

## U.S. Department of State

Initialing Of The Balkan Proximity Peace Talks Agreement: Remarks By U.S. Secretary Of State Warren Christopher And President Milosevic Of Serbia, President Tudjman Of Croatia, President Izetbegovic Of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Representatives Of The European Union, The Contact Group And Negotiating Team Members

*Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, near Dayton, Ohio. Released by the Office of the Spokesman, November 21, 1995*

**SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER:** President Izetbegovic, President Milosevic, President Tudjman, former Prime Minister Carl Bildt, Deputy Minister Ivanov, General Shalikashvili, Deputy Secretary White, Senator Jim Jeffords, honored colleagues, guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Three weeks ago, the people of the United States welcomed all of us to Dayton and urged that the three Presidents seize this last best chance for peace in the former Yugoslavia.

Today, you will leave Dayton with a comprehensive agreement in hand. On this Thanksgiving weekend, our joint work has made it possible for the people of Bosnia to spend New Year's Day in peace for the first time in four years.

In a moment, the three Presidents will initial the agreement. They have come a long ways in the last 20 days, and their initialing here today will signal their determination to stay on the path of peace.

To the three Presidents, I especially want to thank you for your hard and skillful work over the last 20 days. You have cooperated splendidly and given a great deal of attention to these tough problems.

I will witness the agreement on behalf of the United States, as will Carl Bildt on behalf of the European Union and Deputy Minister Ivanov on behalf of the Russian Federation. The agreement will also be witnessed by the heads of the other Contact Group missions: Ambassador Jacques Blot of France, Wolfgang Ischinger of Germany, Pauline Neville Jones of the United Kingdom.

Before we begin today, I want to pay a special tribute on behalf of the United States and the other delegations here to the people of Dayton and especially to the people of the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

With very little time to prepare for this immensely complicated endeavor, the people of the base provided us with marvelous support from the very beginning. They created exactly the right atmosphere for success. Our choice of Wright-Patterson Air Base here in Dayton turned out to be better than we could possibly have expected, and we are grateful to all of you.

Now let's proceed with the initialing of the agreement.

*(All parties initial the agreement.)*

*(Handshakes among the parties, followed by sustained applause.)*

**SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER:** Ladies and gentlemen, we have reached a day that many believed would never come. After three weeks of intensive negotiations here in Dayton, the leaders of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia have agreed to end the war in the former Yugoslavia. They have agreed that four years of destruction is enough. The time has come to build peace with justice.

Today's agreement would not have come without the vision and leadership of President Clinton. The diplomatic and military strategy that he launched this summer has borne fruit. I'm gratified at the result and determined that it should be put into effect.

We've come to this hopeful moment because the parties made the fundamental choice that lasting peace can be achieved here, and they've done the things that peace requires. We're here because the international negotiating team successfully led the parties to this agreement.

Assistant Secretary Holbrooke and his team took a hard and exacting task and succeeded in a way that will be long remembered and admired.

I also want to recognize the tireless efforts of somebody who couldn't be here today, my friend and colleague, National Security Advisor Tony Lake, who played a very important role all through this endeavor.

The European Union and the members of the Contact Group -- Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Russia -- were with us at every critical step of this long negotiating process.

No one thought that these negotiations would be easy and all of us here on the stage can testify to the fact that they were not. Nevertheless, we got what we wanted -- a comprehensive settlement and one that must now be implemented. The hard won commitments that have been initialed today address the wrenching and fundamental issues for which the war was fought and which must be resolved if peace is to endure.

Today's agreement assures the continuity of the single state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, with effective federal institutions, a single currency, and full respect by its neighbors for its sovereignty. The city of Sarajevo, which has gripped the attention of the world for such a long time, will no longer be divided. It will be unified under the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Checkpoints and closed bridges will no longer divide the families of that city. All of Bosnia's people will have a right under these agreements to move freely throughout the country. Refugees and displaced persons will have a right to return to their homes or to receive just compensation. Free and democratic elections will be held next year.

The agreement contains strong human rights provisions. It confirms the parties' obligations to cooperate fully in the investigation and prosecution of war crimes. The agreement excludes indicted war criminals from public office, or military office, in this new government.

The agreement requires the parties to withdraw their armed forces to agreed positions and it also provides for important confidence-building measures among the parties. The parties have pledged to cooperate fully with a NATO-led peace implementation force and to ensure the safety of its personnel; and it sets the stage for a comprehensive program of reconstruction so necessary in that beleaguered country.

