a result, the Serbian government has made the lifting of sanctions one of its highest concerns.

Third, we have worked to bring to justice those responsible for the slaughter of innocents. Last year, persistent American advocacy led to the creation of a UN War Crimes Tribunal. The U.S. has made significant contributions to the funding and
staffing of the tribunal, and has provided information that should assist in the prosecution of war criminals.

Fourth, we have worked to prevent the spread of the conflict. In the Kosovo region of Serbia, Serbs have systematically repressed the human rights of the ethnic Albanian majority. The Serbs have threatened the same kind of ethnic cleansing they have practiced elsewhere. For that reason, we reaffirmed a position -- indeed, a warning -- set down by the previous Administration against Serb expansion of the conflict in Kosovo. And we have contributed several hundred U.S. troops to a preventive peacekeeping force in the neighboring Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Fifth, we have increased the level of American diplomatic engagement. A year ago February, President Clinton sent a negotiator to participate in peace efforts by UN and EC mediators. And since that time, we have taken an increasingly important role, while rejecting attempts to pressure the Muslims of Bosnia into accepting an unjust, unworkable settlement.

Sixth, we have harnessed the power of NATO in the service of diplomacy. With our NATO allies, we implemented enforcement of a no-fly zone over Bosnia -- and we showed the seriousness of that effort when NATO fighters downed four Serbian fighter-bombers on February 28. Last summer, NATO signaled its determination to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo and other safe areas. NATO also agreed to provide close air support to thousands of courageous UN peacekeepers in Bosnia.

And on February 9 of this year, spurred by President Clinton's leadership at the January Summit, NATO issued an ultimatum. With our NATO allies, we declared that any heavy weapon that remained in the zone around Sarajevo, or were not placed under UN control, or that fired on Sarajevo from any location, would be subject to air strikes. That policy stands.

Russia also played a useful role in gaining Serb compliance. Moscow's diplomatic intervention demonstrated how the U.S. and Russia, each acting in its clear national interests, can frequently work cooperatively toward common ends in this era.

The NATO ultimatum created a new momentum, both on the ground and in our diplomacy. Since February, over 300 Bosnian Serb heavy weapons have been placed under UN control. Bosnian government forces have also turned over nearly 50 heavy weapons. While there have been sporadic incidents of small arms fire and unconfirmed reports of mortar shelling near Sarajevo, there has been no significant renewal of fighting or shelling in Sarajevo.
The NATO ultimatum also generated new progress at the negotiating table. On March 18, Bosnian and Croatian leaders came to the White House to sign agreements to create a federation between the Muslims and Croats of Bosnia. This Muslim-Croatian entity will then enter into a confederation with Croatia.

The agreement between the Muslims and Croats is of strategic consequence. It changes the power equation in the area and places greater pressure on the Serbs to join negotiations on their future status in Bosnia and on territorial issues.

We have thus reached a pivotal moment in Bosnia. On the one hand, there is progress in cities like Mostar, where a cease-fire has ended months of shelling and fighting; or Tuzla, where the airfield is now being readied for UN relief flights; or Maglaj, where for the first time in months supplies are getting in.

Yet progress remains fragile. Ethnic cleansing continues, as we have seen in the town of Prijedor. There continue to be Serb attacks on Muslim enclaves, as we have seen around the town of Gorazde in recent days. This fighting should not surprise us; as another round of negotiations approaches, each side has incentives to bolster its position on the ground. But the parties must decide whether, in pursuit of marginal advantage, they are willing to plunge all of Bosnia back into bloodshed.

Where, then, do we go from here? We must do four things. First, we must make clear to Serbia and to the Serbs of Bosnia that the costs of continued intransigence are high. We must maintain economic sanctions. We must be vigilant against Serb aggression in Kosovo. We must continue to assist areas under Serbian siege with humanitarian relief and other appropriate steps.

Let me be clear: neither the President nor any of his senior advisors rules out the use of NATO power to help stop attacks such as those against Gorazde. A contingent of UN forces should soon be on its way to Gorazde. It is important that this happen as soon as possible. NATO is committed to providing close air support for such forces, if requested. We stand by that commitment. And as we examine other ways to build on the progress achieved around Sarajevo, we must recall the central principle of our action there: that effective diplomacy is linked to practical calculations of power.

