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NEWS BRIEFING

Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Public Affairs)



DoD News Briefing

Monday, April 5, 1999 - 3:15 p.m.

Presenter: Mr. Kenneth H. Bacon, ASD PA

Also Participating; Captain Steve Pietropaoli

Mr. Bacon: Welcome. Good afternoon.

You probably just heard the President announce that Macedonia has requested 600,000 humanitarian daily rations, those yellow packages that we've had here in the past. We will begin to fold those into our plan to deliver food and supplies to the refugees in Albania and Macedonia. We are well on the way to the delivery of the 500,000 daily rations, humanitarian daily rations that I mentioned over the weekend, to the refugees in Albania, and the flow continues in about a plane a day to Italy, and then the packages are broken down and carried by C-130s into Tirane.

On the operational side, as you heard this morning from Air Commodore Wilby at NATO, the weather is improving. As a result, last night we were able to hit a substantially larger number of targets than the day before, and that in turn larger than the day before that.

Because of the improving weather, I anticipate that we will be able to give you a briefing in the next day or two that will include a fair amount of imagery that will bring you up to date on some of the activity that's taking place and some of the damage that's been inflicted on Yugoslavian forces and Yugoslavian infrastructure over the last two weeks.

With that, I'll take your questions.

Q: Ken, have the Apaches started to move? And if not, how are they going to move? And with the good weather, have you started using A-10s yet?

Mr. Bacon: First of all, the Apaches have not yet started to move. How they move is still being worked out. They could fly down themselves. They could be carried in other planes, and that will all be worked out as we work out other details, such as the precise placement. I had said they could go to Tirane. It turns out they could go someplace else now. We may decide not to put them in Tirane in order not to clog up that airport for a period time while humanitarian aid is coming in.

Q: Two quick things. By somewhere else, do you mean somewhere else in Albania?

Mr. Bacon: All in Albania. That's where they're going. Albania.

Q: Have you started using the A-10s yet?

Mr. Bacon: Well, as I've explained many times, we are using the A-10s regularly in an observation capacity. I'm not aware yet that they have dropped any ordnance. They have been in strike packages, but I don't know whether they've stuck anything yet.

Q: Does the Defense Department through its technical means have evidence to support these allegations of atrocities? And if not, why not? If so, why -- can you share it with us?

Mr. Bacon: I have just seen for the first time today some imagery that does show, that does indicate that atrocities are taking place, but I want to be very clear what I saw. It was imagery similar to what was shown at NATO this morning. That was of armored personnel carriers and tanks surrounding, or appearing to herd groups of people into a smaller area. That's what we have been able to see through imagery, and only recently have we been able to see that because of the break in the weather.

Most of our information comes from the accounts we're getting from refugees coming out of Kosovo. We've been getting those accounts, just as your colleagues have, at the border as people have come out. But we do now have pictures that tend to show units herding groups of people.

We have attacked some of those units. On night nine, B-1 bombers attacked the 125th Motorized Unit in a staging area. That unit is one that has been surrounding towns and driving people out and then laying waste to the towns.

Q: Are you saying then that those images you just described are the first and only images that you have? And secondly, can you give us...

Mr. Bacon: Well, that's, I assume, one of the images you will see when Admiral Wilson or somebody comes down in the next day or two to lay out some of the imagery we've been collecting. As I said, I've just seen these images for the first time today. There has been a break in the weather, which is allowing us to get better pictures than we've been able to...

Q: ...today? This has been something we've talked about...

Mr. Bacon: It is something we have talked about. I'll raise the question. But I would not hold up a lot of hope because the declassification process usually takes longer than a day.

Q: Will any of these images or information help answer the basic question of what's happened to all the men?

Mr. Bacon: I don't think pictures can resolve that question. These pictures are not precise enough to answer that question. I think the best way we're going to learn that is through talking to refugees as they come across the border.

Q: The relocation of refugees, even temporarily, is GITMO to receive up to 20,000? And if so, how will they get there? Be flown in or taken by ship?

Mr. Bacon: I assume they will be flown in. I hadn't really thought of the shipping option.

You will recall that at one time there were as many as 45,000 refugees at Guantanamo Bay, so I think we'll be able to accommodate 20,000. As I understand it, there are facilities there now for about 10,000, and we can augment those facilities as new people come in.