Today's agreement certainly does not erase the stark memories of the past nor does it guarantee that the fabric of the society of Bosnia will be easily restored. But still, it is a victory for all of us.

It is a victory for people of every heritage in the former Yugoslavia. It offers tangible hope that there will be no more days of dodging bullets, no more winters of freshly dug graves, no more years of isolation from the outside world.

The agreement is a victory for all of those who believe in a multi-ethnic democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Securing that goal will require an immense effort in the days ahead. But that effort can now begin now that the war that has torn the country apart has finally come to an end.

The agreement was a victory for all those in the world who believe that with determination a principled peace is possible. That conviction was shared by three brave American diplomats who gave their lives in pursuit of peace in Bosnia -- Bob Frasure, Joe Kruzel, and Nelson Drew. We honor their memories here today. I'm so pleased that their families are able to be with us in the audience today.

But the victory achieved here will not be secure unless we all get to work to ensure that the promise of this moment is realized. The parties have put their solemn commitments on paper. In the coming days and weeks, they'll have to put these commitments into practice, extending them to every mayor, every soldier, every police officer on the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The United States and the international community will have to work hard to help them succeed. It is profoundly in our self-interest to do so.

As we move forward, we must be both realistic and clear-eyed. We should not assume that the people of the former Yugoslavia have resolved all of their historic differences. But we should also remember that we have now an opportunity to put behind them the horrors of the last four years. The war was waged against civilians; it is they who are the real winners today. The American people should be proud of their help in achieving this result today. The war in Bosnia has been a challenge not only to our interests but to our values. By our leadership here, we have upheld both.

I trust that one day we'll look back at this time and say: Dayton was the place where fundamental choices were made. This is the place where the parties chose peace over war, dialogue over destruction, reason over revenge; and this is where each of us has accepted the challenges to make the choices made here meaningful and to put them into effect so that they will endure.

Thank you very much. Now, I would like to introduce former Prime Minister Carl Bildt.

*(Applause.)*

**MR. BILDT:** Presidents, Mr. Secretary, it is easy to start a war but difficult to conclude a peace. What has been achieved here in Dayton has been achieved not without difficulty. But the important thing is that it has been achieved.

Important as that achievement here of Dayton is, we must understand that it represents but the beginning of peace. We must all be deeply aware of the challenges and the difficulties in the days and the weeks and the months and the years that lie ahead of us. We'll meet in a short time in Paris to sign these agreements, and after that we will meet in London to discuss how the difficult parts of this comprehensive peace package can be properly and fully implemented.

Because implementation is now the key to true peace in Bosnia and the region -- to take Bosnia to free and fair elections during the next year; to let all of those who have been forced to flee to other countries or to inside the region, or inside Bosnia, have the possibility of returning to their homes, to disarm and demobilize; to start to rebuild a ruined economy; to secure human rights for each and everyone; to build that reconciliation that is the road to a future in harmony in Bosnia.

All of this will certainly be difficult. It will also require a massive effort by the international community to both secure the immediate military implementation and to help with the decisive political, humanitarian, and economic implementation. It is those tasks that are the true keys to the real possibilities of an enduring peace.

The 15 nations of the European Union have already outlined a broad and comprehensive program of help and assistance and support for all of Bosnia and for cooperation with all of the region.

We are fully prepared to make our contribution to making this peace work; but decisive will, of course, be the extent to which all parties themselves are fully prepared to continue along the path set here in Dayton and to be confirmed in Paris and London.

I wish to pay tribute to all those that have made the agreement here possible. First and foremost, of course, to the three Presidents -- President Izetbegovic, President Milosevic, and President Tudjman, and their entire delegations. Without your common determination, without your statesmanship, nothing would have succeeded.

Also to the American team, so ably led by Secretary Christopher and Assistant Secretary Holbrooke. Dick, if I might say that on an official occasion like this, you made a great job. You deserve a lot of credit for it. You will be given that officially, but, here, a more personal tribute from us who have been working with you and with your entire impressive and very nice team as well; to the colleagues in the Contact Group, to all the people here at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Packey's Sports Bar -- never to be forgotten -- and to all of the people in Dayton.

War is a terrible thing. Peace is difficult to build. Let the memories of all of the horrors of war be the force that takes us through the challenges of peace during the weeks, the months, the days of peace that are now ahead of us.

*(Applause.)*

**DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER IVANOV:** *(Through interpreter, delayed audio of interpretation)* ... achieve solutions corresponding to the present realities and to the interests of peace.

