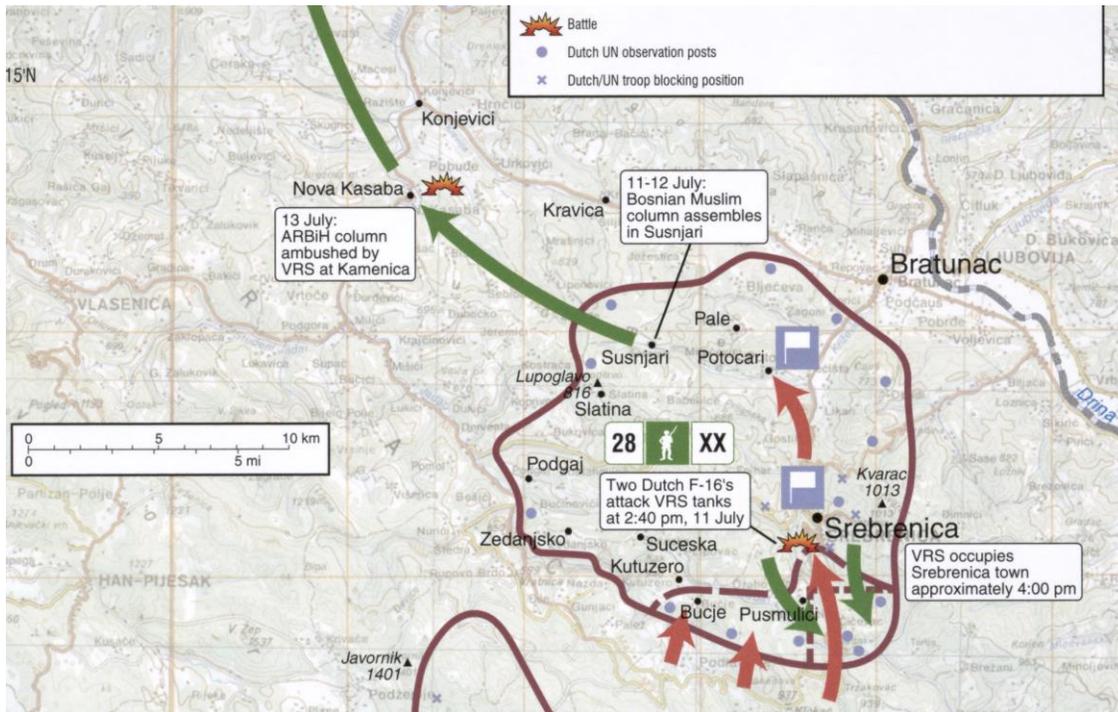


International Decision Making in the Age of Genocide: Srebrenica 1993-1995
June 28 – July 1, 2015
The Hague
Edited Transcript
Session 3: The Fall of Srebrenica



Srebrenica, July 1995, extract from CIA map

TOM BLANTON: The title of our session this morning is "The Fall of Srebrenica." We have an extraordinary amount of documentary evidence including daily situation reports from UN military observers, Bosnian Serb military orders collected by the Yugoslav tribunal, cables between Mr. Akashi and New York, letters between Janvier and Mladić, overhead reconnaissance images, US Government and UNPROFOR memos. Michael Dobbs, would you lead us off with a summary of the evidence and some key questions.

MICHAEL DOBBS: I thought it would be useful to summarize what we know about the situation in and around Srebrenica at the end of June/beginning of July 1995. We now know that there was an unannounced bombing pause in effect from the end of

May in response to the seizure of UN hostages by the Bosnian Serbs. That bombing pause was reluctantly endorsed by the United States at the level of the White House Principals Committee on May 28. We have the record of that Principals' Committee. Anthony Lake informed President Clinton about the bombing pause the following day, May 29.¹ From that same day, May 29, we have General Smith relaying General Janvier's instructions that "the execution of the mandate is secondary to the security of UN personnel."² We also have the discussion between General Smith, General Janvier and Mr. Akashi in Split on June 9, in which Janvier says that "we are no longer able to use air power because of the obvious reason that our soldiers are on the ground."³

All this is happening in the context of a resumption in the political negotiations, with Carl Bildt replacing David Owen. We have General Janvier saying that the bombing pause should be maintained "[until the political negotiations resume](#)," even if the hostages are all released.⁴ We also know that there were plans underway to put a rapid reaction force into Bosnia, but the rapid reaction force was still in the process of being formed at the beginning of July.⁵

Thanks to the evidence collected by the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal, we now know quite a lot about decision making on the Bosnian Serb side. If you look at the chronology, you will see a reference to the famous Directive No. 7 of March 8, 1995 in which Karadžić orders his troops to "create an unbearable situation of total insecurity" for the inhabitants of Srebrenica and Žepa.⁶ As a follow-up to Directive No. 7, the Commander of the Drina Corps, General Milenko Živanović issues an operational order dated July 2, putting Directive No. 7 into effect. The operational

¹ Lake to Clinton, "[Policy for Bosnia](#)," May 29, 1995. This memo recapitulates the "[Summary of Conclusions](#)" from the NSC Principals Committee meeting, May 28, 1995.

² Rupert Smith, "Post Airstrike Guidance," May 29, 1995, [paragraph 7](#).

³ "SRSG's Meeting in Split," June 9, 1995, [paragraph 8](#).

⁴ "SRSG's Meeting in Split," June 9, 1995, [paragraph 9](#). According to Akashi to Annan, UNPROFOR [Z-1026](#), June 20, 1995, the last 26 UN hostages arrived in Zagreb on June 19, 1995.

⁵ See Akashi to Annan, UNPROFOR Z-1026, June 20, 1995, [paragraph 6](#). Akashi reported that around 2000 Rapid Reaction Force troops would arrive "in theatre" by the end of June. The first use of the Rapid Reaction Force occurred on July 2, 1995 when French troops fired on a BSA position targeting UNPROFOR vehicles on Mount Igman road.

⁶ Radovan Karadžić, "[Directive for Further Operations](#)," Supreme Command of the Armed Forces of Republika Srpska, Op. No. 7, March 8, 1995.

order states that the Žepa and Srebrenica enclaves should be reduced to their urban areas.⁷ This signals the beginning of operations against Srebrenica and Žepa.

It is not until July 9 that one of Mladić's aides, General Tolimir, issues an order in the name of President Karadžić [authorizing](#) the Bosnian Serb Army to capture Srebrenica.⁸ It takes a week between the beginning of the offensive and the decision by the Bosnian Serb leadership, supposedly endorsed by Karadžić, to actually capture the enclave.

This what we know from the Bosnian Serb side on the basis of reconstructing their decision making by the tribunal. We begin this session with the question: how much of that was known by the leadership of UNPROFOR? Was an attack on the enclaves anticipated? If so, what actions were taken? Relevant here is the three-way discussion on June 9 in Split between Janvier, Akashi and Smith. We have General Janvier saying that "[the most realistic approach](#)" would be for UNPROFOR to "leave the enclaves," but that is "impossible for the international community to accept." We also have [General Smith saying](#), "I believe that the Bosnian Serb Army will continue to engage the international community to show that they cannot be controlled. This will lead to a further squeezing of Sarajevo, or an attack on the eastern enclaves creating a crisis that short of air attacks we will have great difficulty responding to." We'd like to begin by asking General Smith: how aware were you of Bosnian Serb decision making, either through intelligence sources or your assessment of their intentions, and what actions did you take to anticipate them?⁹

⁷ Živanović, "[Order for Active Combat Activities](#)," Command of the Drina Corps, Krivaja-95, July 2, 1995, [paragraph 2](#).

⁸ Tolimir to Karadžić, "[Conduct of combat operations around Srebrenica](#)," Main Staff of the Army of Republika Srpska, July 9, 1995. A top Mladić aide, General Milan Gvero, [told the RS assembly](#) on August 6 that the decision to capture Srebrenica was taken "when we assessed that the international community would not react immediately...we entered [the town] exclusively because of that." See ICTY summary of RS Assembly session, August 6, 1995. Gvero linked the decision to capture Srebrenica with the failure of the international community to react to the Croatian capture of Western Slavonia, a Serb-controlled enclave of Croatia, on May 1-3, 1995.

⁹ A CIA intelligence report, dated June 1, 1995, noted that the Bosnian Serbs had already begun "[stepping up military pressure](#)" on the eastern enclaves. It added that "UNPROFOR Bosnia commander Smith believes the Serbs are embarking on a campaign to capture the enclaves."

RUPERT SMITH: Having sat through eight ICTY trials now as a witness for the prosecution, I find it quite difficult to know what I knew then. I don't think I knew the half of it. I had what I called a thesis. It was being proved truer by the week, but there wasn't concrete proof. We had no collection capability whatsoever at the UN other than our people on the ground and the military observers, but they were not in very good places to tell us what was going on in Republika Srpska in any detail at all. Certainly not in any military detail.

TOM BLANTON: What about national intelligence gathering?

RUPERT SMITH: I received a national feed, but it tended to be at a much higher level. It did not deal with the detail on the ground. I couldn't have proved a single one of those assertions that I was making to Yasushi and Janvier in Split. It was my opinion, based on my belief of how the Serbs were operating. But I had nothing to show other than past events that this was the way things were going.

DAVID ROHDE: There were reports that British intelligence had an asset in Belgrade who said that there was going to be an attack on the enclave.

RUPERT SMITH: I received what I was sent. I had no collection capability of my own whatsoever.

JORIS VOORHOEVE: I have some painful information. After the fall of Srebrenica an intelligence officer of an important ally of the Netherlands (I'm not allowed to reveal sources), handed to one of my officers a piece of paper containing information from a high ranking Serb officer from the end of May. The Serb source stated that [the Bosnian Serb army] intends to capture the three eastern enclaves in the next three weeks. I have a copy of this document, which states that the source was a reliable

person in an intelligence position very close to the leadership in Belgrade.¹⁰ There is some discussion over what the information means. As is often the case with intelligence, it is dealt with at the mid-level and then put aside as something is not proven. Predictions are never proven until reality proves them. My impression is that the information was not taken seriously enough. I assume it was not reported to political leaders.



Joris Voorhoeve, center

Serb attack is the following: a high ranking international intelligence officer approached me in 2001, saying that he had served in Belgrade as an intelligence officer. He said that an important ally of the Netherlands had a very good source, close to Milošević, and this Serb official asked the western intelligence officer: “What would be the response of your country if the eastern enclaves were taken over by

¹⁰ A documentary that aired on the Dutch TV channel Human-VPRO on June 29, 2015 showed a fragment of the document signed by Brigadier General JCF Knapp, the head of Dutch military intelligence service, MID, from June 1995. According to the TV channel, British and American intelligence both knew about the planned attack on Srebrenica. *The Los Angeles Times* reported on March 1, 2009, that a key CIA source in Belgrade was Milošević’s former intelligence chief, Jovica Stanišić, who served as the CIA’s “main man in Belgrade” for eight years. The paper reported that the CIA had submitted a classified statement to the ICTY listing Stanišić’s “helpful” contributions. The ICTY acquitted Stanišić of all charges in May 2013.

us?" This Serb official did not get an answer. The intelligence person who told me this said that Milošević interpreted this as a kind of green light. There was no response to the Serb question.

Please don't take this as an accusation. After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait there was a lot of discussion about what could have been known about Saddam Hussein's intentions. Re-evaluating intelligence with the benefit of hindsight usually turns up items that were overlooked in the avalanche of information collected by intelligence services. But this Serb officer was a specific source. I do not think enough importance was paid to it. I am also blaming us in the Netherlands for not having a political intelligence service at the time. Since the United Nations has no intelligence operation, it is important to have your own national intelligence when you are engaged in a peace operation. I understand that General Smith had the expectation that the Serbs sooner or later would take the enclaves. I also had that expectation, simply by looking at the map. But we lacked specific information that, with hindsight, was available.

TOM BLANTON: Even with hindsight, the evidence from the ICTY suggests that this was a rolling decision. A prediction from the end of May that the Bosnian Serbs are going to overrun the enclaves is contradicted by their own internal combat orders from July 2 saying we intend to reduce them to the urban areas. From the evidence, this looks like a rolling decision that is interactive. We push, we reduce the enclaves, what's the reaction from UNPROFOR? What does NATO do? Depending on that, the order changes between July 2 and 9.

CARL BILDT: There was internal review done in the US, either established or headed by Tom Donilon [counselor to Secretary of State Warren Christopher]. They were tasked with going through everything they had to see if there was any sign of what would happen. The information available to me was that they came out with the answer no. You should ask Tom. Twenty years have passed and the conclusions should no longer be secret.

TOM BLANTON: We have one major indicator that there was no high-level anticipation of an imminent attack: General Smith went on leave.

CARL BILDT: Let me also say that the rumor mill was turning. Everyone had the impression that the endgame was approaching. In the endgame, the fate of the eastern enclaves was uncertain. But there were many rumors of political deals and giving up territory and things like that. I would not give much substance to any of this. The rumors were all over the place.

RUPERT SMITH: I wanted to make a point about being prescient and predictive and so forth. Had I been presented with a piece of information like that source report [mentioned by Minister Voorhoeve] at the beginning of June, I would have balanced it against my own thesis. This is why I use, and used, the word "squeeze." I did not assess that the Serb interest would be served by clearing the enclaves completely. I believed that the enclaves provided the Serbs with a means of controlling the UN through the "hostage and shield" mechanism. The goal of the Serbs was not to fight the UN or NATO. They wanted to control us. That was the word they used all the time. This meant keeping the enclave intact, but squeezing it, make life "intolerable" (as we can now see from their own orders). That is what I assessed they were doing.

That's why the convoys were being blocked. That's why there was no fuel. That's why they were preventing [Dutch] soldiers from returning from leave. All of that was designed to squeeze Srebrenica, to reduce it to its "urban core," to make it utterly controllable. I would have not taken that as an absolute indicator that there was about to be an all-out assault on the enclaves. I would have balanced that against the other argument.

Another point in my assessment was that the Serbs could not carry out more than one attack at a time. This was not going to be an attack against all the enclaves at once. Remember that Sarajevo was always a problem for them because of the presence of the Bosnian army which was becoming increasingly active. The most the Serbs could do was one enclave at a time.

MICHAEL DOBBS: Could you explain your thinking about going on leave, since this has been raised?