Q: The reason I mention a ship, at one point we actually rented cruise ships, if I remember, to bring refugees in. I just thought it was a possible option here.

Mr. Bacon: It might be an option. I'm not aware that that's under discussion.

Q: Has that been decided on, Ken? Has it been decided that they're going to GITMO?

Mr. Bacon: There are two possibilities, Guantanamo Bay and Guam. I think the more likely possibility is Guantanamo Bay.

Q: Do you have other means of confirming atrocities besides imagery and besides talking with refugees? And if you do have those, have you confirmed any independently?

Mr. Bacon: I don't think there's any doubt that atrocities are taking place. But our main way of confirming atrocities is by talking to people. Until we can get forensic teams in on the ground to pursue reports of the atrocities, we will not be able to look for remains of people who have been shot or burned or in some other way brutalized. So we don't have the ability that forensic teams have had in Bosnia, for instance, where they've gone to alleged sites of massacres and been able to dig in the ground and find evidence. Eventually we will have that, and, of course, we will pursue that, but right now we are conducting through the State Department fairly extensive interviews with refugees as they come across the border to get their accounts of what happened.

Q: Can you give us a sense of KLA military resistance?

Mr. Bacon: It continues. It continues. It's not as strong as it was a week ago. Obviously the attacks are having an impact on the KLA, but there are pockets of resistance, particularly in the west. The problem with the KLA is that one, they're facing a much stronger force; and two, they're lightly armed, and they don't really have the armaments they need to deal with a sustained armor attack, and that's what they're getting right now.

There are also reports that the KLA is continuing to recruit members, but a lot of that recruiting is taking place outside of Kosovo. The KLA as an organization remains alive and in fact is probably expanding. Some of the KLA people remain in Kosovo, but they have obviously fled to the hills. But there is still some resistance taking place.

Q: There's been some talk that what units remain would sort of pull back into Albania. And there are some intelligence reports that indicate that within five days Milosevic will all but have defeated the KLA.

Mr. Bacon: Well, Milosevic predicted that he would be done long before now, so I think that despite the magnitude of brutality, it is taking him longer than he anticipated. I suspect that Milosevic is probably trying to position himself to declare his job done and then announce that he's accepting a peace. But that would be a rather cruel and irrational result to demand peace after emptying a country and killing as many people as he has.

Q: You just said that's what he's about to -- so with...

Mr. Bacon: I think that is clearly a possibility that we have to prepare ourselves for, that after driving people out of the country, creating a crisis in the area, a refugee crisis in the area, destabilizing surrounding countries and killing perhaps thousands of people, that he will say, "now I'm ready to accept a peace."

But I want to point out that we have said consistently that he has to stop the fighting, he has to withdraw his troops, so they don't remain there holding this empty territory. He has to accept a NATO-led international peacekeeping force. He has to accept democratic self-government. And he has to allow the refugees to return. And the refugees will only return if there is an internationally-led peacekeeping force to protect them.

Q: Is there any new information on the three captured American soldiers? For example, have they had any communication with their families? And what's the prospect of the International Red Cross getting to see them?

Mr. Bacon: I'm not aware that they have communicated with their families. We don't believe they've communicated with their families, and I don't believe that the ICRC has been in contact with them, but I'll double check on that.

Q: Has the U.S. Government had any direct communication on their condition?

Mr. Bacon: I am not aware that we have. We are trying to communicate through Sweden, which is our representative power, and the Yugoslavs have refused to deal with Sweden. The encouraging thing is that after a couple of days the Yugoslav government has announced that they will be treated as POWs, given the rights they're entitled to under the Geneva Convention, and that they will be released at the end of the hostilities, and that they will not be tried. So that's encouraging.

What's discouraging is that they were captured in the first place -- we believe abducted, although the investigation is still ongoing -- and that they remain in captivity.

Q: Can you update us on the movement of Serb or Yugoslavian troops into Kosovo toward the Albanian border? And isn't it becoming more obvious that by the time the Apaches and the rocket launchers get to, in place in Albania, that it will all be over? There won't hardly be any people left in Kosovo to go save?

Mr. Bacon: I think it's clear that cleaning out Kosovo is not the end of what's going on now. It's the return of refugees to their homes in Kosovo and the rebuilding of Kosovo and the attainment of a safe, secure, self-governing environment that is the end state we're working towards now.