These decisions, however, will become historic only when they are implemented. The parties have taken upon themselves obligations and must strictly abide by them.

Russia intends to continue to actively contribute to the peace process in Bosnia; in particular, with regard to the implementation of civilian aspects of the settlement. The decision of Russia's participation in fulfilling the military aspects of this agreement will be made by us later and will take into account all the existing conditions.

In this regard, Russia reserves its position in regards to Annex 11(b) which deals with issues of military implementation.

It is important that simultaneously with the adoption of the peace agreements, the issue of sanctions is being settled. This will contribute to stabilization in this region. The agreements have been difficult to achieve. They don't answer all the questions, but these are the agreements which we could reach today. It will be even more difficult to achieve these agreements.

Russia, together with other members of the Contact Group, is ready to do everything necessary for the earliest achievement of the comprehensive peaceful settlement of Bosnia.

Just now President Yeltsin made an address on Russian TV where he stressed that Russia would like to see Bosnia become a democratic, prosperous state, where all the peoples inhabiting it could live in peace. We shall actively contribute towards this goal.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Russian delegation, I would like to express deep appreciation to the U.S. Administration for its hospitality and excellent working conditions. In particular, we express our appreciation to you Mr. Secretary of State for your personal contribution to the achievement of the agreement.

Thank you.

**PRESIDENT MILOSEVIC:** Presidents, Mr. Christopher, ladies and gentlemen: Due to the successful conclusion of the negotiations in Dayton, this day will enter into the history as the date of the end of the war in the area of the former Yugoslavia.

In a civil war like this one in Bosnia there are no winners, and there could be no winners. All are losers. Only peace is a victory.

The solutions achieved here include painful concessions by all sides. However, without such concessions, it would be impossible to succeed here, and peace would be impossible. Therefore, no party should regret the concessions which were given.

Starting with the present day, the war in Bosnia should be left to the past, while peace and future cooperation, understanding and economic and cultural development should enter the scene of the area.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to emphasize that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia shall continue with the same persistence with which it struggled for peace and equality of peoples in the area during the past years to promote cooperation and development on equal basis in the best interests of all countries and people in the region.

Mr. Christopher, I would like to express my gratitude to the people and the government of the United States of America -- the President and the American negotiating team headed by Richard Holbrooke, and to you personally -- for the great efforts the United States invested in the achievement of peace, expressing at the same time the expectation that the United States shall take part in the implementation of the agreement in the same way as they contributed to the achievement of the agreement.

I thank the representatives of the Russian Federation and to the representatives of the European Union for their constructive cooperation. I would like to pay special tribute to the people of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and the citizens of Dayton for their cordial hospitality and moral support which they gave to the success of the Proximity Talks.

Thank you.

**PRESIDENT IZETBEGOVIĆ:** Presidents, Secretary Christopher, Ambassador Holbrooke, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends.

Today is an historic day for Bosnia and for the rest of the world. For Bosnia, because the war, we hope, will be replaced by peace; and for the rest of the world because of the suffering of Bosnia and everything that followed it has been a moral question of the first rate, and moral questions concern every man and every woman in the world.

The documents that we have just signed guarantee the sovereignty and integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina and development of an open society based on tolerance and freedom. This we consider as the main and greatest result of the just-completed negotiations.

We are thoroughly committed to honor and fulfill the obligations stemming from them. We plead America, Europe, Islamic world, and all the countries in the world to support us in this important and noble task.

This support and help are especially expected from the United States of America -- from the President of the United States, from the Congress and from the American people.

Don't hesitate, since by doing so you help to relieve the suffering of many people and to quell the fire of a dangerous spot that presents a constant threat to the region and to the world.

And to my people I say, this may not be a just peace, but it is more just than a continuation of war. In the situation as it is and in the world as it is, a better peace could not have been achieved.

God is our witness that we have done everything in our power so that the extent of injustice for our people and our country would be decreased. Thank you.

**PRESIDENT TUDJMAN:** Mr. Secretary of State, Mr. Co-Chairman of these peace talks, distinguished Presidents, ladies and gentlemen.

Let me express my satisfaction with the fact that we have finally reached a solution promising lasting peace in Bosnia -- that is, in the former Yugoslavia -- after five years of crisis, four years of war and more than three years of intensive negotiations. The dramatic character of these negotiations in which the solution has been reached when everyone thought that the negotiations had failed also symbolizes all the complexity and difficulty of this crisis -- certainly the major crisis to affect Europe after World War II.