RUPERT SMITH: That had been decided in February. The roster of leaves was based on the tour lengths of the principal actors in Sarajevo. My tour length was a year. My chief of staff's was six months; the sector Sarajevo commander was six months. The chiefs of staff and the sector Sarajevo commanders changed over at more or less the same time. I would go on leave at the midpoint of their tours. This was a routine that had been established the year before. There was no more planning to it than that. It was my turn to go on leave. As I recall it, we had no idea of what was about to happen. We were surprised.

MICHAEL DOBBS: In fact, you interrupted your leave to attend the meeting in Geneva?¹¹

RUPERT SMITH: Yes. I took a man with a radio with me. I was only in Korčula [on the Dalmatian coast]. It was not that far away, but it took the better part of thirty-six hours to get in and out.

MICHAEL DOBBS: You said you had a man with a radio, so you were actually able to exercise some control?

RUPERT SMITH: We communicated once a day. I think we had a standard schedule. I would call in and my military assistant would brief me. That's how I was told that there was an airplane waiting for me in Split to go to Geneva. In effect, that was four days out in my leave by the time we had left Korčula, got to Split, gone to Geneva and come back again. I was back there for twenty-four hours when the message came "please come home."

¹¹ Gen. Smith was recalled from leave to attend the Geneva meeting convened by Boutros-Ghali on July 11. He then resumed his leave, on the Croatian island of Korčula, until July 12 (the day after the fall of Srebrenica), when he returned via Split late in the evening on July 12.

MICHAEL DOBBS: You were out of the operational loop and couldn't shape the UNPROFOR response? You had no input on the Close Air Support decisions [involving Srebrenica]?

RUPERT SMITH: No. I was told what was happening, but I was in no great position. I think I had one map with me.

TOM BLANTON: Muhamed, why don't you come in on this?

MUHAMED DURAKOVIĆ: Thank you very much. When it comes to intelligence gathering, I am very surprised to hear that very little was known. The information that you could gather in Srebrenica through the UN Military Observers, UN Civilian Police, UNCHR, MSF, ICRC, and UNPROFOR was overwhelming. On top of that, I was walking around Srebrenica one morning and was met by five huge guys wearing different uniforms with different kinds of weapons. They were wearing British insignia. They turn up out of nowhere in Srebrenica with specific tasks, including intelligence gathering.¹²

In connection with this intelligence gathering, I will tell you a story that some of you may find funny. I was twenty years old at the time, and liked playing practical jokes. I was approached by one of these guys because I was an English speaking inhabitant of Srebrenica. He was trying to make friends, but the purpose was obviously intelligence gathering. I told him that it would be very simple to get the information he was seeking. All he had to do was go to the Post Office, second floor, pick up the phone and call 255-522. The answer would be there. He wrote this down, went to the Post Office, and quickly found out that there were no phones and

¹² The *London Sunday Times* published articles on [July 7](#) and [28](#), 2002, based on the testimony of "Nick Cameron," a pseudonym for a member of a two-man Special Air Service Regiment team ordered into Srebrenica on March 18, 1995 (replacing a four-man team). The former SAS soldier said that he acted as the "eyes and ears" of the UN Command in Sarajevo, reporting to General Smith. His tasks included supplying target coordinates of Bosnian Serb positions for action by NATO aircraft. According to the NIOD report, the SAS soldiers served as Joint Commission Observers, reporting within "[a UK-eyes-only chain](#)." The SAS team left Srebrenica at the same time as Dutchbat.

no way of contacting anyone. At this point, he got really mad, literally chasing me around the Post Office.

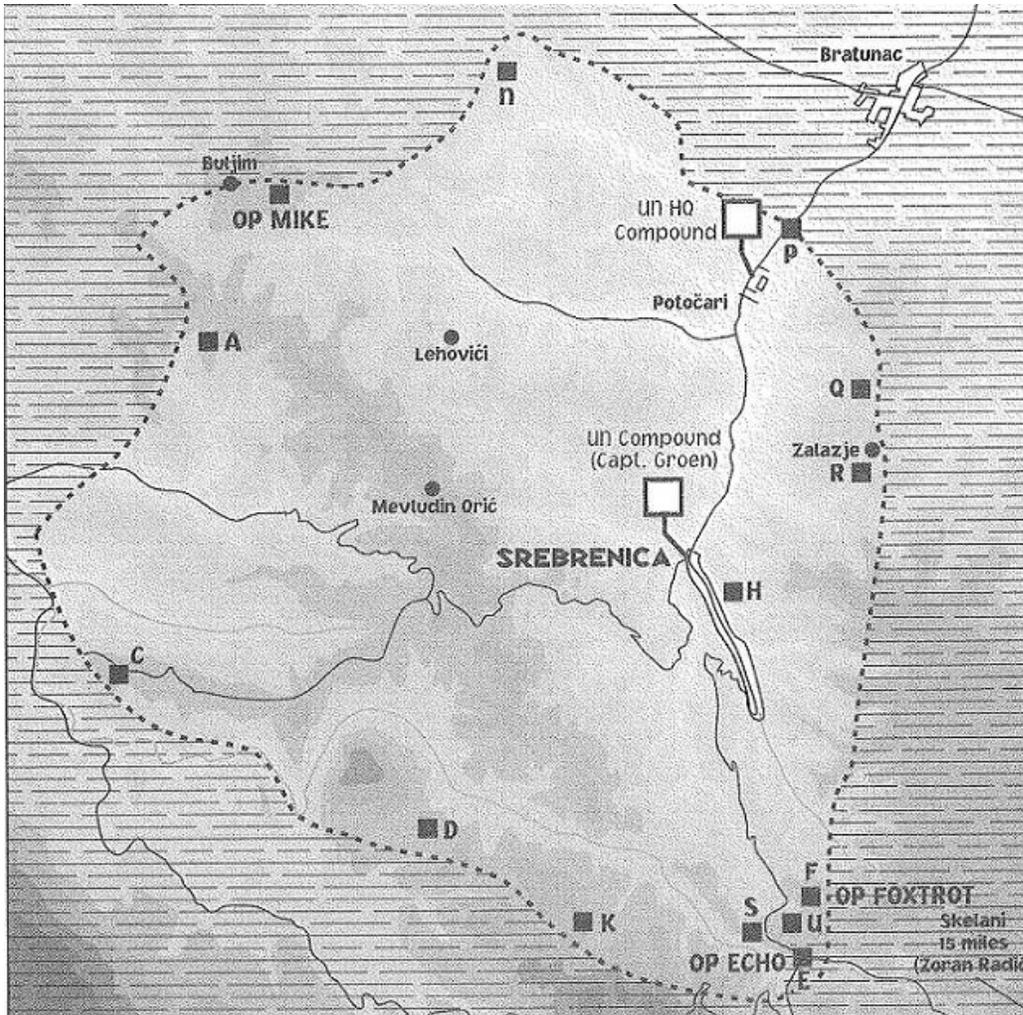
MICHAEL DOBBS: The problem is that there was no one at the other end of the line to tell him what was happening.

MUHAMED DURAKOVIĆ: Obviously, someone knew that something was about to happen. Someone needed to put some more boots on the ground, in addition to the Dutch. These people were taken out of Srebrenica afterwards. The Dutch can say how they left Srebrenica, but I know that I would often see them in the streets of Srebrenica. They looked like they were working really hard out in the field. They would come back from their patrols completely covered in mud. Obviously they were not spending their time inside of Srebrenica. They were spending their time around Srebrenica.

MICHAEL DOBBS: Since Muhamed has referred to this unit, which we now know was an SAS unit reporting to Rupert, perhaps Rupert can tell us a little bit about what they were doing in Srebrenica?

RUPERT SMITH: They were called Joint Commission Observers. Their provenance was known by all parties. They were introduced the year before by Michael Rose. I had deployed them into Srebrenica during June, I think, for two reasons. First to serve as forward air controllers, which they all were, and second, to give me an independent picture of what was going on in Srebrenica. They would provide another line of communication should things go wrong in Srebrenica. Later they were deployed into Goražde. I never got anybody into Žepa. The whole purpose was to have a parallel reporting system and forward air controllers in the pocket. That was why they were deployed. They play a part in the final act.

TOM BLANTON: Let me ask Kees Matthijssen, you are a company commander in Dutchbat. What did you expect? Did you see this attack to overrun the enclave coming, or the squeezing?



Dutchbat observation posts, courtesy David Rohde

KEES MATTHIJSSSEN: On June 3, there was [the attack on the Observation Post Echo](#), which was the most southern observation post in the enclave. This was not in my area by the way. I was responsible for the northern part. It was what you could call a "game changer." We were aware of the attempt to squeeze the enclaves. You could ask yourselves the question, what conclusions were drawn from the June 3 attack on that observation post? Colonel Karremans gave his assessment in his June 4 report

"Deteriorating Situation in Srebrenica" that we discussed yesterday.¹³ The question is what conclusions were drawn at the higher levels, where more information should have been available to make a better assessment on what it could mean. Were the Serbs just trying to find out what would happen, to see how the battalion would respond, how BH Command would respond, how political leaders would respond? On the basis of all that, they could finalize their plans for doing more. I would say those were relevant questions related to the June 3 attack that I would call a "game changer."

TOM BLANTON: You believe at that point the Bosnian Serb plan moved to potential all-out attack, not just squeezing, given the lack of response?

KEES MATTHIJSEN: It could be.

JORIS VOORHOEVE: A brief response. At the time, Netherlands military intelligence service, MID, thought the Serb intention was only to take the southern part of the enclave for logistical reasons. There was no prediction or calculation that they were out to get more. Around June 8, however, the Bosnian military in the enclave reported that they expected a Serb attack very soon.¹⁴ That report reached the Netherlands Army in The Hague, but was not shown to me at that time. It was discarded as just another instance of crying wolf.

TOM BLANTON: Despite the attack on the observation post?

JORIS VOORHOEVE: Yes.

¹³ Karremans to BH Command, "[Deteriorating situation in Srebrenica](#)," TK9588, June 4, 1995. See also 2002 NIOD report, [page 1543](#).

¹⁴ See Bosnian intelligence report cited in 2002 NIOD report, [page 1553](#).

OBRAD KESIC: I have a question for the organizers. There's an outstanding book that was written on intelligence and the war in Bosnia by Professor Wiebes. Was there any attempt to contact him and bring him to this conference?

TOM BLANTON: Yes.¹⁵

OBRAD KESIC: It seems to me there's one significant piece of missing information on decision-making within the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Based on the memoirs of people who were in Srebrenica, commanders and prominent figures, orders were given for units to attack outside the enclave and tie down Serbian units. There was an offensive to break out of the city at this time. This is part of the broader context. The last time I was in Pale, prior to Srebrenica, was May 1995. The focus of the [Bosnian Serb] political leadership then was actually around Kupres, Brčko, and Glamoč. They thought that a major [Bosnian government] offensive was being prepared and were very concerned about that. During the few days that I spent with the political leadership in Pale, there was little talk about the enclaves along the Drina. It was all focused the concern about what was happening up north or west.

TOM BLANTON: You spoke earlier about the political leadership and the military leadership and the issues of command and control. Yet we have this series of orders, particularly the July 9 order, which [says](#) "the President of the Republic ... has agreed with the continuation of operations for the takeover of Srebrenica." What do you make of that?

OBRAD KESIC: I can only speculate. It is interesting that it's not an order coming from the political leadership.¹⁶

¹⁵ Cees Wiebes, [Intelligence and the War in Bosnia: 1992-1995](#). The Wiebes monograph was part of the NIOD inquiry. NIOD declined to make its documentary sources available for this project, citing a 20-year public release rule, dating from the publication of the report in 2002. Discussions were held with Wiebes and other NIOD researchers prior to the conference, but they were not invited to the conference.

¹⁶ The [July 9, 1995 order](#) was addressed to the President of Republika Srpska "for information," and signed by Maj. General Zdravko Tolimir, Assistant Commander.

TOM BLANTON: It's a military officer [Tolimir] saying, "The President has agreed..."

OBRAD KESIC: For me, it's a mystery. It's part of a greater mystery in terms of what was happening in the internal communications. There was great tension between the military command and the political leaders at the time. In fact, there was an attempt to change the Commander in Chief of the Bosnian Serb military on several occasions. I hesitate to call it a mutiny but it was clear that the only general supporting this order was the one that was going to be named to head the military.¹⁷

TOM BLANTON: Given the sequence of orders that we do have on the record, would you agree with the hypothesis that this was a rolling decision [to capture Srebrenica]?

OBRAD KESIC: I think that's clear. Based on what we have learned from Bosnian Serb politicians and generals, this was something that was decided during the actual events. I don't think they ever thought they were going to achieve the success they did militarily, based on the previous experiences they had when they entered the enclaves.

HASAN MURATOVIĆ: I think this is a very important point that we must clarify completely. According to [UNSC resolution 836](#), all conditions to call for Close Air Support were met the moment they took the first observation post.¹⁸ Did anybody ask for NATO support from Sarajevo and from headquarters in Zagreb?

¹⁷ For details on the power struggle between the Bosnian Serb military and political leaderships, beginning in April 1995, see CIA two volume military history of the Yugoslav conflict, *Balkan Battlegrounds*, volume 1, [page 289](#). The study includes numerous maps and charts of the war, available through the [Library of Congress](#).

¹⁸ [UNSC resolution 836](#) of June 4, 1993 authorized UNPROFOR to take "the necessary measures, including the use of force" to respond to an "armed incursion" into the enclaves. It also authorized UN member states, "acting under the authority of the Security Council" to take "all necessary measures, including the use of air power...to support UNPROFOR in the performance of its mandate".

TOM BLANTON: I think Hasan's question is about Kees' point that July 3 was perhaps the game changer.

HASAN MURATOVIĆ: If there had been Close Air Support for Dutchbat on July 3 that could have saved the whole situation. There was enough time to take all necessary actions to stop the Serb offensive. It was clear by then that an offensive was going to happen. Then we have this turning point when they attack the UN. Resolution 836 provided the basis to call for Close Air Support. I would like to know whether support was requested from Sarajevo or from Zagreb, and what happened inside the UN in Sarajevo, in Zagreb and in Dutchbat in Srebrenica.

TOM BLANTON: We have the June 4 report from Colonel Karremans in which he described the “deteriorating situation” in Srebrenica and appealed to his superiors for support. Did you get any response?

THOM KARREMANS: No.

TOM BLANTON: You say no response. What about in Sarajevo? General Nicolai, do you have a recollection of this period?