We have said from the very beginning -- President Clinton said that there were three goals. The first goal was to

show the strength and unity of NATO; the second goal was to deter the type of attacks against Kosovars that have occurred; and failing that, to so degrade and diminish the Yugoslav forces that we would be able to begin to return refugees and achieve a solution to this problem, and that remains our goal.

Q: Could you also answer the part about the movement of Serbs. How many are in Kosovo and have you seen more movement toward the Albanian border?

Mr. Bacon: There generally has not been a significant increase of Serb troops in Kosovo over the last couple of weeks. There were about a maximum of 20,000 on March 24th. That may have increased by a couple of thousand. There still remain almost as many troops outside the border of Kosovo, that is north of Kosovo, as there are in Kosovo. So there has not been a massive movement of troops into Kosovo from outside. However, the troops within Kosovo have gradually been sweeping south and west, and they started their ethnic cleansing campaign in the north, and they've been moving down and sweeping toward Albania. You can tell that by looking at the flow of refugees and the way they're coming out.

Q: Can you give us your best sense today of the timing of the ATACMs, the Apaches, and the brigade that would protect them? Do you still believe it is going to be seven to ten days until all of that is...

Mr. Bacon: I don't have any new information on that, so I don't have any reason to revise it.

To the extent that -- if we decide, if it's decided for sure that they aren't going to go to Tirane but they're going to go to a more remote and less developed site than Tirane, it may take longer to establish a support base to prepare the site for them to get there. So it could be longer than seven to ten days, but I don't have any official decision on that, and, therefore, no way to give you a firm estimate.

Q: Should that official decision from both NATO and the U.S. come, let's say it's two weeks, it is still the thought of the Defense Department that that is worth doing, even though Milosevic would essentially be finished with whatever he's doing?

Mr. Bacon: Milosevic may think he's finished. We will not be finished.

Q: How firm is that 20,000 refugee ceiling? And would there be any sort of special criteria to select the refugees that would go, presumably to Guantanamo?

Mr. Bacon: Those are good questions, but not for the Defense Department.

Q: Going back to the pictures, could you describe them a little bit more? Were these -- how large the groups of people were, whether this was occurring in urban areas or rural areas, or any other details that you might have?

Mr. Bacon: The one I saw involves a town. It has a group of people; it's hard to say how big the group is. It has a bunch of cars in it. Then you can see some APCs and tanks around the sideline, sort of in a semicircle enclosing them. Rather than describe this, we'll try to get this picture released in the next day or two, if not sooner, so you can look at it yourselves.

But I must say that looking at this picture isn't going to prove anything. What it does prove is that people are being herded or contained by military units. You can't see what the military units are doing.

Q: Is there more than one of these scenes, or just one?

Mr. Bacon: I've just seen one. But I believe I recall that Air Commodore Wilby showed something similar to this this morning at NATO.

Q: Any update on the ROOSEVELT? How soon it will be in theater and how soon operations would begin.

Mr. Bacon: The ROOSEVELT is basically there doing carrier qualifications and should be ready for operations, I believe, tomorrow. I think she should be ready as soon as tomorrow to participate in operations.

Q: Second, can you tell us any indications you've seen of the impact that the campaign has had thus far on operations in Kosovo? Units in the barracks, units hiding, units not moving, units out of fuel?

Mr. Bacon: Certainly the units have become much more dispersed. We have early indications of some supply problems, but nothing that has stopped a tank in its tracks at this stage.

Clearly the impact on infrastructure has been acute, but it will take awhile for the destruction of fuel depots and lines of communication such as roads and bridges to choke off the forces down in Kosovo. As I said last week, we have some indications that recruiting is becoming more difficult. That is they're trying to mobilize reserves and they're encountering some resistance in the mobilization of reserves for the Yugoslav army.

So we do see signs that the campaign is beginning to have an impact. This impact is not fast. And this impact is not something that has yet stopped the VJ, or Serb army, in its tracks.

Q: Given the bottleneck of tens of thousands of refugees at the border of Macedonia and southern Kosovo, and the

reports coming out in today's papers that talk about disease and lack of water and that sort of thing, is the U.S. considering airdropping food in or setting up relief, emergency relief centers inside that corner of Kosovo? If not, why not?

Mr. Bacon: This is a question that comes up every day or so, and the answer hasn't changed.