The Republic of Croatia has done everything in order to avoid war; and, when it unfortunately did break out, we have spared no effort in seeking a peaceful settlement. At this conference we have also contributed in every possible respect to achieve a solution.

Thanks to the efforts of the organizers and host, as well as the other members of the Contact Group, we have reached an agreement which we believe will bring about the complete cessation of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia.

I would like to emphasize my conviction that this agreement will result in further strengthening of the Federation between the Croats and Bosniaks in accordance with the Washington agreement. In particular, we look forward to the peaceful integration of the remaining occupied areas of Croatia and to complete normalization of relations among all the states emerged from the former Yugoslavia and their people on the ground on mutual recognition.

I believe that the implementation of these agreements will result in lasting peace and create conditions necessary for the establishment of a new international order in this part of the world.

Aware of the complexity of the situations in my letter to President Clinton a few years ago, I expressed the opinion that only respectable forces such as NATO would have political and military strength needed for the implementation of peace. Therefore, I strongly support the expected arrival of NATO and U.S. forces, and I assure you that the Republic of Croatia will spare no effort to cooperate with them and provide them with all necessary assistance in fulfilling their noble task.

For all these reasons let me express my gratitude to the United States of America -- President Clinton and Vice President Gore -- and all member states of the Contact Group. In particular, I would stress your role, dear Mr. Christopher, and that of your co-workers, headed by Mr.

Holbrooke, in organizing these negotiations. Thank you for your efforts, best evidenced by the several last working nights which, as we see, have resulted in this historic agreement.

Thank you.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE:** Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Fourteen weeks ago - it seems like 14 years -- President Clinton launched five of us on a mission to turn Bosnia from war towards peace. Within a week, we had suffered the greatest imaginable tragedy -- the loss of three cherished colleagues and friends on Mt. Igman. But they are with us in spirit today, and we would not be here today without their efforts and their contribution.

The agreements and territorial arrangements initialed today are a huge step forward, the biggest by far since the war began. But ahead lies an equally daunting task: implementation. On every page of the many complicated documents and annexes initialed here today lie challenges to both sides to set aside their enmities, their differences, which are still raw and open wounds. They must work together.

On paper, we have peace. To make it work is our next and our greatest challenge. A challenge is, of course, also an opportunity. The Contact Group and many other nations will be there to help, but the peoples of Bosnia must do it for themselves.

On a personal note, I want to thank my colleagues on our traveling team: General Wes Clark, Roberts Owen, Chris Hill, General Don Kerrick, Jim Pardew, Rosemary Pauli-Gikas, and the entire support team for their putting up with impossible hours, long separations from their family, and, if I understand what I read in the papers correctly, an occasionally impossible boss. Also, the augmented team in Dayton and the best support and guidance from Washington throughout: from Vice President Gore; from Warren Christopher, my colleague and friend for 19 years; from Bill Perry; Tony Lake, a colleague and friend for over 30 years; Madeleine Albright; John Shalikashvili; and, of course, the incredible support we have gotten from the people of Dayton and, above all, from the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, headed by General Viccellio and his team.

It's been a long and winding road for all of us, and it's not over yet. Far from it. The immense difficulties and the roller coaster ride we have lived through in Dayton in the last 21 days and especially in the last few days only serves to remind us how much work lies ahead.

Let us pledge, therefore, that this day in Dayton be long remembered as the day in which Bosnia and its neighbors turned from war to peace. Thank you.

I'd like to ask Jacques Blot, Pauline Neville-Jones and Wolfgang Ischinger, from France, the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany, if they would join me; and I'd like to ask each of them to say a few words. Come up together, please.

**AMBASSADOR ISCHINGER:** Presidents, Mr. Secretary. On behalf of the German Government, it is my privilege to congratulate the three Presidents and their delegations and all of the people in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the peace agreement reached today.

After so many months of war and suffering, we move today from war to peace. This is a moment of joy and great relief for all of us. In Germany, hundreds of thousands of refugees from Bosnia are sharing this moment of joy with us today.

My government expresses its firm support for this comprehensive agreement. We will actively participate in the complex tasks of implementation which lie ahead. In particular, we are proposing to launch the arms control negotiations provided for in this agreement with a conference to be held in Bonn in the coming weeks.

Today's success can be sealed only if the entire peace package will be faithfully implemented by all of the parties in the weeks and months ahead. That is our common challenge.