KEES NICOLAI: No, I am looking in my papers to see if there is any information. I don't remember anything about a request for close air support.¹⁹

TOM BLANTON: Or the implementation of 836, which mentions “all necessary measures.”

KEES NICOLAI: No.

¹⁹ The June 4 cable from Karremans includes a [general appeal for support](#), but does not specifically request Close Air Support. An unpublicized “bombing pause” had been in effect from May 28,

TOM BLANTON: As we discussed yesterday, General Janvier had issued a specific directive on May 29 to General Smith saying, in effect, this is not the time for air strikes. However, you might think that an attack on a UN observation post would qualify for Close Air Support, even under the Janvier/Smith directive, which authorized ["force if necessary ... as a last resort."](#)

DAVID HARLAND: Given the long discussion we had yesterday on the US decision to agree to a pause in the use of air power, this is all a little moot. I agree with Hasan. If he remembers, there were those of us who very much felt that this was the time. It was clearly blocked not only at the level of [the UN chain of command in] Zagreb and New York levels. They were responding to signals received from the powers who possessed the airplanes.

TOM BLANTON: Including the United States. Jamie, did you want to come in on this point?

JAMIE RUBIN: Carl referred to a review of intelligence in Washington that Tom Donilon did. I don't know anything about that, but I do know that after Srebrenica, Madeleine Albright asked me to call in the CIA person at the USUN. We went through every daily report provided to the President and the Cabinet members prior to Srebrenica. It took us about twelve or fourteen hours. I do recall at that time there was a specific judgment by the CIA that they would not take the enclaves because it was too complicated to deal with all the people.²⁰ That's a true story.

The CIA assumption was that the Serbs would not kill everyone. They believed that the logistics of managing 10,000 people were beyond Bosnian Serb capabilities. I believe the phrase was that they were "unlikely to take the enclave of

²⁰ A [CIA analysis dated June 1, 1995](#), predicted that the Serbs "will attempt to avoid costly house-to-house fighting to take the enclaves, preferring to rely on their traditional strategy of seizing the high ground around the main towns for artillery positions and bombarding the civilian population to drive them out." The report said that the Serbs "may not move immediately" to capture the enclaves and "may prefer to wait for winter" to launch their offensive. Rubin said that he was referencing a different intelligence document (not yet released), reflecting similar information.

Srebrenica because of the management of the human beings”. That was a CIA assessment probably not a PDB [President’s Daily Brief], but the other one, a NID [National Intelligence Daily], as we called it then. The names changed a lot. We were unable to find any specific piece of information [predicting an assault on the enclaves]. I do not know if there was something delivered at a much higher level to the President, but the basic intelligence brief read every day by a thousand people in Washington signaled the opposite. It signaled that they wouldn't do it.



[Jamie Rubin](#)

TOM BLANTON: For some of the same reasons that Rupert Smith has outlined, that it would not be completely in their interest.

KEES NICOLAI: As far as I could read in my documents, OP Echo was withdrawn without calling for close air support. This was on June 4, immediately after the hostage taking, a moment when our hands were tied. That also has a role to play in the reaction to this event.

TOM BLANTON: Because the hostages were being held all the way up until June 18?

KEES NICOLAI: Yes.

RUPERT SMITH: In early June, we still have hostages in Serb hands.²¹ As has been mentioned, there was a difference between close air support as an act of self-defense and bombing. My memory is that at this stage we in Sarajevo could only request [Close Air Support], we could not command. The key for close air support lay with Mr. Akashi in Zagreb. The key for bombing was in New York with Boutros-Ghali. That was the situation as I remember it at the beginning of June.

To have a case for calling in close air support, you had to have the actual fighting going on at the time.²² Those were the rules of the game. If you have already abandoned a position, there were no grounds for close air support. There was one process for triggering Close Air Support and another, completely different, process for triggering the Exclusion Zone bureaucracy, which was not in our hands at that point.²³

TOM BLANTON: Zeid, will you come in on this?

ZEID RA'AD AL HUSSEIN: Around this time Mr. Akashi asked me to do a study for him on the robustness of all our forces in theater. The question was how robust would be the response if an OP is attacked (and there are many such occasions).

²¹ The UN hostages seized on May 25-26 were released in batches between June 2 and 18. See Kirudja to Akashi, "Remaining UN hostages," [June 10, 1995](#). The last 26 hostages were flown to Zagreb on June 19. See Akashi to Annan, "Daily Reporting," UNPROFOR Z-1026, [paragraph 2](#).

²² Under the "[smoking gun principle](#)" established by Janvier at the end of May 1995, only targets that were "currently engaged in an assault on UNPROFOR" could be targeted. See NIOD report, page 1620.

²³ Requests for Close Air Support were known as "Blue Sword." The original application had to come from the battalion commander (Karremans in the case of Srebrenica). The request then went via Sector HQ in Tuzla to BH Command in Sarajevo (Smith/Nicolai) to the Crisis Action Team in Zagreb. According to the 2002 NIOD report, [page 1614](#), a request for air support had to be approved first by the Force Commander (Janvier), it was then forwarded to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Akashi). After obtaining the SRSG's approval, the Force Commander would then forward the request to NATO CincSouth in Naples, Admiral Leighton Smith. Gen. Rose invoked "Blue Sword" following Serb attacks on Goražde in April 1994. See [Goražde Chronology](#), 10-16 April 1994.

Would the contingent itself return fire? Would it be proportionate? How aggressive would it be? What would the fire discipline be like? When conducting this study it was clear that there were many occasions where UN OPs were being shot at throughout the confrontation line. The variations in terms of responses by different contingents in UNPROFOR were quite considerable. I have the study somewhere.

This was meaningful in the sense that an adversary party would test and probe the UN's response to determine where the response was likely to be weaker or stronger. In this instance, on July 3, an attack on an OP in the [Srebrenica] safe area would be seen in the context of many attacks on different OPs over the course of a week. That would then be reported up the Bosnian Serb chain of command. It would then be easy for the Serbs to focus on this as a canary in a coal mine in the context of a broad number of firing incidents. It might not be an attack as such, maybe a patrol taking a few shots at a UN OP to see whether there would be return fire.

TOM BLANTON: How many OPs were actually seized or captured by Serb attacks in this period?

ZEID RA'AD AL HUSSEIN: The issue was not so much whether an OP was seized but whether there would be a response to fire poured into an OP. The contingent that was by far the most aggressive when fired upon were the Danes up in Croatia in Sector North.

HASAN MURATOVIĆ: In the case of OP Echo, it was not only firing, they actually took the OP.

ZEID RA'AD AL HUSSEIN: They attacked the OP which was then abandoned. Then they seized it.

TOM BLANTON: This is all taking place in a context of the June 4 conversation in Split where General Smith [tells](#) Mr. Akashi, "We are already over the Mogadishu line;

the Serbs do not view us as peacekeepers.” Mr. Akashi [says](#), “Can we return back over the line?” That plus hostages, plus the two keys, you have all these restraints on the reaction at what General Matthijssen describes as the “game changer” moment.

JENONNE WALKER: I'm interested in knowing more about my government's culpability or lack thereof. The May 29 decision by Bill Clinton to temporarily suspend air action at the request of the British and the French was five weeks before [the final assault on Srebrenica which began on July 6]. Do you know whether the United States had a role in turning down the request for air action that came from the Dutch? It's very unclear to me who is actually responsible. The UN actually works for all of its member states. I wonder if anyone here knows who was actually responsible in capitals for the continuation of the bombing pause [after the hostages were released on June 18, 1995].

TOM BLANTON: We're going to get into the operational choices and requests that were made on July 8, 9, and 10.

JOHN SHATTUCK: I didn't know about the bombing pause at the time. Holbrooke certainly knew about it. He objected very strongly, according to Peter Galbraith and Kati Marton. I was part of a larger group, working with Madeleine Albright, who was the person I was most engaged with. There were a lot of voices inside the US Government in June 1995 pushing for a response to what seemed to be a gathering storm. There was a very hot debate in the US Government, and a lot of pressure for a much more effective response.

I have a question based on the July 9 memo from Tolimir, related to Tom's point about the rolling decision. You will note the last two sentences of Tolimir's instructions, [ordering](#) subordinate units to “refrain from destroying civilian targets” unless forced to do so by strong enemy resistance.²⁴ “Ban the torching of residential buildings and treat the civilian population and war prisoners in accordance with the

²⁴ Tolimir to Karadžić, [“Conduct of combat operations around Srebrenica.”](#) Main Staff of the Army of Republika Srpska, July 9, 1995.

Geneva Conventions.” This is July 9, the day before they overrun Srebrenica. Is this completely disconnected from reality? Or does it, in fact, reflect the state of play inside the Bosnian Serb military at that point?

MICHAEL DOBBS: I think the ICTY, and certainly the prosecution, concluded that a lot of this was inserted for the record to show that they were abiding by the Geneva Conventions. Their actions spoke otherwise.²⁵

DAVID HARLAND: Put in after the fact?

MICHAEL DOBBS: No, before the fact. But what was put on paper and what was ordered were two different things. In the orders, you often see standard references to the Geneva Conventions.

TOM BLANTON: We want to move onto the operational issues. We have outlined a number of the factors that served as restraints on the use of air power. We've seen it in the Split conversation with Mr. Akashi and Janvier and Smith, we've seen it in the pause decision of the highest levels, but this is also the moment that Carl Bildt takes over the political negotiations from David Owen. There is some sense in some of the documents that people are saying, “There's a chance for the peace negotiations, let's not be too violent, Carl is just taking over.” Was there ever any direct discussion of that type, Carl, either in the capitals or with UNPROFOR? That this might be a good time to stand down because we have a shot at making a deal?

CARL BILDT: Not that I can remember. I re-read my book this morning and went through the accounts.²⁶ I was not in the overall chain of command but I see that in

²⁵ The ICTY trial chamber concluded that the references to the Geneva Conventions had [“no bearing on the state of mind”](#) of Gen. Tolimir, the signatory of the document. It noted widespread violations of the Geneva Conventions in Srebrenica, both before and after July 9.

²⁶ Bildt, *Peace Journey: The Struggle for Peace in Bosnia*, page 44. Bildt writes that he reminded Milošević in their first (July 1) meeting of “developments on the other side of the Atlantic, and said that he might soon have NATO forces fighting their way to the borders of Serbia.”

my discussion with Milošević, I took considerable liberties in threatening him with force. This was during my first meeting with him. I told him that he had to be aware of the fact that if we do not sort this out now and get the political process moving, the process in Washington is moving in the direction not only of air strikes but of the substantial use of force. I said, you might have NATO and American forces on your border, on the border of Serbia, fairly soon if you do not move. I went well beyond my mandate in indicating to him that gruesome things were going to happen. I did not specifically mention air power or air strikes. That was well beyond any information I had, or my mandate, but I was very explicit. Also with Mladić by the way.

DAVID ROHDE: I wanted to follow up on Jenonne's question. Mr. Akashi, did any American official ever say to you or General Janvier that you should not carry out air strikes in 1995?

YASUSHI AKASHI: I do not recall any instance in which American officials told us that we should refrain from air strikes. If anything, thinking in the abstract, Americans were likely to urge us to engage in air strikes.

DAVID ROHDE: Thank you. I ask because I think Muhamed Duraković is being polite. Most Bosniaks don't believe us. They are convinced that there was a massive conspiracy. That General Smith was ordered to leave Sarajevo [for his vacation in Korčula at the beginning of July 1995]. That the CIA knew the Serbs were going to attack.

I also wanted to ask Mr. Lagumdžija or Mr. Muratović about the withdrawal of Orić from Srebrenica in April 1995.²⁷ Many Bosnians suspect that the government betrayed them, that there was a secret deal to trade Srebrenica for the suburbs of Sarajevo. As Obrad mentioned, there was an order to conduct a raid out of

²⁷ According the NIOD report, [page 1514](#), page 1514, Orić left Srebrenica in April 1995 at the request of the Bosnian government. Orić travelled to Tuzla, and never returned to Srebrenica.

Srebrenica in conjunction with the effort to liberate Sarajevo in June 1995.²⁸ Can you say anything about why Naser Orić was pulled out of the enclave? Was he ordered to return? Was there some secret agreement to abandon the enclave by the Bosnian Government?

HASAN MURATOVIĆ: The Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina never discussed anything like exchanging territory of Srebrenica for some other area or moving population from there. I am talking about the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Whether the President or somebody from his office discussed it, I don't know. About Naser Orić: I really don't know anything about him leaving Srebrenica for Tuzla.

ZLATKO LAGUMDŽIJA: Some people reported talks on Srebrenica back in September 1993. There were various debates about maps, about the Vance-Owen plan. There was talk in the air about exchanging territory but, as far as I know, it was never discussed in the government. As a government, we had a completely different position. Our position was that we should not even talk to Karadžić about anything. That was the official position. I just want to, so don't bump into the later in the conversation. I think that what Hasan was talking about, June 3, how I read this now, I wasn't aware of this but after this exercise, twenty-four hours exercise, how I read it, as I said yesterday, May 24.

I have been asking myself how did Milošević and Mladić understand these moves. From their perspective, Janvier urges General Smith to consider withdrawal of air strikes on June 21. On May 25, there is the Kapija coffee house shelling in Tuzla where they brutally murder more than fifty people. They also seize about 400 hostages.²⁹ On May 29, the UN Secretary-General gives new guidelines for use of air power, stripping General Smith of his authority to order strikes. On June 3, a Dutchbat observation post is captured in clear violation of Resolution 836. On June

²⁸ For details of attacks out of Srebrenica in 1995, see NIOD report, [page 1562](#).

²⁹ 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.

4, as if by a miracle, Janvier and Mladić meet in Zvornik. The conclusion of their meeting is unclear. On June 9, Akashi says that we should not cross the “Mogadishu line.” Then, on June 16, there is UNSC Resolution 998 establishing the rapid reaction force.³⁰ According to General Smith, it was mainly for Sarajevo. Everyone understood that it was going to take a few months before it gets deployed. Mladić and Milošević draw the obvious conclusion: We have to finish the job now.

My question is: who stopped the execution of UNSC Resolution 836? Also when, how and why. By “who?” I mean the structures, institutions, individuals, call it whatever you want. With all due respect, this is one of the questions that has been running round in my head in the last twenty-four hours.

TOM BLANTON: That will be one of the focuses of our lessons discussion.