Q: The situation has gotten clearly worse...

Mr. Bacon: The situation has gotten worse, and the way we're dealing with that situation is to try to take refugees out of Macedonia as soon as possible so it will create room for new refugees to come into the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. We will continue to work on that.

As we've said before, dropping food now to the refugees could well run the risk, and in fact we think it would without doubt do nothing but sustain the Yugoslav army we're trying to choke off. So it would be counter to our policy.

Q: ...in that region for, again, to respond not to the military situation but to the humanitarian crisis in that area right now?

Mr. Bacon: Because putting troops into Kosovo right now would lead to vicious assaults against the troops that would, without doubt, end up killing many of the refugees trying to get out.

Q: How soon can we expect the refugees to begin showing up in Guantanamo, if they go? And how much in the way of the U.S. force will have to go down there to take care of those people?

Mr. Bacon: Well, there will be, obviously, some people will go down there, probably vectored in there from the United States. I can't answer that question. We'll try to get answers.

In terms of the timing, this will be worked out by the Immigration Service, the State Department, and the military. And I can't give you a precise date on that now.

Q: You said a few minutes ago that Milosevic may think he is finished, but he will not be finished. Again, saying that the military goal is to get the Kosovo civilians back into Kosovo, exactly how are the allies going to do that? By ground troops? By bombing all of the Serb forces that remain in Kosovo? What happens when they get all the Kosovo civilians out, and Serb troops are left in Kosovo?

Mr. Bacon: It will be much easier to attack them. There will be Serb troops primarily left, and we will be able to attack them with more precision and more concentration than we have been during periods of bad weather.

We've been through this sustained period of opaque weather conditions. It is lifting now. I can't predict how long it will be lifted, but we plan to use this to our maximum advantage while we can.

We will make these attacks as forceful and direct as possible on the VJ forces.

I want to go back again to what we've said many times, the end state goal. We want to stop the killing. We want a withdrawal of the Serb army and special security forces, the so-called VJ and the MUP. We want democratic self-rule, autonomous democratic self-rule in Kosovo. We want a NATO-led international peacekeeping force. And we believe that if those four conditions are met, then refugees will be able to return and rebuild their lives in Kosovo, and that's the goal.

Q: How will you get the Serbs out of Kosovo? Just the continual air campaign? Is there any chance that you're going to have to send in ground troops? Or is it going to be an air campaign so massive that they'll either give up or you'll kill them?

Mr. Bacon: We believe that we can do this with an air campaign that has several elements to it. One is attacking troops on the ground. Another is attacking the supplies and facilities that support them and sustain them such as fuel, such as roads, such as warehouses that contain military food and equipment, and we will continue to attack the targets at the heart of the regime in Belgrade that are used to command, control, and sustain these troops.

Q: ...your definition of the term "permissive environment?" That's the term, of course, that administration officials have used to describe the state that they would like to see things in before any ground troops would go into Kosovo.

Over the weekend Secretary Albright seemed to be suggesting that such a state might be achieved by the use of air power or military force, that would not necessarily require the consent of Mr. Milosevic's government.

What's your view on that?

Mr. Bacon: A permissive environment is the conditions that I've listed three times already today. It is stopping the killing, withdrawing of the forces, agreeing to autonomous democratic self-rule, and agreeing to the acceptance of a NATO-led international peacekeeping force. When those four conditions are met, we believe that the refugees will be able to return. That is the definition of a permissive environment.

I think that Jamie Rubin went over that today in his briefing in great detail. I have nothing to add to what he said.

Q: Do you think such an environment could be achieved without the consent, that an environment where ground forces would be safe to go in, and could go in, or might go in, could be achieved without the consent of Mr. Milosevic?

Mr. Bacon: We believe that our policy will achieve those goals.

Q: Are you, back on the refugee question, are you still looking at the military flights that are bringing supplies in to turn around and bring refugees out? Or are you looking at chartering aircraft?

Mr. Bacon: All of these details remain to be worked out. Remember what's happening now frequently is that we are breaking down large loads from 747s, C-5s, and C-17s in Italy, redistributing them to C-130s, and taking them in with C-130s.

Now there are many options for getting people out, and I'm just not able to talk about what the decisions are because they haven't been made yet.