Today's success is also a success for the Contact Group, which has been able to make significant contributions to the agreement which has just been initialed. My special tribute goes to Carl Bildt, the negotiator of the European Union. Our thanks go to our American hosts -- to you, Mr. Secretary, to Dick Holbrooke, and to all the members of his very able team, and to the people of Dayton, Ohio, for the gracious hospitality which we have been offered here in Dayton for three full weeks. Thank you very much.

**AMBASSADOR BLOT:** (Through interpreter) Mr. Presidents, Mr. Secretary of State, with our permission, as a small contribution, I would like to speak French.

With the contribution with all the people in Bosnia and Herzegovina who have suffered so much, France is very satisfied to see that the agreements concluded today (inaudible) have gone towards peace.

We would like to pay tribute and the courage to all those who have chosen the -- (*Audio difficulties/interpretation not broadcast*)

(*Interpretation, continuing*) we would like to hail your personal efforts, Mr. Presidents. Since the beginning of the war, France has spared no effort to help Bosnia-Herzegovina to find peace again. With other European countries, France has undertaken a number of actions. France participated in the actions of the Contact Group. Here, Mr. Secretary, in Dayton, France has given its support (Audio difficulties/inaudible)

(*Interpretation, continuing*) by their signature in the conference to which they are invited by the President of France in December. It is important that each community understands that without cooperation, nothing will be realized. Very quickly it will be also necessary to take action to help ensure that each community, especially in Sarajevo, will be assured that its security has become real.

France will bring its contribution to the implementation of the agreements reached in Dayton and to be signed in Paris in the military field, where its forces will participate at the NATO operations or with its partners at the European Union for the civilian aspects of it. And France (Audio difficulties) to do everything that will ensure the identity of a united political, cultural,

democratic Bosnia-Herzegovina which will, like all the other states of the former Yugoslavia, find its place in Europe.

**MS. PAULINE NEVILLE-JONES:** Mr. Secretary, Presidents, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to add my thanks to those of the previous speakers for the generous hospitality shown us here by the Base Commander and also by the people of Dayton. We have been made to feel very welcome for the important work that we've carried out here.

I would also like to congratulate the Presidents for having signed and the United States Administration for the energy and the determination that has been shown in leading these talks to success. Everybody who's been involved in them knows that they were not easy.

I think this positive outcome demonstrates the importance of the Contact Group process. Dick (Holbrooke), with whom other members of the Contact Group have been working closely for a long time -- I'd like to thank you personally for the contribution that you have made. I think everybody knows how important it's been. It's been a privilege, Mr. Secretary, to work with your colleague.

This agreement is a landmark in the history of Bosnia, and if it is implemented, it will open the way to a prosperous and secure future for the people of that country in both entities. It is a huge opportunity. But it does depend upon implementation. These agreements are not self-implementing.

We look to the Bosnian parties to comply with their obligations. They know that, for they have undertaken to cooperate with the international community actively; and we welcome that, and we want to help because the opportunity there is to restore this country to normality and to set it on a new path. It is at the end of the day only the people of Bosnia who can achieve that outcome.

I'd like to say on behalf of the United Kingdom that we will play a full part in that process. We shall play, for one thing, a central role in the NATO-led international implementation force that I hope will shortly be able to deploy. We, as you know, already have troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We have, indeed, suffered loss of life. We want to make good on that investment with the help of the people of Bosnia.

My government will also contribute to reconstruction and to development, and we want to develop a direct and dynamic relationship between Bosnia and the European Union, and we will do that with our European partners.

I'd just like to say in conclusion that the British Government will host a conference at ministerial level in London, probably on 8-9 December, concerned with the implementation of the peace settlement that has been initialed today. We shall do that in the presence of Bosnian representatives. The object will be to get agreement in the international community on the future program for implementation of the civilian aspects of the Dayton agreement.

Mr. Secretary, Presidents, ladies and gentlemen, I just want to say one other thing, which is that for me personally this has been a very great privilege to have been able to make some small contribution to the conclusion of this important settlement that was initialed today. Thank you.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE:** Mr. Secretary, in your name and on behalf of the President of the United States, the people of Dayton and this air base, we're about to close the proceedings. Before we do, I wonder if we could ask the three Presidents to stand up and for us to join them standing and express our appreciation for what they've done in Dayton and our hopes for the future.

*(Sustained applause)*

**SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER:** Ladies and gentlemen, the next step in this important process will be a peace conference to be held in Paris some time in mid-December. That will be an important formal step in this process that was launched here today by the initialing of these agreements.

We appreciate all of your attendance here today to help us mark this important occasion. Thank you very much for coming, and now the meeting is adjourned.

(The meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.)