JAMIE RUBIN: Remember that the US Government did not have troops on the ground, as we were constantly being reminded. When things got difficult, we did what the British and French asked us to do. They had troops on the ground. That is where our position on the [bombing] pause comes from. We couldn't insist on bombing over the objections of the British and the French, because it was not our forces that were there. This is where the US position always stops prior to the policy change in August 1995. We cannot be stronger than our allies who have troops on the ground.

JENONNE WALKER: Did that still obtain when the Dutch, who were on the ground, asked for air support?

JAMIE RUBIN: There was never, to my knowledge, a discussion about the Dutch request.

³⁰ UNSC, [“Resolution 998 \(1995\),”](#) S/RES/998, June 16, 1995.

JORIS VOORHOEVE: A question for Mr. Muratović. I understand that the Bosnian Government had a post-mortem evaluation, which included members of Parliament and members of the Army leadership, to discuss what went wrong and how and what were Bosnian policies. I understand that this evaluation was based on a paper written by the Bosnian Army leadership, General Delić. Some participants did not consider the results of this meeting very satisfactory. I think you were also at the meeting. Can you share with us the self-reflection of the Bosnian leadership, how it dealt with the crisis?³¹

HASAN MURATOVIĆ: I don't know what meeting you referring to.

MICHAEL DOBBS: We should move onto the operational details of the Serb attack on Srebrenica and the Dutchbat response inside Srebrenica during the fateful period July 2 to 11. We would like to look at the requests for close air support from Colonel Karremans. Colonel Karremans, could you take us through your requests for close air support? There is a document dated July 9 in which you state that “using CAS in all possible ways is in my opinion not feasible yet.”³² You asked for close air support prior to July 9, but you also had some doubts about whether it would be feasible. Can you explain that and your own thinking during these few days?

THOM KARREMANS: Yes, I can do that. First I would like to return to a very specific subject which we have already discussed concerning targeting and Intel. We had a huge lack of useful intelligence. Today, we use satellites, airplanes and whatever to gather intel. That was not the case in 1995. The only thing we had were the observations posts, the eyes and ears of the battalion, the British JCOs, and some intel officers that I had. But the intel was only within the safe area, not outside. I

³¹ In an October 28, 2015 email to the organizers, Voorhoeve noted reports that Srebrenica mayor received no response to urgent telephone calls to Izetbegovic's office prior to the fall of Srebrenica. He said that the Sarajevo government failed to “take any action at crucial moments” of the crisis and called for further research into Bosnian government actions.

³² Karremans, [“Deteriorating situation in Srebrenica,”](#) TK95113, July 9, 1995, [paragraph 10](#).

relied very much on the information I got from my commands, from Sector NE [in Tuzla] and BH Command.

MICHAEL DOBBS: On that specific point, Minister Voorhoeve yesterday mentioned these so-called "[magic suitcases](#)," which would have allowed you to eavesdrop on Serbian communications. According to Bert Bakker, this question was also examined by the Parliamentary Commission report. On that very narrow question, were you ever offered the suitcases? Did you refuse them, or were they refused at a higher level?

THOM KARREMANS: I don't know.

JORIS VOORHOEVE: The equipment was refused by General [Hans] Couzy, the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Army.³³

MICHAEL DOBBS: Because he thought it would undermine the neutrality?

JORIS VOORHOEVE: Yes. He also insisted, at the time of my predecessor, Minister of Defense, Relus ter Beek, when Dutchbat I was deployed, that the heavy caliber guns on the armored personnel carriers should be replaced by a much lighter version, because the army commander wanted as low and neutral a military profile as possible. I don't think he believed very much in this operation. Later on, he did not pay enough attention to the accounts of some soldiers describing what went wrong and did not fully report to the Ministry of Defense what they had told him.

THOM KARREMANS: Your initial question was about my doubts about close air support. The attack started [around 3:00 p.m. on July 6] in the southeast area around OP Foxtrot, which was one of the outer observation posts. I think there were

³³ According to the NIOD Report, General Couzy refused the offer of American communications interception equipment because "this was a peacekeeping mission and not a war." He wanted "a strict separation between strategic and operational intelligence." See [page 2847](#).

seven or eight soldiers at that post when it was attacked over the course of two days. The only thing they could do was report and report. As I said yesterday, we had no hard means to counterattack. There was only one possibility: to ask for close air support. That was possible in the case of [OP Foxtrot on July 6](#), but not in the case of OP Echo on June 3. The forward air controllers need to do their job properly. They need to be able to see what is going on, to read the airplanes on the target. I was hesitating because of the terrain. The terrain was extremely difficult for close air support, except on July 10 and 11 in the morning when we were expecting massive close air support. On that particular piece of terrain, south of Srebrenica town, it was possible, but not in the vicinity of some of the OPs. That is why I made that note on July 9.

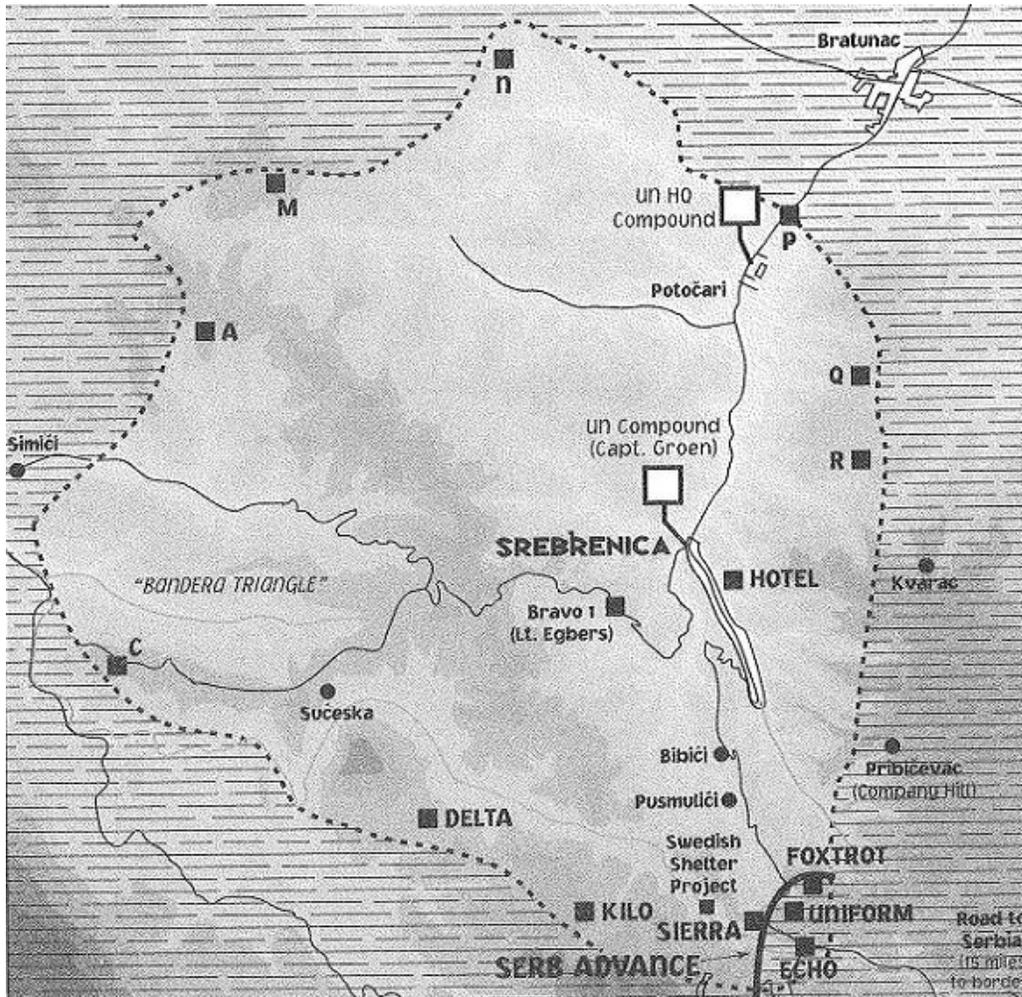


Thom Karremans

MICHAEL DOBBS: But you had requested close air support prior to July 10.

THOM KARREMANS: I asked for it a couple of times and never got an answer. Each time, I asked, where is it?

MICHAEL DOBBS: General Nicolai?



Serb front line, July 8-9, courtesy David Rohde

KEES NICOLAI: July 6 was the [first time](#) that Colonel Karremans asked for close air support. That was for me a reason to have a discussion with him about the post-air strike guidelines. I [tried to explain](#) to him that the conditions at that moment didn't meet the criteria for close air support. The [second time](#) he asked for close air support, as far as I know, was on Saturday July 8 when OP Foxtrot was attacked and had to be withdrawn.³⁴ At that moment we decided only to use air presence, to show the Serb Army that we had the airplanes in the area and were able to attack. We didn't attack at that moment. Colonel Karremans was able to take two new positions

³⁴ Two Serb soldiers [entered OP Foxtrot unopposed](#) at 1426 hours on July 8, following the withdrawal of the Dutch soldiers, according to the UN Srebrenica report, which also provides map of [positions on July 9](#).

north of the position of the observation post. He still had some control over that area. The situation changed on July 9. This was the moment when we at BH Command got the impression that the Bosnian Serb Army wanted more than to only squeeze the enclave. They were attacking more OPs and they were attacking to the north, in the direction of Srebrenica town.

At that moment there was an intensive discussion with the headquarters in Zagreb. General Janvier had made clear that he did not want to use the ultimate means of air power unless Dutchbat first used their weapons. We ordered [Karremans] to create a situation in which Dutchbat, as well as the town of Srebrenica, would come under attack. That was the reason for the [blocking position](#). It was not meant to stop the Bosnian Serb Army which was not possible for Dutchbat to do at that moment. The purpose was to create a situation that met all the conditions to use air power. On July 9, we also warned the Bosnian Serb Army that we would use close air support if they continued with their attack.³⁵ We also prepared the request for close air support, depending on when they attacked this blocking position. But, there was no request for close air support on July 9.

At the end of the afternoon of Monday, July 10, the Serbs were so close to Srebrenica that they were attacking our positions. Now the situation that we wanted to create was there. We did not have to spend a lot of time formulating the request because it was already set up. When the [request](#) came in, we immediately transferred it to Zagreb at about 6:00 in the evening. Then the waiting started. I always wondered why it took so long to take a decision. The fact that General Janvier or someone else did not want to use air force at all could have played a role. Maybe Mr. Akashi can say something about that. For us, it was unbelievable that there was no reaction in time from Zagreb. It was only after it was too late, after 9:00 in the evening that they [said](#), "It is too dark, the troops are too close together, the risk of collateral damage is too high for close air support." They promised to have planes in the air the next morning, but it was a no go from Zagreb on the evening of July 10.

³⁵ Smith, ["Warning to the Bosnian Serbs: Attacks Against the Srebrenica Safe Area,"](#) HQ UNPROFOR Sarajevo, July 9, 1995.

MICHAEL DOBBS: Before we get to why the reasons for that no go, I would like to ask Colonel Karremans about the [ultimatum](#) to the Bosnian Serbs on the evening of July 9 threatening the use of “NATO Close Air Support” if “a blocking position to the south of the town” was attacked.³⁶ According to a UNMO report early on July 11, the commanding officer held a meeting with the Bosniak authorities in Srebrenica. He told them that “massive” air strikes would take place that morning if the Serbs did not withdraw from the safe area.³⁷

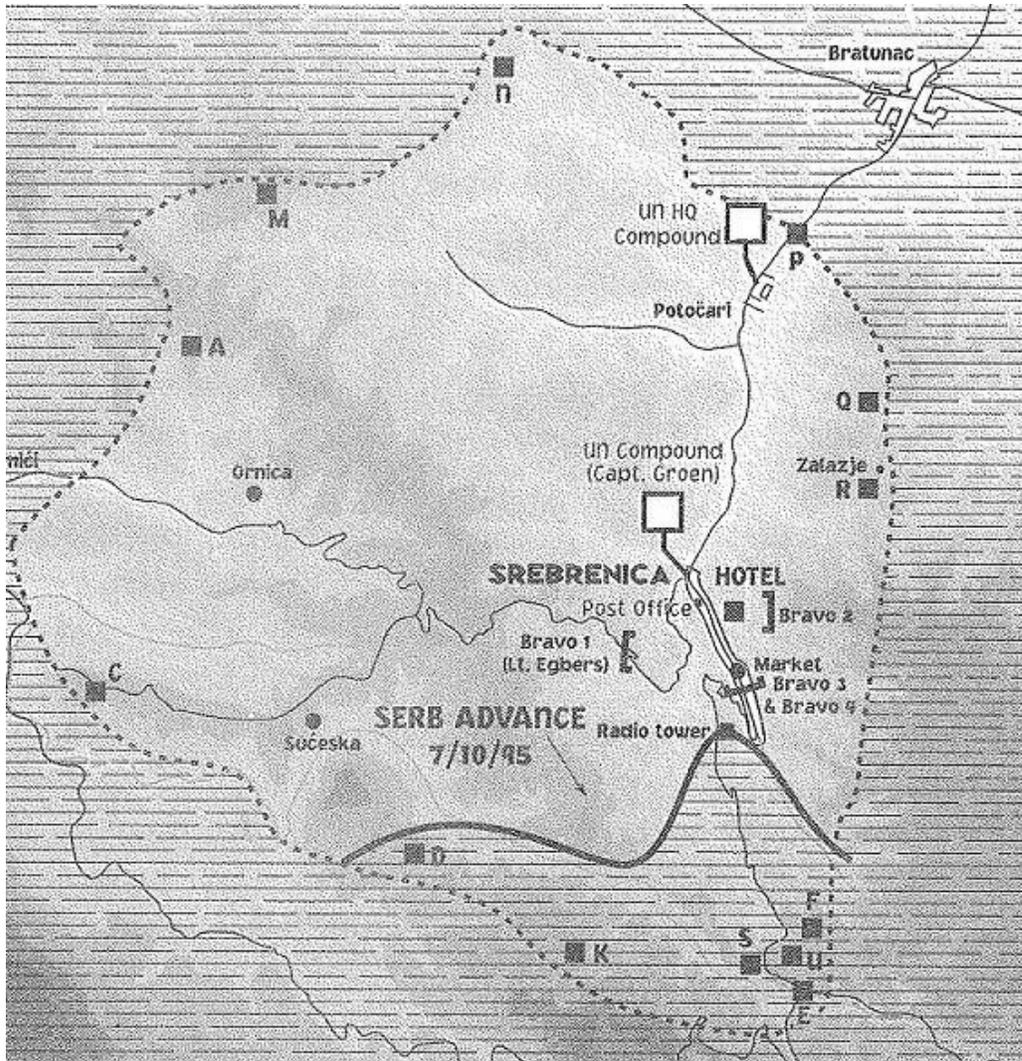
There's another reference to “massive air strikes against all BSA targets in and around the enclave” in a Dutchbat document dated July 10 signed by Captain [Jelte] Groen [Company Commander of Bravo Company].³⁸ The term “massive air strikes” seems to suggest a much broader action than simply close air support. I would like to ask Colonel Karremans if it was his understanding that there would not only be close air support but massive air strikes.