You will note that today at the White House the President appointed Lieutenant General Mike Duffie as the DoD representative, the military representative, to the team that he's established to deal with these problems under Brian Atwood. We will try to get him down here as soon as possible to talk to you about the details of dealing with the refugee relocation program.

Q: A different question. If you're thinking about moving the Apaches and the MLRS to a more remote area, are you also giving any consideration to the deployment of tanks or additional heavy armor to protect that force?

Mr. Bacon: I'm not aware that we are beyond the troops that I mentioned yesterday. That was an infantry group and a group of MPs to protect them.

Q: Ken, I'm trying to figure out the military implication of destroying a thermal generating station. Are you bumping up against civilian targets here in your effort to win the morale of the military?

Mr. Bacon: I'm going to turn specific targeting questions over to Captain Pietropaoli and he can walk you through what's been happening in that regard, and I'll come back after he's...

Q: Are you bumping up against the Geneva Convention restrictions on civilian targets? Are you bumping up against -- that's what the thermal plant seemed to be.

Mr. Bacon: Some of these targets are close to oil facilities that we've been taking out aggressively. Others, of course, are dual-use targets, and it's hard to separate. What is a bridge? A bridge that allows military equipment to travel from one part of the country to another and also carry civilian equipment is clearly dual-use and it's hard to make those separations. But on this specific point...

Q: The thermal...

Mr. Bacon: I don't know enough about where its location was, next to a petroleum storage facility, but I believe they were cheek-by-jowl, but maybe you have more on that.

Q: And maybe you don't.

Captain Pietropaoli: As Mr. Bacon said, we are not targeting civilian targets, per se. There are several targets that would be either dual use, in the case of bridges, or are adjacent to one another.

I believe in the case -- without getting into the specific aim points of the facility you're talking about, the intention here was not to shut off the supply of hot water to the residents of Belgrade; the intention was to go at those reserves of petroleum products that were in that facility, and that is in fact what was struck. Adjacent to that, I believe, is unfortunately the geothermal plant.

Q: Was it hit them?

Captain Pietropaoli: It wasn't necessarily hit. It's a question of how finely you can do this when you are targeting petroleum products.

Q: We've just heard that a permissive environment can be established through the policy ongoing, the campaign ongoing. Does it matter to the Joint Chiefs whether a permissive environment is established with Milosevic's consent or not?

Captain Pietropaoli: I think that's always been the understanding both to the Chairman, for whom I work, and the other Chiefs, that a permissive environment meant the agreement by Mr. Milosevic to this NATO-led international force along with the other conditions that Mr. Bacon has sent. Obviously if there were to be some other policy decision, then that would have to be completely reconsidered by the military commanders, but at the moment, that

is the policy, and I expect that to remain the policy. That's their understanding of a permissive environment, exactly as Mr. Bacon laid out, and, I believe, Jamie Rubin laid out earlier today.

Q: Joe Lockhart put it slightly differently. He said either there needed to be a political agreement or -- or that you could destroy the forces in Kosovo to the point where you could bring back the refugees. I think that's partly what we're trying to clear up is what he means by the "or."

Captain Pietropaoli: I haven't had a chance to talk to Mr. Lockhart about it. I would say if he meant bring back in the hands and the custody of NATO forces, I'm not aware of any such planning or any such consideration. If he means bring back in the hands of international NGOs, etc., if there were no military threat existing from the army or special forces left in Kosovo and the refugees were free to walk in or be escorted back in with the caregivers from the international government organizations, or non-governmental organizations, that might be a possibility. But I know of no intention for that to be NATO troops except pursuant to an agreement by Mr. Milosevic to accept that international force.

Q: Would you characterize the case of airstrikes in the last 24 hours vis-a-vis a couple of days ago as three times more sorties, ten times more sorties? How would you...

Captain Pietropaoli: Well, the weather last night, Jack, was probably the best we've seen since the first night of operations. I believe they showed a chart this morning at the NATO briefing in Brussels that had more than two dozen targets. Again, not all targets are equal. Some targets may be single aim points, other targets may be an entire engagement area that NATO aircraft are working for some time.

But given that, clearly last night was a substantially larger level of effort. The initial reports we've gotten from NATO with respect to the tactical aircraft, including the strikes in and around Kosovo and the rest of Yugoslavia this morning was they had some very good results. That is pilot reports back. That will have to be compared with other sources including imagery. But we think that the clear weather and the level of forces...

