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NEWS

FROM:

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BOSNIA UPDATE

**DOLE URGES PRESIDENT CLINTON TO FIRM U.S. RESOLVE;
PUT NATO IN CHARGE OF MILITARY OPERATIONS IN BOSNIA;
PREVENT GENEVA SELL-OUT**

Sarajevo is on the verge of falling. The key strategic mountain overlooking Sarajevo, Mount Igman, is now in Serbian hands -- its capture facilitated by Serb helicopters blatantly violating the no-fly zone. Although the Bosnian Serb leadership has promised to withdraw its forces, as we have seen over the past 16 months, they make and break promises as a matter of course. The fact is that Sarajevo is now effectively cut off, at the mercy of Serb forces.

On Monday, our NATO allies at long last agreed to take tougher measures against Serbian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina. While the NATO agreement takes long-overdue and significant steps forward, in particular by preparing for air strikes against Serbian military positions, there are still some hurdles to overcome before such action can be taken.

Some of these hurdles result from continued French, Canadian, and British opposition to anything but narrowly defined military action to protect UNPROFOR troops. It's hard to imagine that after 16 months of brutal aggression against Bosnia, some of our allies still think that the move from words of warning to action is too soon. However, that is why there is a requirement that NATO ministers meet again before initiating any military action. This NATO council meeting will likely take place on Monday; in my view, the sooner, the better.

Let NATO, Not U.N. Do the Job

There are also other political hurdles to overcome. While Serb forces continue their offensives on Sarajevo and other areas, the United Nations and NATO are locked in a political tug-of-war. So, instead of watching the launch of air strikes against advancing Serb units, we are watching the U.N. Secretary General launch letters to the State Department saying he's in charge.

President Clinton rightfully believes that air strikes should be undertaken to prevent the fall of Sarajevo and other cities, and that NATO should be in charge of such military operations -- in consultation and coordination with the United Nations.

The fact is that NATO can handle the job and the U.N. can't. It seems to me that with Serb forces choking Sarajevo, we don't have time for a bureaucratic power struggle. We can't let this tug-of-war continue. Let's be clear, NATO has the authority to act under U.N. Security Council Resolution 770 and under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter. So, Boutros-Ghali should step out of the way and let NATO do the job.

Credibility Of NATO And The United States Is On The Line

The credibility of NATO is on the line. And, U.S. credibility is on the line -- not just at NATO, but in Geneva, too.

On Wednesday the Bosnia desk officer at the State Department, Marshall Freeman Harris, resigned. This is the second State Department resignation protesting U.S. policy toward Bosnia; last year, George Kenney, who was also the Bosnia desk officer, resigned in protest. In his letter, Mr. Harris stated that he "could no longer serve in a Department of State that accepts the forceful dismemberment of a European state."

This was a courageous move and despite the cheap shots hurled at Mr. Harris by the State Department spokesman, I think

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it is clear that Marshall Harris is a man of conscience, who puts his principles above promotions.

This resignation together with news reports from Geneva indicate that the United States has abandoned its commitment to upholding the principle of the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Hercegovina.

Call a "Time-Out" in Geneva

Behind closed doors in Geneva, mediators Owen and Stoltenberg are pressuring the Bosnians to sign away most of their country. Their solution to silencing the guns around Sarajevo is to give the aggressors what they want. This is not a negotiation. Owen and Stoltenberg are merely facilitators of Bosnian surrender.

The United States has sent representatives to Geneva, but the question is, what are they doing? Are they pushing for a sell out? And, why isn't the United States attempting to bring principle back into the process?

In my view, there should be a "time-out" in Geneva. Owen and Stoltenberg should take a long vacation and review all of the U.N. resolutions reaffirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia-Hercegovina. They should also take a look at their own earlier statements against partition and dismemberment.

The United States has said that it will accept any settlement agreed to by all of the parties. Well, this approach guarantees that the party with the greatest strength and the most territory will dictate the terms of settlement. As the Bosnian Foreign Minister, Haris Silajdzic, said a few days ago this is the rule of force, not the rule of law.

Press For NATO Cooperation

I urge President Clinton to rethink his position on the Geneva talks and to commit the United States to supporting only a settlement that does not reward aggression and genocide. Maybe our U.S. representatives in Geneva could give the mediators a quick seminar on the U.N. Charter and the rule of law.

This is not just Bosnia's last chance, but the international community's last chance to do what is right -- to prevent the fall and partition of Bosnia. I urge President Clinton to stay on course with our NATO allies -- to press for their cooperation to move swiftly and decisively, and not to be deterred by bureaucratic obstacles raised by the United Nations.

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