KEES NICOLAI: In the warning that we sent to the Bosnian Serb Army on July 10, we were talking about close air support. We also heard from Colonel Karremans that he was very afraid about the reaction of the Serb Army from positions around the enclave. His request was for a strike not just against the attacking force, but other Serb positions around the enclave. In my opinion, that would have been possible within the definition of close air support. They were all involved in fighting in that small area. In the case of air strikes, you can go further and attack command posts, communications centers and so on, but this was all Serb forces in direct contact with UNPROFOR troops in the enclave. If you have enough airplanes, that remains close air support, but you need more airplanes than the two we used at one time on July 11.

³⁶ UNPROFOR to UNPF Zagreb, “[Warning to the Bosnian Serbs](#),” July 9, 1995, including order to establish “[blocking positions](#).”

³⁷ A catalog of [UNMO Reports from Srebrenica](#), July 6 to July 18, is available from ICTY. See [110200B update](#) for Karremans meeting with Srebrenica leadership, and “ultimatum” to Bosnian Serbs.

³⁸ Groen to Franken, “[Exchange of Ultimatums between BSA and Dutchbat](#),” July 10, 1995.



Serb frontline July 10, with Dutchbat blocking positions, courtesy David Rohde

MICHAEL DOBBS: Can we ask Colonel Karremans, what was your understanding on the afternoon of July 10? Did you think that a decision had been taken to carry out massive air strikes?

THOM KARREMANS: No. There has always been a huge discussion about air strikes and close air support. We were asked to compile a list of targets before July 4. We renewed that list every day. It was based on what we could see and hear. Nothing more. As I said before, we had no intel from planes or satellites or outside sources. We were expecting and hoping that, if the attack on the Safe Area continued, we would get a little bit more than close air support to take out all the Bosnian Serb

attacking units outside the safe area. For example, supply units, artillery, communication centers. That's the way to hit an enemy in a case like this.

As General Nicolai said, after we retreated from OP Foxtrot on July 8, I gave the order for two other temporary observation posts. An observation post is just an observation post, however. It's not a defense position. Everybody thinks that we were defending, but as a huge distinction between defending and protecting. The OPs were the ears and the eyes of my staff, providing me intel on what was going on inside and later outside the safe area that I could send up the chain of command.

I gave orders to some of the observation posts to withdraw. When that was not possible, they were attacked or overrun by the Bosnian Serb army. At a certain point, our soldiers became hostages of the Bosnian Serbs. By the end, they had about 30 hostages. That was one of the most difficult decisions that I had to make during this period: should I ask for close air support knowing that there were Dutch soldiers that had been taken hostage by the BSA? I requested close air support because I could foresee what was going on, especially on July 10.

As General Nicolai said, I received an order to establish blocking positions [on July 9]. I had done studies on defense operations and retreating operations, but we had not practiced blocking positions with white vehicles and blue helmets. It was not possible to switch from a blue helmet operation to a green helmet operation. Everybody could understand that it was an order that could not be carried out. As a battalion commander who had spent six months in the area, knowing what was going on, I would say this was an impossible mission. But we established the blocking position and it was attacked. That is why we asked for close air support. It did not arrive on July 10.

MICHAEL DOBBS: To clarify, on the night of July 10/11, when you met with the Srebrenica leadership, were you convinced that help was on its way?

THOM KARREMANS: That was something different. During the night of July 10, I had a discussion with Colonel Brantz who was the deputy commander of Sector NE in Tuzla. I think the commander was on leave. He told me, in consultation with BH

Command, what we could expect the next morning, the morning of July 11. He said you can expect more than you asked for. With that information I went to the local leadership, the military and civilian leadership, and [tried to explain](#) what would happen the next morning. I could see in the eyes of the people that they didn't believe me. I noticed that evening that many men were already leaving the safe area. That was during the night of July 10/11. After the meeting with the local authorities I went to Bravo Company [deployed in Srebrenica town] and explained to them what should happen the next morning. I then went back to my command post [in Potočari, 55 kilometers north of Srebrenica]. In the morning of July 11, we were looking up in the sky. What would happen? Nothing happened.³⁹

JORIS VOORHOEVE: There are some officers who were part of this and they are not present in the meeting. First of all, General Janvier had a Dutch military adviser, Colonel de Jonge, who was the one to design the blocking position. Colonel de Jonge later told the Parliamentary inquiry that he wanted to trigger massive close air support. He said that you can make close air support as big as you want.

Second, Major Franken (deputy commander, Dutchbat III) had identified 32 Bosnian Serb artillery positions at the request of Colonel Karremans on the hills. He gave the coordinates to UNPROFOR. Colonel Brantz called Colonel Karremans on the evening of July 10 saying there would be forty to sixty airplanes tomorrow morning. He was the Deputy Commander in Tuzla. The Norwegian commander, General Hauckland, was on leave. I was also called by Colonel Brantz on July 10. He said, "We will take out forty different Serb targets." He explained that Colonel Karremans was worried about the Multiple Launch Rocket systems that the Serbs had in a village nearby. Colonel Karremans and I had the same information from the same source.

On July 9, I was called by the office of General Janvier seeking the view of the Netherlands Government, considering that there were thirty Dutch blue helmets

³⁹ According to the 1999 UN Srebrenica report, [paragraph 297](#), Sector NE informed Dutchbat around 0400 hours on July 11 that 40 Bosnian Serb targets "had been identified" and NATO planes would be over the targets by 0650 hours. The planes did not appear.

detained by General Mladić.⁴⁰ There was no time to consult with the Government, so I gave my own answer. I said, “The United Nations cannot refuse the use of close air support.” That is literally what I said. It came out a bit garbled in the 1999 UN Report, saying that I left it up to the Force Commander, General Janvier. My message was: “UNPROFOR has to apply close air support because it was promised to the Netherlands Government and is a final means of assistance to Dutchbat.”

In hindsight, I think we should have responded much earlier and firmer. That would have been a very clear sign to Mladić. I blame myself for not taking a plane to Zagreb and talking directly to General Janvier to press him for air support, even though there were thirty Dutch hostages. I think there should have been a preventive air support action to take out the Serb artillery which was free firing from the hills of Srebrenica into the valley. The population there, and Dutchbat, were sitting ducks.

MICHAEL DOBBS: Just to clarify your role. We have a cable dated July 10 to the State Department from the US Ambassador to the Netherlands, Terry Dornbush. He reports that the Government of the Netherlands is pessimistic about the situation in Srebrenica, and [quotes](#) Defense Minister Voorhoeve being “wary of air strikes which he thinks could lead to great civilian casualties and would put the 427 Dutch troops (including 30 being held by Bosnian Serbs) in greater danger.”⁴¹

JORIS VOORHOEVE: I can only guess what has been redacted from this cable. I remember this conversation with the ambassador. I was worried about the Dutch blue helmets, I had just buried one of them who had been killed by Bosnian fire.⁴² Nevertheless, we were convinced that close air support had to be given. I think I should have pressed that point much stronger and earlier and personally in Zagreb.

⁴⁰ Voorhoeve said he is not “100 per cent certain” of this date. His diary notes the call was on July 9, but a Dutch military aide to Janvier (General Kolsteren) believes the call took place on July 10. According to the [UN Srebrenica report](#), the call took place on the evening of July 10.

⁴¹ Dornbush to SecState Washington, DC, [“Dutch DefMin on Srebrenica: No Good Options,”](#) American Embassy The Hague 03682, July 10, 1995.

⁴² A Dutchbat member, Private Raviv van Renssen, was shot dead by a Bosniak defender of Srebrenica after the withdrawal from OP Foxtrot on July 8.

TOM BLANTON: I want to go back to the events in Zagreb on the evening of July 10. We have a document, from ICTY, that shows General Janvier talking by phone to General Tolimir at 8:10 p.m. and 9:05 p.m. that night. Look at the [last sentence](#), "Please immediately meet these demands so the use of NATO air forces can be avoided."⁴³ This conversation is taking place after Janvier has been informed that [Dutchbat is under attack by Bosnian Serb troops](#) who are already on the outskirts of the city. Dutchbat is waiting for the planes because that's your only shot and the Force Commander is basically saying, "We'll do anything to avoid those NATO planes." David, do you want to comment?

DAVID HARLAND: I interviewed General Janvier for the UN report. He had his lawyer present. He confirmed that he [did not want to use air power](#) and did not approve the request [on July 10.]⁴⁴ He said that actually only one request reached him officially. He said that he had been alerted by BH Command that there had been a request to them that they had not forwarded but that a single request was under consideration. I asked him why he did not want to use air power. It is in the transcript. He said, "The terrain, it's forested and hilly, it's not particularly useful for air power, it would have been very easy for the Dutch to block [the Serbs]." I said the record showed that the Dutch requested air support several times. They were the ones on the ground. He said, "*Les Hollandais, ils ne sont pas les soldats.*" He said on the record that he did not want to use air power even if there was a request and even if the conditions had been met.

TOM BLANTON: General Nicolai?

KEES NICOLAI: In my opinion, this is unbelievable. It was General Janvier who ordered the blocking positions in order to trigger close air support [if they were attacked by the Bosnian Serbs]. When that happens, he hesitates to send in support,

⁴³ ICTY transcript of intercept of telephone conversations between Janvier and Tolimir at [2010](#) and [2105](#) July 10, 1995.

⁴⁴ 1999 UN Srebrenica report, [paragraph 482](#).

using arguments of mountainous terrain. It was not dark at that moment, on July 10 at 6:00 in the evening. The fact that the terrain was not suitable for close air support is a fake argument in my opinion.

RUPERT SMITH: We would get a much clearer idea of what was happening if we could get hold of the NATO air tasking orders. You cannot put all those airplanes in the air without some very comprehensive orders. The package for doing the kind of massive attack that has been discussed here, with 40 planes, is different to keeping a close air support combat air patrol of four ships in the sky. There would have been tanker aircraft and so forth.

JAMIE RUBIN: Can I ask the General: as far as you know, there never was a NATO capability to launch a forty plane close air support?

RUPERT SMITH: I don't know.

TOM BLANTON: General Nicolai is nodding his head, saying that there was.

DAVID ROHDE: There were planes in the air on the night of July 10 from the USS Theodore Roosevelt.⁴⁵

JAMIE RUBIN: Forty?

DAVID ROHDE: Not forty. There were F-15s that were able to carry out night attacks and tankers were with them on the night of the 10, but they never got the approval from Janvier.

⁴⁵ See David Rohde, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica*, 124, which also contains a full account, based on contemporaneous notes taken by a participant, of the Crisis Action Team discussion in Janvier's office on the evening of July 10.

RUPERT SMITH: My point is that you can then trace by working backwards from where the airplanes are, and what time orders were given or not given. Evidence can be found to nail this down. It is in the air tasking orders.

ZEID RA'AD AL HUSSEIN: To fill in some context here, if we go back to this idea of a rolling operation and Bosnian Serb testing and probing, it's worth recording that we see the first use of the Rapid Reaction Force's French mortars on July 2. Two rounds were fired at BSA position that had targeted UNPROFOR vehicles using the Igman road. A mortar shell later exploded in the compound of UNPROFOR's BH headquarters causing minor injuries. The very next day, July 3, for the second day running, French troops fire on BSA positions targeting UNPROFOR and escort humanitarian traffic on Mount Igman road. Around Sarajevo, UNPROFOR is showing a robustness and the RRF is beginning to operate. By contrast, you have this other position, in the enclave of Srebrenica, where they begin to see that there is tenderness that they can push. They don't see close air support or aerial activity. The contrast is quite remarkable.

MUHAMED DURAKOVIĆ: It is important to look at what happened on a minute to minute basis in Srebrenica. I remember very well Colonel Karremans coming to the PTT building for the meeting with local authorities [shortly after midnight on July 11]. I was present. Ramiz Bećirović, the late chief of staff of the 28th division, was also present, [along with the mayor, Fahrudin Salihovic, and deputy mayor].

[Addresses Karremans] I share your opinion when you say that the Bosnian authorities really did not believe that the air support would come. Therefore, they mobilized the troops of Srebrenica to try to defend whatever was left of the territory from Zeleni Jadar toward Bibići that is the area from OP Foxtrot and OP Echo in the south of the enclave to the north side of Srebrenica. The movement of the men that you saw was actually not a movement of people trying to escape the enclave. It was a scrambling of whatever was left of the Bosnian defense after we saw that the observation points had been run over. There was no response to that.

If you remember, UNPROFOR had previously ordered us to fill up the trenches that we started digging in response to the ongoing attacks on the enclave which were increasing from day to day, starting as early as May 1995. We were always promised that if the BSA took one foot of the enclave, beyond this imaginary line, they would be met by this horrific response. When that did not happen, Ramiz decided to scramble whatever the available resources he had to bring people to these positions on the Bibici hill on the south side of the enclave.

[Addresses Karremans] On that evening, as I recall, you came back to tell us that we should withdraw from those positions because we were now sandwiched between the BSA Army and the population of Srebrenica and because there was going to be a [huge air strike in the area](#). The closeness of the confronting parties was such that we might take a lot of collateral damage, a lot of casualties. That is when we retreated back into the town, if you remember.

There is another very interesting point that I would like to make. You policy-makers were living in your own world. My world was at the operational level. At a certain point the situation became so desperate that we really did not know what to do. Ramiz ordered one of the prominent members of the Bosnian army to take the British [forward air controllers] toward the Bosnian Serb armored vehicles that were moving toward Srebrenica. This man was one of the unsung heroes of Srebrenica. He is now a bus driver in Australia. He took a woman who was able to speak a few words of English, but enough to communicate with the British. The two of them went deep into the territory where they could easily point out the positions of the Serbs. The British were there, they had their communications devices, and they had all the equipment they needed, pointing in that particular direction.