Last night U.S. participation, for example, in the strike included the full range of systems -- B-1s, B-2s, F-117s, the tactical aviation, the F-15s, F-16s, all the tankers and support aircraft that were flying.

Q: The level of resistance was significantly higher last night than you have seen in some time.

Captain Pietropaoli: Again, we don't have a perfect picture back here of the air defense activity on any given night. Most of that information is best seen at the operational or tactical level. We can see some of that from back here, both from reports of U.S. systems, but it was a very significant air defense (indiscernible) last night. As we've said,

this air defense -- although we've had decent luck suppressing, decent results suppressing this air defense system and continue to work it over as an enabler to go at these other targets, it is by no means knocked down yet.

Q: Do you see Milosevic's air force continuing to fly? And if so, where? And any concerns about some of the continued air activities?

Captain Pietropaoli: We had no reports back here last night of counter-air activity against NATO aircraft. There has been some reports from a variety of sources about some use of close air support aircraft. I'm not sure whether these are helicopters or super Galeb attack aircraft, or a combination thereof. As you know, when you're in a close air support, this is unusual. We have not seen this sort of activity last summer, for example, during Milosevic's previous offensives in Kosovo, did not see close air support working in any great degree, so we're looking very seriously at those reports.

But that kind of activity, close air support of ground troops or security forces tends to be very low and difficult for us to pick up other than by non-radar sensors.

Q: Can you tell us anything more about the very significant air defense that you've seen?

Captain Pietropaoli: I know there were a number of surface-to-air missiles fired last night, but frankly, I do not have and probably will not have for 24 hours in the cycle -- by the time I get the information back from the pilots... Oftentimes the only knowledge that a surface-to-air missile has been fired, particularly if they're fired ballistically without guidance from the radar, is the pilot report, sighting a plume, or some other report from the scene. That takes some time, as you might expect, to filter back to 19 nations.

Q: How concerned are the Chiefs about the dwindling supply of cruise missiles? And is there any new restriction coming on how they're used?

Captain Pietropaoli: I have heard nothing out of the one that I'm closest to in terms of concern. Obviously, people are aware of the air-launched cruise missile situation with respect to the other supplies, which again -- there's been no impact that we've seen on the operations because of the CALCM inventory with respect to sea-launched cruise missiles and the Joint Direct Attack Munitions, the AGM-130s, etc. The other kind that have been very important during these days when we were seriously weather constrained, those kinds of all-weather systems -- the Tomahawk cruise missiles, the Joint Direct Attack Munitions from the B-2s, etc., have been very important in sustaining a level of effort despite the bad weather.

Again, now as the weather improves we're able to increase that level of effort, increase that intensity by using the

other laser-guided weapons in the inventory.

Q: Steve, how many...

Q: Speaking of the Chiefs, how dispirited or gratified are they by these stories we're seeing on finger-pointing and second-guessing? Isn't it fundamentally correct to say that they're all currently employed as members of the Joint Chiefs, and that is either an explicit or a tacit endorsement of what we're doing?

Captain Pietropaoli: That's your characterization, Mark. I would only say that among the many rules that General Shelton has, two of them that I'm very clear on are these. He won't discuss in public his advice to the President or the Secretary; and he won't discuss or allow me to discuss in public what goes on in the Tank. I believe the other Chiefs have a similar policy.

I can say, however, that these stories, as I believe you've heard Secretary Cohen quite explicitly this morning, and again just a few moments ago at the White House. My own boss, General Shelton, has made it clear to me that when it came down post-Rambouillet to the situation that faced NATO a few weeks back, which was essentially to do nothing and allow Milosevic to continue the level of violence and probably increase the level of violence that he was perpetrating in Kosovo, or to embark on the phased-air operation that had been on the table with NATO for some months, that all of the Chiefs felt that that was the only option that made any sense, given the stakes to NATO and given the stakes to the people in the region.

Q: To follow up on that, Captain, while there might -- we've seen the news accounts about misgivings among the Chiefs on achieving goals in Kosovo, the political goals in Kosovo, at least in the early period. Now, however, with the widening target list, more aggressive campaign, are the Chiefs convinced that this policy will achieve the political goals in Kosovo and against Belgrade?

Captain Pietropaoli: Fortunately for me, Pat, I only have to speak to the military objective.