Second, we must also raise the effectiveness of NATO's involvement by improving coordination with the UN. When UN peacekeepers request NATO close air support -- as they have twice since February -- their requests should not be subject to a protracted decision-making process. General Shalikashvili, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, has called that process "tortuous, at best." We are working to ensure past problems are corrected.
Third, with our European allies and Russia, we must at the same time intensify diplomatic efforts to engage the Serbs. We are committed to working with all the parties in Bosnia on remaining territorial issues. That process -- conducted on our part by our special negotiator, Ambassador Charles Redman -- will continue to be painstaking, delicate and very difficult.

Fourth, as the parties move toward a settlement, we must prepare for the possible deployment of NATO troops, including U.S. troops, to enforce the peace. The President has said he intends to help implement a viable agreement; we believe that commitment has encouraged the parties to resolve their differences. Active American support would be essential. But as the President has stressed, if we are to involve our troops, it must be at the request of the parties and the settlement they reach must be viable.

We have set out clear and practical conditions for American participation in a peacekeeping mission in Bosnia. These conditions are designed to ensure an effective operation with achievable objectives. We are working in NATO to refine a plan that General Shalikashvili and our other military leaders are confident will work. And we are working with members of Congress from both parties to help build broad public support. The President has already met with bipartisan congressional leaders several times on developments in Bosnia.

As we prepare for the possibility of a U.S. deployment to Bosnia, we can gain some insights from the mission our troops just completed with great skill and bravery in Somalia. In Bosnia, as in Somalia, we can help create the opportunity for peace; but the responsibility for peace lies with the people who are at war. By specifying an end date to our involvement in Somalia, we gave impetus to the warring parties to work to reach new solutions. By the same token, we can spur the peace process in Bosnia by making clear any peace-keeping mission in which we participate will not be open-ended.

We also must define our mission clearly, early and often. When our forces in Mogadishu suffered casualties last October, public confusion surfaced about our objectives in Somalia. The President spoke to the nation within days to clarify our objectives and mission, but in all candor, we could have done that much earlier. In the case of Bosnia, the President has specified our interests and goals consistently. We will step up that effort if the deployment of our forces becomes more likely.

A final lesson is that we must bring our forces to bear in sufficient mass to get the job done. If our forces are deployed to Bosnia, they will go in strong. They will be part of a NATO
force, not a UN force. They will establish a commanding presence with the numbers, equipment and robust rules of engagement they need to defend themselves and accomplish their mission.

In the weeks and months ahead, Bosnia is likely to remain prominently in the headlines. As the public turns more of its attention to this conflict, let us remember where Bosnia stands on the scale of threats to our security in this era.

Direct threats to our nation or our people require us to be prepared for a unilateral military response; Iraq’s attempted assassination of President Bush fell into this category, and we did not hesitate to respond on our own. A second category of threats justifies only a limited use of force, and generally under international auspices. Peacekeeping would fall under this category. A third category may require our strong diplomatic engagement but not the deployment of our forces.

In this rough typology, Bosnia fits in the second category: The interests at stake warrant U.S. leadership and, at different stages and in differing ways, the use of American force in tandem with others. We have looked to Europe to bear many aspects of the burden of solving this crisis, because it is Europe that is most directly affected. But Europe -- and indeed, the entire world -- looks to America for resolute leadership commensurate with our interests. Imagine what the situation in Bosnia -- and indeed the whole region -- would be if we had not provided the leadership that has made possible the gains of recent weeks.

When the President traveled across the Atlantic in January, he set forth a vision for Europe, based not on the kind of division Europe has known for decades but on greater integration. That vision -- of democracy, of market economics and of security cooperation -- reflects our deepest values and most basic interests.

The war in Bosnia today presents a clear challenge: to Europe’s stability, to NATO’s credibility and to our very vision of a post-Cold War Europe. In Bosnia, as in so many of the conflicts that have erupted in this age, each generation is accumulating blood debts to be paid by the next. In this unyielding cycle, children are taught nothing but habits of hatred among religions, races and clans. In the Balkans and elsewhere, this cycle must be broken.

What America does to help resolve the conflict in Bosnia will help shape the kind of world your generation inherits. That is why we have worked hard to bring a peaceful end to the conflict, to help Bosnia break its cycle of violence and vengeance, of bloodshed and blood debts.
And that is why I close today with the same appeal I opened with: an appeal for you, the men and women who will lead this nation into the 21st century, to take an active interest, and to play an active part, in shaping America's vital engagement in this new era.

Thank you very much.

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