They could see the tanks approaching Srebrenica. My friend pointed at the tanks, "These vehicles that you see, these are the Serb vehicles." The British called someone on the radio, he did not understand but there was a lot of jibberish going on. They turn back to him and say, "We don't see." My friend says, "You don't see the vehicles approaching?" They looked at each other and say, "No, we don't see." He calls Ramiz. In his right hand he has an AK-47, a Kalashnikov, in his left hand a small radio. He calls Ramiz (who unfortunately died in 1996 so he cannot be here to

confirm this story) and explains what is going on. The Brits are pretty much saying, "Don't trust your eyes, trust us, nothing is coming towards Srebrenica, nobody is approaching."⁴⁶

This was now the endgame. Unlike most of you, we knew what was coming. We have spent hours over the past two days discussing the psychology of Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, how it was impossible to predict what they would do, despite the fact that you had ethnic cleansing taking place from 1992 to 1995. Not only men were separated and killed but women and children were separated and killed, and whole villages were being destroyed. As a twenty year old in Srebrenica, I knew what is coming. I understood that this was probably the last day of my life. The same kind of psychology goes through the head of my friend when he makes this desperate call to Ramiz. He then sends a message saying, "Should I do the blue?" Which meant: "we have been betrayed, these people are not here to help us, these people are here to do whatever needs to be done so we are no longer here." The message he gets back from Ramiz is "no."

This was what was happening on the operational level in Srebrenica. Despite all the equipment, all the communications devices, everything that was visible, the Serbian onslaught was not stopped. Then Srebrenica collapsed and the Dutch retreated. The last "blocking position" that I saw occupied by the Dutch was on the main square, next to the main mosque. I passed by these guys. They were terrified. The gunner was staring at the south side of the enclave while the shells were hitting the town. That is when the population was moved out of the southern part of the town. We had stayed overnight in the southern part of the town, it was absolutely horrific. In the morning, the women and children were directed towards the Dutchbat compound [in Potočari]. The men, including myself, moved up to the front line [in the north of the enclave] to try to fight our way out of Srebrenica.

⁴⁶ Duraković did not give the name of the Bosnian officer. According to the 2002 NIOD report, [the Bosnian officer was Ekrim Salihovic](#), who had been serving as liaison officer to UNPROFOR. Shortly after 0700 hours on July 11, Salihovic guided the JCOs to a nearby hill from where they could see the advancing Bosnian Serb infantry. They subsequently moved to another position and identified 41 potential targets, which they signaled to the Air Operations Coordination Center in Sarajevo. For another version of this incident, see Rohde, *Endgame*, 139-141.

TOM BLANTON: Thank you. Let me go back to the night of July 10. We have a message from Mr. Akashi to New York on July 11 saying that he authorized a request for close air support at 12:20 p.m. [Zagreb time]. By this time, the Serb forces have already broken from their overnight positions. By 4:00 p.m., they have captured the town.⁴⁷ My question to Mr. Akashi is about the time lapse. General Janvier refuses to authorize close air support on July 10, instead engaging in conversations with General Tolimir. By 12:20 p.m. on July 11, you and General Janvier have concluded that the danger was overwhelming but in fact it is already too late.

YASUSHI AKASHI: Let me give you my perspective from Zagreb. For at least a week prior to July 11 General Janvier gave me updates on developments in the Srebrenica area every day, maybe two or three or four times a day. I was prepared to respond positively to close air support request. In our chain of command, nobody other than General Janvier could make a request for close air support. Unfortunately, there is sometimes confusion in using the term "close air support" as distinct from "air strike," which is a political act. They belong to quite different categories.

So far as I was aware, in the case of Srebrenica, what I was expected to approve was close air support. There's some contradiction in the term "massive close air support." There could be sizable close air support involving numerous supporting planes and attacking planes. The number could be large or small. Yesterday we talked about the meeting the Secretary-General organized in Geneva on July 8. I sent General Janvier back to Zagreb to be *au courant* with urgent developments in Srebrenica. I myself followed him soon afterwards the same evening. On July 10, I was out of Zagreb for several hours at the invitation of the Croatian government. They invited me to Dubrovnik for a meeting. Even at that time Janvier kept me informed. I came back on that same day to Zagreb. It was not until

⁴⁷ According to the UN Srebrenica report, [paragraph 302](#), the Bosnian Serbs resumed their attack at approximately 11:00 a.m., with direct tank fire against Dutchbat positions. Janvier requested Akashi to approve a request for close air support at 12:00 p.m. Akashi approved the request at 12:17 p.m.

12:20 p.m. on July 11 that Janvier came to my room with a request for close air support. I gave my approval because I was ready.

DAVID ROHDE: There is a note that says, on the critical evening of July 10, when the planes were circling, you and General Janvier spoke on the phone at 9:40 p.m. Do you remember what Janvier said to you at that point maybe about his conversation with General Tolimir?

YASUSHI AKASHI: I do not recall that.

DAVID ROHDE: There are notes from that evening from a participant. One of the participants remembers Janvier saying, "I spoke to Tolimir and he says that they do not intend to take the enclave. I believe him. If they do take the enclave I'll draw my conclusions."⁴⁸ Do you think General Janvier was naive about the Serbs?

YASUSHI AKASHI: I don't think so. He was a professional soldier, a responsible one. These words, which you have read out, sound like fiction.

DAVID ROHDE: There's another note that you spoke to him at 11:00 a.m. on July 11 before you received the official request at noon. Do you remember that conversation?

YASUSHI AKASHI: We were almost constantly in conversation to bring ourselves up to date with the latest developments. It was almost by the hour.

DAVID ROHDE: Did General Janvier ever say to you that he felt he had made a mistake on the night of July 10 by not approving the request for close air support?

⁴⁸ For a detailed account of the Crisis Action Team session in Zagreb, based on interviews with several participants and contemporaneous notes, see Rohde, *Endgame*, 118-125. For Tolimir promise to halt attacks, see [intercept of conversation](#) with Janvier at 2010.

YASUSHI AKASHI: No.

MICHAEL DOBBS: There was a conversation between you and Janvier on the night of July 10, which the critical evening. Janvier was closeted with his Crisis Action Team. He spoke to a lot of people including people in Paris, Tolimir, you. Were you part of the consultations on the night of July 10? Or were you just waiting for him to make a formal request to you?



[Yasushi Akashi](#)

YASUSHI AKASHI: I was certainly waiting for the request and was ready to approve it. I did so, as I said, within ten minutes or so [of receiving it on July 11]. I did not detect anything striking or unusual, there are always movements and commotions in our office in Zagreb. He had his office on one floor, I had my office on the other. Our assistants and our advisors were constantly coming and going, but there was nothing unusual about that evening, as far as I remember.

DAVID HARLAND: I have two little facts to add to the record. I asked President Izetbegović about the events of July 9, 10 and 11. He told me that they had made

repeated requests of their own to the UN, I don't know where that is on the record. In the end, Izetbegović said, the UN had 300 soldiers in Srebrenica and the Bosniaks had over 3,000. He said that he had managed to speak to [Srebrenica war president] Osman Suljić. He said that he had urged Suljić to try to take out just one Serb tank. Izetbegović said to me that he had reminded Suljić of the “Red Arrow” anti-tank weapons he had shipped to the Bosniak forces in Srebrenica, and he recalled that the Bosniaks had even lost a helicopter trying to get this equipment into Srebrenica for exactly this kind of situation.⁴⁹ Izetbegović said that he had given up on the UN, but thought that the Bosniaks had forces in Srebrenica that could have been used to at least slow the Serb advance.

When I was writing about the events of Monday, July 10 for the UN report, a key fact that jumped out from the record is the emergency meeting of the Security Council at the request of the US. Ambassador Albright had asked very clear questions. Are the Serbs continuing to advance? Is the town of Srebrenica being attacked? Boutros-Ghali's representative, Ambassador Gharekhan, gives a completely false answer. He says the Serbs are not continuing to advance and ignores the question of whether the attacks are still taking place. It has always been a mystery to me why he gave [completely wrong answers](#) to very precise and important questions posed by the United States.⁵⁰

TOM BLANTON: Let me call your attention to another key document, a cable to New York in the name of Akashi but signed by Janvier at 9:35 p.m. GMT [11:35 p.m. Zagreb time] on July 10 which [states](#) that, "The Force Commander made the decision not to use CAS under the present circumstances because the fighting was by

⁴⁹ The [Red Arrow-8 \(or Hongljan-8\)](#) was a tube-launched, wire-guided anti-tank missile system, made in China and supplied by Pakistan that was capable of destroying a Serb T-55 tank. According to the NIOD report, no one in the enclave had been trained in firing the weapon and the instruction manuals were in English. Srebrenica defenders [attempted to use the missile against a Serb tank three times](#) on July 9, but they malfunctioned each time.

⁵⁰ Gharekhan also mistakenly informed the Council that the Bosniaks had fired on an UNPROFOR APC, based on inaccurate reporting from Zagreb. See Annan to Akashi, "[Informal Consultations of the Security Council](#)," July 10, 1995. For a US account of this meeting and the inaccurate information supplied by Gharekhan, see USUN cable 002720 of July 10 "[SC Discussion of Srebrenica](#)." Gharekhan also mistakenly told the Council that there had "[not yet been any requests for close air support](#)" from the Dutchbat commander.

infantry, thus making means other than air power preferable."⁵¹ Janvier adds that NATO aircraft will be airborne again at 6:00 a.m. the following morning and "ready to conduct a CAS mission at shorter notice."

The next paragraph says that Mr. Akashi was in Dubrovnik and did not manage to get back to Zagreb until approximately 11:30 p.m. In effect, Janvier is the voice of Zagreb at this point. Shashi, will you just address what New York knows and when does it know it?

SHASHI THAROOR: I myself was not in New York [during this crucial period]. I had gone to Norfolk for a NATO meeting. I then took a couple of days leave, from which I was recalled on July 11. This cable was not drafted by me. The [July 10 cable](#) is signed by Kofi Annan's deputy, Iqbal Riza. Annan himself was not in town. He had been in Geneva with Rupert Smith. It just so happened that this collapse occurred when a lot of key people were not present in their normal duty stations.

The [Janvier cable of July 10](#) reflects the fundamental questions that were in the minds of commanders and civilians about UNPROFOR and the use of force. In paragraph 12, he has an assessment that the Serbs just want to shrink the pocket, as Rupert mentioned earlier. There was really no assumption that the Serbs wanted to take Srebrenica. You can see, "free up substantial military resources, expand Serb control, etc., etc." Then he [goes on to say](#) that perhaps the Serbs want to demonstrate that the rapid reaction force will "not free us from the continuing dilemma over the use of force by UNPROFOR." What's interesting here, of course, is that the dilemma about the use of force was meant to be resolved by the insertion of the rapid reaction force. The idea was that we would use heavy artillery to get convoys through, which was the original purpose of UNPROFOR. I keep going back to that basic conundrum. Other kinds of force had to bear in mind operational realities: the vulnerability of UN forces, the mixing of our positions with the positions of others. At the same time there was concern that [the RRF] would mark a point of no return.

⁵¹ Akashi to Annan, "[Situation in Srebrenica](#)," UNPF-HQ, UNPROFOR Z-1128, July 10, 1995.

This is a cable that was signed by Janvier and written by him at that time. I think it fairly accurately reflects his thinking and the concerns and his state of mind at that time which fits in with what the rest of us knew. I think it is fair to say that all of us [senior UN officials], whether we were in Zagreb or in New York, were completely taken aback that the Serbs did not stop, that they just kept rolling into Srebrenica.

ZLATKO LAGUMDŽIJA: I hear you say that you were taken by surprise, that on July 10 you did not expect events to turn out the way they did. Did I understand that correctly?

SHASHI THAROOR: This was the judgment coming to us from the commanders.

JAMIE RUBIN: There was a great deal of skepticism within the United States [government] about different parts of the UN system skewing the record to a policy they preferred. You can find evidence of this in the documents. For example, there is a [document](#) dated July 13, 1995, from General Smith, which pretty much lays out what happened after the Serbs overran Srebrenica.⁵² Then you look at a cable to New York that same day from Mr. Akashi, which includes references that make it seem like the Bosnians are the problem. I recommend that you read [paragraph 7](#), [paragraph 8](#), and [paragraph 9](#), because this is the kind of stuff that made us doubt what was coming out from the political side of the United Nations.⁵³ Even in Srebrenica, there was a desire to cast blame on both sides, [avoiding the issues] of

⁵² See Rupert Smith, "[Aftermath of the Fall of Srebrenica](#)," July 13, 1995. General Smith noted that the Bosnian Serbs were "[cleansing](#)" Srebrenica, and that "men of military age" were "being separated from the refugees." It also stressed that the Dutchbat commander should not be left to deal with Mladić by himself, as he was "[talking from the jail](#)."

⁵³ Akashi to Annan, "[Situation in Srebrenica](#)," UNPF-HQ, Z-1154, July 13, 1995. A notation on the Akashi cable shows that it was sent at 1300 GMT (3 p.m. Zagreb time) on July 13, by which time there were already reports of Bosnian Serb mistreatment of Srebrenica residents. See, for example, UNMO report at 8 a.m. Zagreb time July 13 that they were investigating a "rumour" that Serbs had [killed several men](#). The cable plays down these reports, describing the allegations of mistreatment as inaccurate (paragraphs 7 and 8). Paragraph 9 notes that "draft-age" Bosnian men were excluded from the Bosnian Serb convoys, which were "under Dutchbat escort." The cable notes elsewhere that the fate of some 4,000 "males of draft age" awaiting "screening" by the Bosnian Serbs was of "[obvious concern to everyone here](#)."

the risk of slaughter of the Bosnian men and whether the Serbs soldiers were abusing the civilians.

TOM BLANTON: “There continued to be no reports of the Bosnian Serb Army mistreating any of the Bosnian civilians.” That’s the last line of paragraph eight.

JAMIE RUBIN: I don't want to hold you all up, but I recommend people read these paragraphs. The political part of the United Nations is telling the reader that reports of potential mass murder must be exaggerated because every time we check on some report, there's nothing there. These Bosnians are exaggerating, that's what the reader gets.