I think that the Chiefs are confident that the air operation planned by NATO and currently being executed will in fact achieve the military objective that was set for the operation, that is to reduce his capability to sustain the forces in Kosovo perpetrating the violence against the civilian population.

It was clear it couldn't immediately stop the killing. That was known beforehand. And it was clear that it could not necessarily, on its own, accomplish larger policy objectives like forcing Milosevic back to the table. You cannot set as an objective of military force something which the adversary can deny you simply by being obstinate, intransigent.

Q: The repatriation of the refugees, though? This is a policy goal now, and...

Captain Pietropaoli: I think if we continue the effort that we have now and we achieve the military objective, which I believe the military commander at NATO and the Chiefs here are confident can be achieved with air power; it won't be quick, but it can be done. If we stay that course, the conditions will be such that refugees will be able to return, because we will have substantially degraded Milosevic's ability to perpetrate violence on them. But that will not happen overnight.

Q: Were the Chiefs surprised by the ferocity and the velocity of the Serb attacks in Kosovo?

Captain Pietropaoli: Again, I can't speak for all the Chiefs. I'm technically the Chairman's spokesman, not the spokesman for the Joint Chiefs. Let me confine my remarks to what I know of his.

I think that he and the Secretary have been clear from the beginning that what has happened was unfortunately, sadly anticipated, that there was every chance that should NATO act, that Milosevic would increase the fury of his attacks, which were already underway against Kosovo, and that it would perhaps accelerate the refugee outflow. That was known.

The alternative was to allow him to proceed at his own pace in pursuit of his own objectives while NATO stood by and watched. That was not considered an acceptable alternative, given the stakes.

Q: If that was known, again, I'm sorry, I asked Ken this yesterday. But if that was known, why didn't they do a more thorough job of preparing for the refugee exodus? Why is it only now that...

Captain Pietropaoli: Word that I have, Dana, and this is not something that I've been able to track more closely. I think now with General McDuffy appointed to be a part of that task force, perhaps we'll have even better visibility than we currently have on the overall intergovernmental organization/non-governmental organization effort.

The reports that I have back from the people in the field, although it is a tragic situation there, and chaotic, that in many respects the international community is far better prepared for this humanitarian disaster than they have been for others in other parts of the world.

You can never be too prepared for this kind of human suffering. But in fact they had laid in stores; they had made plans. It is difficult to get -- in the Pentagon it's difficult enough for us to coordinate plans among the various commanders and branches of the services. For the international community, that's far more challenging. But they

had done a great deal of thinking about what would happen. When it happens, it becomes execute, not just plan.

Q: Can I ask about the Joint Chiefs again on the military, accomplishing the military goal of the refugees going back into Kosovo. Are you saying that the Joint Chiefs think that getting the refugees back into Kosovo is accomplished through air power alone? Or how do you envision the refugees going back?

Captain Pietropaoli: You've taken it two steps beyond what the Joint Chiefs have signed up to for the military objective, Thelma. What I intended to say in response to the question was, the military objective is to reduce Milosevic's ability to sustain those forces in Kosovo that are perpetrating violence on the civilian population. When that objective is achieved, and we believe it can be achieved, with air power -- we wouldn't have set it as an objective if we didn't think we could achieve that. When that objective is achieved, it may be that that level of repressive capability potential that Milosevic retains in Kosovo is sufficiently low that between the indigenous fighters and the UCK and the sheer volume of 90 percent Albanian population versus 10 percent Serbian population, bi-ethnically, that the refugees can begin to flow in the opposite direction.

If the violence is reduced, it is likely that these refugees will try to return to their homes -- if the violence is reduced and they can have a reasonable expectation they won't be driven out at the point of a gun again.

But that is not an objective of the military operation.

Q: So you're not saying that you need to get all of the Serb troops out of Kosovo or kill them all or have them give up before the refugees can go back or...

Captain Pietropaoli: We have not put that precision on our objectives, no ma'am.

Q: Aside from the difficulty of signing up conscripts, which Ken referred to, have you seen any other signs or debilitating effects on the Serb military in Kosovo? For instance, tanks running out of gas, or anything...

Captain Pietropaoli: I look forward to the day, Charlie, that I can stand up here and show you the picture of that tank or those tanks that are stopped dead in the field.

Q: Has there been anything else you can point to?