SHASHI THAROOR: This is what we conveyed to you in the Council because this is what we were getting from the field. This was our source of information.

JAMIE RUBIN: That may be, but it's not the “field” that General Smith is writing from. His assessment is completely the opposite. He is not raising doubts, or citing “exaggerated” reports from the Bosnian Government.

JORIS VOORHOEVE: I would like to step back a moment to the directions from the UN Secretary-General. He was the one who committed himself to close air support and the use of air power at the proper time. He made very clear commitments, giving the Netherlands a guarantee that there would be a decision to give close air support within two hours of a request from the local commander.⁵⁴ The Secretary-General is not here so we cannot question him but we have people here who talked

⁵⁴ According to the 2002 NIOD report, [page 896](#), UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali promised to respond to a Dutchbat request for air support “within two hours.” He repeated that promise in a January 21, 1994 [press conference](#) in The Hague, and a January 28, 1994 [letter to the Security Council](#).

to him often. There are several indications that he really did not want to use the capability that had been given to him by Security Council Resolution 836.⁵⁵

First, in the NIOD report, there is mention of a meeting between Madeleine Albright and Boutros-Ghali [in early 1994] where Madeleine Albright asks Boutros-Ghali why he is so fuzzy about the use of air power. His response, according to this report is, "I have to be fuzzy because I don't control it. The control of air power is in the hands of the British and the French commanders."⁵⁶

Second, there is a book by a German officer, General Manfred Eisele, who served in the UN Secretary-General's office. He remembers that after the disaster of Srebrenica the UN Secretary-General [Boutros-Ghali] met with you, Mr. Akashi, and UN Under-Secretary-General [Kofi Annan] on July 24, 1995, to discuss the question of who would have the authority to approve close air support. General Eisele says, "Boutros-Ghali called a meeting about close air support. He explained that he did not want to delegate the use of air power to anybody, except Mr. Akashi for a brief period. In general, he himself wanted to take the decisions."⁵⁷

General Eisele explained that, under NATO procedures, the local commander calls for close air support. That is quite different from the nine different steps that the United Nations, constructed in UNPROFOR with formal requests on paper, considerations, committees, advisers, going all the way up to the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General was irritated by the intervention of General Eisele and ended the conversation by saying that he would not delegate this authority to anybody else because "I do not trust anybody."

Except you, Mr. Akashi.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ UN Security Council Resolution 836 [requests the Secretary-General](#) to work with UN Member States and UNPROFOR to implement the use of air power if necessary in and around the safe areas to support UNPROFOR in the performance of its mandate.

⁵⁶ See 2002 NIOD report, [page 899](#).

⁵⁷ Manfred Eisele, *Die Vereinten Nationen und das Internationale Krisenmanagement* (Josef Knecht, Frankfurt, 2000), with a forward by Kofi Annan, pp. 170-171. See also a summary of Eisele's account in Voorhoeve, *Veilige Gebieden*, pp. 177-9.

⁵⁸ According to Eisele, Boutros-Ghali forbade him to speak about air support with NATO officials without another high ranking UN civil servant present. (Eisele, *ibid*, p.179.) As discussed in Session 2, Boutros-Ghali agreed to turn over his authority to initiate air strikes on July 25, 1995 (the day after his meeting with Eisele) 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.

YASUSHI AKASHI: I think there again seems to be a confusion between close air support and air strikes. Close air support is clearly an act of self-defense. We brooked no delay when the lives of our soldiers or civilians were in imminent danger from tanks or guns aimed at them. We had simplified procedures in these cases, provided that Rupert Smith's forward air controllers could identify the guns aimed at our personnel. I don't think that any unnecessary delays were permitted in such instances.

The first such request came on March 12, 1994 when General Cot was the Force Commander. We pondered over the question for several hours in my office, then I approved close air support. But by that time the Serb tanks in the Bihać area had fled into the forest.⁵⁹ Therefore, close air support was not activated on that occasion. A few days later, in the second part of March, we received another request for close air support from General de La Presle, who had taken over from General Cot. I ascertained that de La Presle's approach, his methodology, his way of evaluating the dangers and appropriate responses were identical to mine. In this case, I gave my approval, without any hesitation, after a 15-minute phone discussion. Other subsequent requests for close air support were dealt with almost immediately.

Air strikes are a quite different animal, however. As I said previously, air strikes are a political act. There were three different categories of air strikes. The first category is the destruction of purely military targets. The second category covers targets that are necessary for military objectives but rather indirect. After exhausting your target lists in the first and second categories, you get to a third category, the destruction of infrastructure necessary for the economy of the political entity concerned. In August 1995, there were almost two weeks of consecutive air strikes. By that time, I no longer had the UN key.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ According to the [NIOD report](#), on March 12, 1994, NATO aircraft "circulated uselessly over the Serb targets for hours" waiting for permission to attack. Akashi later ordered a streamlining of authorization procedures.

⁶⁰ Boutros-Ghali consulted with NATO secretary-general Willy Claes, following a July 25 North Atlantic Council session, according to a [press statement](#) issued by Claes. He transferred his authority to approve

The Secretary-General was talking about [what would happen] if targets in the first and second categories were exhausted. He wondered whether he should present this fact to the Security Council. It is a grave decision to go to the third category, which means destruction of the economy of a country. There was a quite different mentality between air strikes and close air support, which was aimed at saving lives that were in direct and immediate danger. I regret that these two things are confused in some of these documents. They were confused even by those of us who should know better.

KEES MATTHIJSSSEN: I wanted to provide some background to the [Akashi cable dated July 11](#) [describing the attack by NATO aircraft on two Serb tanks threatening the Dutchbat blocking position south of Srebrenica town.]⁶¹ A Dutch forward air controller called in an attack on a Bosnian Serb tank. The attack [took place at 2:40 p.m.](#)

The tank was destroyed. Soon after that, a message arrived from the Bosnian Serbs through the northern entrance to the enclave, Observation Post Papa. It came to me on the radio: "Last warning to UNPROFOR Srebrenica. In case of another airstrike, we will shoot all officers and soldiers. If that is not sufficient, we will burn down UNPROFOR Command Potočari and all your observation posts." Signed BSA Command. I took note of this, delivered the message to Colonel Karremans. His office was about sixty meters from mine, also in the Potočari HQ. I then went back to my own command post.⁶² This is not mentioned in the report of Mr. Akashi sent to New York [[at 4:42 p.m.](#)]. Here it says, a second pass was canceled "[due to obscuration over the target area.](#)" I wonder what went wrong between what happened in the field and somewhere in Zagreb.

air strikes to his military commanders later the same day, bypassing Akashi. General Janvier was on holiday in France at the time of the second Markale marketplace shelling in Sarajevo on August 28. The decision to launch Operation Deliberate Force was taken by Bosnia commander Rupert Smith, in consultation with NATO CincSouth Admiral Leighton Smith. See Rick Atkinson, "[Air Assault Set Stage for Broader Role.](#)" Washington Post, November 15, 1995.

⁶¹ Akashi to Annan, "[Situation in Srebrenica.](#)" UNPF-HQ, Z-1136, July 11, 1995.

⁶² As commander of Charlie Company, Matthijssen was responsible for the northern portion of the Safe Area, including the OP Papa checkpoint.

MICHAEL DOBBS: Are you saying that the second wave was cancelled because of this threat?

KEES MATTHIJSSSEN: Yes, I think so. The threat came in, I handed over the message to Colonel Karremans. I don't exactly know what happened afterward since I went back to my own command post. This was another point when things might have changed. Instead close air support was stopped. A few hours after that, we had 20,000 people in our compound.

MICHAEL DOBBS: What time was that ultimatum delivered?

KEES MATTHIJSSSEN: The report mentions NATO aircraft attacking at 2.40 p.m. I did not have the exact time when the Bosnian Serb ultimatum arrived in my notes. I think about 30 minutes later.⁶³

TOM BLANTON: In the [third paragraph](#), it mentions local Serb commanders have threatened to kill Netherlands personnel and shell various villages if there are further air attacks. That's basically the threat.

KEES MATTHIJSSSEN: Yes, that's basically the threat.

TOM BLANTON: The [next paragraph](#) says: "Admiral Smith has agreed to our request, proposed by the Netherlands Minister of Defense to the SRSG, to suspend air presence and close air support missions over Srebrenica" because you were now "intermixed" with the Serbs. That is later in the afternoon, after this threat, is that correct?

KEES MATTHIJSSSEN: Yes, I think so.

⁶³ According to the 2002 NIOD report, [page 1727](#), the threat to kill the Dutch hostages and shell the compound arrived at 1550 hours.



Kees Matthijssen, R, with Thom Karremans

MICHAEL DOBBS: Could Colonel Karremans clarify what you did with that threat? Did you immediately pass it on?

THOM KARREMANS: That was very simple. I had two phones, one on this ear and one on the other. [*Points to his ears*] That was down and that was up. I was in constant contact with Colonel Brantz [Sector NE in Tuzla]. When I got the message from Kees Matthijssen, I immediately sent it through the communications systems to both Colonel Brantz and to BH Command. That went very, very quick. There was a real threat, not for the Dutchbat soldiers who had already been taken hostage but from the mortar platoons that Mladić had deployed between Bratunac and Potočari. He threatened to use them to shell the compound and the city of Srebrenica. We had shelters, but the population of 40,000 didn't have shelters. That is why we reacted so quickly.

MICHAEL DOBBS: Right. You say in a July 12 report that you are in the "[sitting duck position](#)."⁶⁴ Did you feel that that you were in the "sitting duck position" on July 11?

THOM KARREMANS: I had been in the "sitting duck position" since June when I started reporting on the deteriorating situation in the enclave.⁶⁵ This had happened earlier, but in the six days of war [July 6-12], the battalion really was a sitting duck.

TOM BLANTON: By July 12, you are saying, "[I am not able to defend these people](#). I am not able to defend my own battalion," etc.

THOM KARREMANS: If you don't have the means to defend, you can protect, but you cannot defend. For defense operations, you need other assistance. I did not have that. I do not need to explain here that you cannot stop a tank with a rifle. If you do not have anti-tank weapons or rockets, but only a platoon of soldiers with rifles, that is impossible.⁶⁶

TOM BLANTON: General Nicolai.

KEES NICOLAI: I have a few remarks on close air support. First of all, on the evening of July 10, after General Janvier refused to authorize close air support, a misunderstanding arose about what would happen the following day. The air force operations center was talking with Colonel Karremans asking for an update on targets around the enclave. That conversation gave him the impression that these targets would be attacked the next morning. General Janvier had promised that new aircraft would be [airborne in the vicinity](#) of the enclave at 6:00 in the morning on

⁶⁴ Karremans to Janvier, "[Meetings with Gen Mladić on 11 and 12 July 1995](#)," Dutchbat Srebrenica, 206, July 12, 1995.

⁶⁵ Karremans to Commander BH Command, "[Deteriorating situation in Srebrenica](#)," Dutchbat Srebrenica, TK9588, June 4, 1995.

⁶⁶ According to the NIOD report, Dutchbat III [possessed three "usable" anti-armor TOW missiles](#) in July 1995. However, the Netherlands defense ministry had stated that the missiles were "[not to be used under any circumstances](#)," due to their lack of reliability.

July 11, which was true.⁶⁷ The misunderstanding was that Colonel Karremans thought that the attack would start at 6:00 a.m. while those of us in Sarajevo and Zagreb were waiting for a new request for close air support.

As a result, nothing happened. The airplanes were circling around. Dutchbat was under shelter waiting for an attack. Nothing happened until about 10:00 or 10:15 in the morning when the misunderstanding was resolved. Sarajevo received a new request, which we passed immediately to Zagreb. At 12:20 p.m. the decision was made in Zagreb to approve close air support but with one big surprise.⁶⁸ There was a [severe restriction](#): close air support was only authorized “against Serb targets that may attack the Netherlands blocking position south of Srebrenica” or “heavy weapons identified to be shelling UN positions.”⁶⁹ That's something else than directly attacking known Bosnian Serb positions around the enclave. It was such a severe restriction that we in Sarajevo had serious doubts about the effect of this form of close air support.

JAMIE RUBIN: It was no longer “massive,” it was now small.

KEES NICOLAI: Absolutely. “No longer massive” is an understatement, it was absolutely far too little.

JAMIE RUBIN: Can you explain that point how it went from forty to two again?

DAVID ROHDE: Colonel Brantz used the term “[massive](#)” on the night of July 10, is that correct? Was he confused? Was he wrong?

⁶⁷ See Akashi to Annan, “Situation in Srebrenica,” Z-1128, July 10, 1995, [paragraph 4](#).

⁶⁸ According to the 1999 UN report, [further delays ensued](#) because a staff officer in Sector NE decided that the paperwork for a CAS request was erroneous or incomplete. The request was forwarded to Zagreb from Sarajevo around 1045. Akashi authorized the CAS request at 1220.

⁶⁹ See Akashi to Annan, “Situation in Srebrenica,” [Z-1130](#), July 11, 1995. Dutchbat had previously supplied detailed information on known Bosnian Serb firing positions around the enclave. See, for example, [UNMO report](#), July 8.

KEES NICOLAI: The only thing he knew at that moment was the number of planes that would be used during the action. He could not know how many airplanes should be used for the attack. There are also planes for refueling, protecting the surrounding area, and so on. When there are about forty airplanes promised, you may expect that more than two at a time will be used for an attack.

DAVID ROHDE: There was a report that the wrong form was used on the morning of July 11 and was initially rejected by some officer?

THOM KARREMANS: That was earlier, that was a couple of days before, not on the 11.⁷⁰

KEES NICOLAI: I have an additional remark about the Bosnian Serb warning mentioned by Kees Matthijssen. During the afternoon of July 11, we received several warnings in Sarajevo. One was the warning that Kees Matthijssen received, the threat by the Bosnian Serbs to shell the civil population in the Potočari compound. We received a second warning from [Mladić assistant], General Milan Gvero, who phoned us at about 4:00 in the afternoon. By this time, the town of Srebrenica had fallen, and the population was without cover, in and around Potočari. We concluded that there was no use continuing the air attacks. After the second wave, we decided that it had to stop. They came to the same conclusion in Zagreb. NATO was ordered to stop the air attacks between 4:00 and 5:00 in the afternoon.

JORIS VOORHOEVE: A point of precision here. The second wave returned to the air base at exactly 4:00 p.m., according to a NATO document that I saw.⁷¹ The question

⁷⁰ According to the NIOD report, the operations officer in Sector NE (Pakistani Lieutenant Colonel Rachid Sadiki) initially [rejected the Dutchbat request for CAS](#) on the morning of July 11 because it was submitted on the wrong form. A 2002 CIA study reported that the Dutch had filed a request for air strikes, rather than close air support. See *Balkan Battlegrounds: A military history of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990-1995*, volume 1, [page 338](#). In the words of the CA study, “at this point, the saga of NATO air support crossed the line from the confused to the unreal.”

⁷¹ According to the NIOD report, the first “wave” included two [Dutch F-16s](#) that dropped bombs at 2:42 p.m. The “second wave” included two [US F-16s](#).

was, will there be a third wave? “Wave” is a big word for four planes: Two American and two Dutch. The American planes in the second wave had reported that they could not identify a useful object because of the way that everything was mixed together. The Dutch F-16 pilot was a woman. She dropped a bomb on a Serb tank and destroyed it.⁷² That made Mladić very angry. He made the call that came into your OP. It went to Sarajevo and Zagreb. We were also called in The Hague.

Prime Minister Kok, Foreign Minister Van Mierlo, and I were sitting in the crisis center. According to our records, we called at 4:45 p.m., i.e. about ten minutes after you had given instructions not to come in with a third air wave because of the risk of enormous numbers of casualties among the civilian population and Dutchbat. When we had gotten this message at 4:45 p.m., we looked at each other. We did not need to exchange any words. I picked up the phone and called Mr. Akashi. I said “This doesn't make sense any more to have additional air action. [Addresses Akashi] I remember you said, “Stay on the phone for a moment,” you talked to General Janvier.⁷³ He agreed and you agreed that it should be canceled, but actually it had been cancelled already earlier by BH-Command in Sarajevo. Later on, according to the Dutch investigation, General Janvier claimed he had stopped it much earlier. So there was some confusion over who had actually stopped it.

CARL BILDT: I had a reason, in a different context, to look at the effectiveness of these air strikes. I will just go through the details, from a CIA document, of the strike package that eventually happened at 2:30 p.m. on July 11 but could have happened the day before. There were 18 aircraft. That sounds quite a lot, but many of them were not strike aircraft. The package included two electronic warfare planes, EF-111s, two EA-6B Prowlers, used for jamming enemy radar systems, four fighter

⁷² See Michael Dobbs, [“How a ‘dumb blonde’ took on the Serbs,”](#) Foreign Policy, April 2, 2012. The pilot was Lt Manja Blok. When Mladić met with Gen. Smith in Belgrade on July 16, he complained angrily that one of the bombs narrowly missed him. [“What a pity,”](#) replied Smith.

⁷³ According to an Akashi cable to New York, which was sent at 1642 GMT (6:42 p.m. Netherlands/Bosnia time) on July 11, the request for suspension of close air support was made by the [“Netherlands minister of defense”](#) and approved by Admiral Leighton Smith.

escorts, two AWACs [communications aircraft], two tankers, and six strike aircraft.⁷⁴ Two of those were the Dutch F-16s. Each of them dropped one iron bomb on the same tank.

The second package coming in was two US F-16s. They could not find the targets, they were flying around, and visibility was poor. They gave up after failing to locate anything. Two other American F-16s then took up the search hunting for Serb artillery pieces that had been targeting the OPs. I am reading off this CIA document. They too failed to find any suitable targets and took off after a Serb soldier launched an anti-aircraft missile from his soldier fired SA-7 launcher. The CIA document ends by saying that, militarily speaking, the practical effect of the NATO air strikes was “approximately zero.”⁷⁵ There were eighteen aircraft involved but the military effect was approximately zero.

JORIS VOORHOEVE: It was too little, too late.

TOM BLANTON: Way too little.

CARL BILDT: A critical question, of course, is what would have happened if they had been sent in twenty-four hours earlier. Militarily, the package would have been the same, as I understand.

DAVID ROHDE: Were there forward air controllers talking to the American F-16s?

THOM KARREMANS: Yes, there were. By coincidence, a couple of years ago, I spoke with one of the two Dutch pilots in my home. He explained to me what was happening in the air, as Mr. Bildt has described. It's an umbrella with airplanes. As Mr. Akashi has also said, close air support and air strikes are two different worlds. The pilot told me that they had been waiting for six days in the air. Waiting in the air

⁷⁴ See CIA 2002 study, *Balkan Battlegrounds: A military history of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990-1995*, Volume 1, [page 339](#).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* [page 339](#).

for the mission from the forward air controllers. We referred to the air controllers by the codename "Windmill."⁷⁶ They had contact with everybody in the air.

DAVID ROHDE: Were there four aircraft that actually arrived over Srebrenica or six? The Dutch dropped their bombs but the four Americans did not communicate with your forward air controllers. Why did they not drop their bombs?

THOM KARREMANS: I don't know.

DAVID ROHDE: Were the Dutch communicating with the four American planes?

THOM KARREMANS: Yes, they were supposed to be.

DAVID ROHDE: But they were unable to find targets together somehow?

THOM KARREMANS: There were enough targets, I must say. We sent in every day an updated target list.

DAVID ROHDE: Were the British forward air controllers speaking to the American planes on July 11?

THOM KARREMANS: No.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ The flight time from Vicenza in Italy (headquarters of the Fifth Allied Tactical Air Force) to Srebrenica is 25 minutes. According to the NIOD report, Karremans filed the correct request for Close Air Support at 10:00 a.m. on July for the planes to arrive on station. The request arrived in Sarajevo (via Sector NE in Tuzla) at 10:50 a.m. The first bomb fell at 2:42 p.m., "[nearly four hours](#)" later. The strike was called in by Windmill 02 (Sergeant Voskamp) and Windmill 03 (Sergeant Erkelens), who were stationed near the Bravo Three blocking position on the southern approach to Srebrenica. See also Rohde, *Endgame*, 158-160. (SEE MAP).

⁷⁷ According to the NIOD report, the British JCOs [tried to guide the American F-16s](#) to Serb tanks and artillery positions, but they were unable to locate the targets and flew away.

MICHAEL DOBBS: We have not yet talked about the “blocking positions” established by Dutchbat as a pretext for triggering close air support. What happened to these blocking positions?

TOM BLANTON: They were a trip wire, no?

THOM KARREMANS: Yes, they were a trip wire. There were two APCs, armored personnel carriers [at positions Bravo One and Bravo Three], with soldiers. When a tank is shooting at an APC you can do one of two things: stay there or leave. They left because the tanks were already shooting and they did not have an opportunity to hide.

JAMIE RUBIN: On the targeting question, did I understand you to say that the reason they could not find the targets was that the criteria had changed from a fixed target to something that was harder to find? Where was the criteria changed. Zagreb? Sarajevo?

KEES NICOLAI: In my opinion, it should have been not difficult to find the targets. They were at the same place as the day before [but the restrictions imposed by Zagreb](#) meant that they were not allowed to attack these positions unless they were observed firing on UNPROFOR.

JAMIE RUBIN: That's why they don't find targets. They have to be firing at the very moment you are there.

KEES NICOLAI: Yes, that's quite impossible.

DAVID ROHDE: To be fair to the Dutch, I interviewed Lieutenant Vincent Egbers, who was in charge of the blocking positions. They formed the blocking position, they

were fired on, and they sat there as sitting ducks.⁷⁸ This all happened on July 10. It was meant to be a trip wire, as Tom said. Everything happens as planned but then General Janvier...

TOM BLANTON: The tripwire is disconnected at the other end.

DAVID ROHDE: Yes, they are basically unarmed and sitting there. They get shelled from Serb positions. The Dutch risk their lives, but when the request goes up later on July 10, Janvier doesn't approve it even though the blocking position has worked as a tripwire.⁷⁹

MUHAMED DURAKOVIĆ: When it comes to targeting, I completely agree with you. If you remember, the vehicles that were moving from OP Echo towards Srebrenica were completely visible once they entered the area of Bibići, which is a plateau above Srebrenica. It's actually called *boj* ["war" in Bosnian] because throughout history it was used as a plateau to attack the medieval town of Srebrenica. *Boj* in Bosnian is the derivative for "fight." When the Serbs came to Bibići and were on that plateau they were themselves sitting ducks had anyone wanted to attack them. Obviously that did not happen. The Serb mortar fire came from a village called Jasenova, which is near the two red arrows pointing Bućje and Pusmulići, there is a village called Jasenova. I know those mortar positions were there because I passed by them two weeks after the fall of Srebrenica on my way to Žepa with the survivors that I took on with me from Zvornik. You could still see the positions of the mortars. They were very clearly visible to anyone at any point.

TOM BLANTON: And were never attacked. Peter?

⁷⁸ For establishment of the blocking positions on the morning of July 10, see Rohde, *Endgame*, 97-98, and 110-111.

⁷⁹ See NIOD report, [page 1686](#).

PETER GALBRAITH: I was trying to think about July 10. As I recall, it was actually the opening of the Dubrovnik festival that was going on that day. What it suggests to me is that there was a real lack of urgency about what actually was going on in Srebrenica at least at the top of UNPROFOR. It was a very lengthy, very lovely cultural program. This was not pre-arranged, but I wonder if there was a lack of a sense of urgency in UNPROFOR [in Zagreb]. There is also the question of what people anticipated might happen if enclave was in fact the taken over. There was already the experience of what had happened in 1992 with the ethnic cleansing. Shortly before this, a report had come out based on an investigation that was led by Norwegian war crimes investigator Hanne Sophie Greve on the practice of ethnic cleansing.⁸⁰ I wondered if within the UN, at least within the analytical unit, there was a view of what might happen if the enclave was run over.

TOM BLANTON: Are you posing that question to your next door neighbor [UN official Tone Bringa, who later married Ambassador Galbraith]?

PETER GALBRAITH: I am posing that to my neighbor. [*Laughter*] I actually have not asked her this question. My question was about what was expected, what was anticipated going in?

TONE BRINGA: I can't speak on behalf of the Analysis and Assessment Unit.⁸¹ My role there was a bit different since I had lived in Bosnia and am an anthropologist. Probably my sense of what was happening on the ground was different. Starting in January 1995, I went to these morning meetings in Zagreb, with Janvier talking about all the convoys planned for Srebrenica but not getting through. That was every morning for a long time. Step by step, all these events gradually added up to the Bosnian Serb Army probing to see whether there would be a reaction. For me, that pattern was quite clear.

⁸⁰ Boutros-Ghali, "[Letter Dated 24 May 1994 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council](#)," S/1994/674, May 27, 1994.

⁸¹ Bringa was a political analyst in the Analysis and Assessment Unit at UNPF in Zagreb, reporting to Special Representative Akashi.

Then you had the hostage-taking which, of course, was quite shocking. Both Zagreb and BH HQ were very worried about it. Then you had the attack on the Dutchbat observation post [Echo on July 3]. All these things added up. For me it was clear that the Serbs were moving and were going to take Srebrenica. There was also the report by the commission of experts on ethnic cleansing, which came out on May 1994. It showed very clearly the systematic, planned, and gradual way the Bosnian Serbs took over Prijedor and other areas which were then “cleansed” of their populations.⁸²

I wrote an article where I recount my experiences in Tuzla [after the fall of Srebrenica] which was titled “averted gaze.” There was a reason for that title.⁸³

JOHN SHATTUCK: What we are seeing documented [during our discussions at this conference] in a very powerful, real way is the bankruptcy of UN peacekeeping and peacekeeping in general. I don't point the finger at the UN. I think there was a failure of international will which, as I said yesterday, has its roots in other conflicts, particularly Rwanda. There are policy documents that reflect this. In the US Government we had something called Presidential Decision Directive 25, which was a straitjacket on the criteria for US participation in international peacekeeping.⁸⁴ PDD 25 came into effect in May 1994 during the catastrophic Rwanda events but that was a coincidence. The PDD really had its roots in Somalia. This isn't just a US story, it is a much larger story.

We also see the beginnings of an understanding about the “responsibility to protect,” which becomes a UN doctrine some years later under Kofi Annan.⁸⁵ It emerges out of the very detailed circumstances that we are talking about here today

⁸² See “Final report of the commission of experts,” or Prijedor report, May 27, 1994, [S/1994/674](#), particularly [paragraph 182](#), which references “crimes against humanity”.

⁸³ Bringa's piece entitled “Averted Gaze: Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992-1995,” can be found in Alexander Laban Hinton, *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide*, Chapter 8, 194-226.

⁸⁴ [“U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations,”](#) The White House, PDD-25, May 3, 1994.

⁸⁵ The Responsibility to Protect, or R2P, has three principles that refer to the obligation of states towards their populations and toward all populations at risk of genocide and other mass atrocities. Every state has the responsibility to protect its populations from mass atrocity crimes, the wider international community also has the responsibility to “encourage and assist” states in meeting this responsibility. Finally, if a state is failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action.

and the heroic efforts of those who were actually on the ground trying to implement a failed peacekeeping operation, particularly those in the Dutchbat. It became very clear to the Bosnian Serbs that this was a failed policy, not just with respect to Srebrenica or even Bosnia. Their probing operations pushed into the very soft material that we call UN peacekeeping.

Obviously there were individuals who were making decisions within this framework. We have talked a good deal about General Janvier who is not here. I have never met General Janvier, but he seems to me to be a classic representative of this failed peacekeeping approach. He tries very hard to maintain the neutrality of the UN, but that is impossible to do in the face of what's happening on the ground.

My own experience was in the world of trying to gather information on what was actually happening on the ground. It was a world that policymakers generally didn't want to hear about until after Srebrenica. They didn't want us to be gathering the kind of information that Tone has talked about. People didn't want to hear this because it was not supportive of a UN peacekeeping operation based on the notion of complete neutrality.

JORIS VOORHOEVE: I think there was a collective underestimation of the consequences of preserving neutrality in the vicinity of serious crimes. To give you an example, on July 11, in Sector North-East of UNPROFOR, the Bangladeshi officers serving there had gone to the mosque to pray. The Norwegian General [Hagrup Haukland] who was in command there was on holiday. That left this Dutch officer, Colonel Brantz, in charge by himself. That is also an indication of what happened in Sarajevo. Some officers remained at their posts, but others did not display a great sense of urgency.

TOM BLANTON: We are at the end of our session. We will have the whole afternoon session to draw many lessons. Thank you.

[END OF SESSION 3]