Captain Pietropaoli: Again, we have heard increasing reports of their concern about distribution, principally distribution of petroleum, etc., and its availability to the tactical units. We have not seen reports of troops or tanks or armored personnel carriers stopped in their tracks because of a lack of fuel. That's why we continue to work

over these reserves, these supplies, and the distribution for those. And the other elements of the infrastructure that we believe are important to choking off these forces in Kosovo.

Q: With the weather having lifted, are you actually trying now to attack troops in armor formation? Or strictly the supply points? And can you offer us any examples with the weather having lifted of any success you've had in attacking troop and armor formations?

Captain Pietropaoli: Again, just before I came in, I got sort of an initial feedback from this early morning our time, raids that NATO aircraft had done. I don't have that level of detail. I know they are tracking a range of targets. They have target areas to look for, based on intelligence reports, where we might find groups of vehicles.

One of the very difficult things, as you might expect, is, and this will always be true, unfortunately, Milosevic's forces, whether they are the special police or the army, are operating in and around villages, in and around refugees.

We take, as you know, extraordinary care not to inflict civilian casualties in our bombing campaign. It is difficult at times to strike some of these; it will be difficult. We've seen this not from an actual strike package, but from imagery, when you have tanks and armored personnel carriers and troops, as Mr. Bacon described in this other photo, all around an area of refugees. This is not going to be a number of APCs we're going to be able to strike, even though we would very much like to.

The same is true -- we are not certain -- we have had reports of refugees being carried in army vehicles to the border. If we are not certain what's in that vehicle, reasonably certain of what's in those vehicles, we do not want to attack convoys of vehicles.

So it's a combination.

Now, this may well have been a very good night in exactly the regard that you asked. I just don't have that information yet. It's likely NATO will have it long before I do.

Q: May I briefly follow up on Dana's question? Although you've told us for days that the international community was very well prepared and anticipated the refugee crisis, it's awfully difficult to reconcile that with the pictures you see of people sleeping out in the mud and the cold and the rain for days, of food shipments just starting now from the United States, if there was so much food prepositioned. Very, very minimal medical care in the field.

So I guess I'm still confused as to exactly how well prepared the community was, and how well the Pentagon

understood how well the international relief community was prepared?

Captain Pietropaoli: Two things, Barbara, I'll say. One, it is not principally our responsibility to know how well prepared they are. We understood, and as I said briefed in our expectation that generally speaking wars create refugees, they don't stop refugees. And if you were going to start a NATO campaign, it might well accelerate the number of people leaving, because it would likely result in Milosevic accelerating his ethnic cleansing operations in Kosovo.

It was our understanding that the international community had in fact been anticipating a possible -- you've been reporting on this situation in Kosovo including the outflow of refugees a year ago for some time. It was our understanding that -- no plan in the military ever survives the first contact with the enemy. I suspect that is largely true for humanitarian efforts as well. And I think to some measure it depends on what your level of comparison is.

If you look at some of the tragedies in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, I think the international community was far more greatly challenged in getting supplies there or in anticipating the magnitude of the issues they faced in Rwanda and elsewhere. Even in Central America in the aftermath of Mitch right on our back doorstep, it took us a great deal of time to move the infrastructure in there, even to effectively begin moving those supplies -- although we were on it before the storm had actually passed. We were flying helicopters in that effort.

Q: This is not a natural disaster. The international community has said that they reached their crisis -- their worst case point was 150,000 refugees, which they reached in a few days. And they themselves said that they were very surprised, that they had consulted with military, both NATO and the United States, and they acknowledge that they were surprised, and they had been overwhelmed.

Captain Pietropaoli: I can't speak to that. I'd only say if they thought the maximum number, they the international relief agencies, thought that the maximum number of refugees that would leave Kosovo would be 150,000, that does not track with what we thought.

Mr. Bacon: You're making a false distinction here, if I may, Barbara. The difference between a stock and a flow. There was plenty of food prepositioned in the area. It's as if...

Q: Well, was it prepositioned in Kosovo, and...

Mr. Bacon: Some of it was. And some of it wasn't. The fact of the matter is that there had been provisions made. That doesn't mean you don't have to ship in more. If you have a full tank of gas, you can say that you have enough gasoline in your car to travel for a week. It doesn't mean you don't have to put more gasoline in toward the end of

the week. That's what's happening here.

There was prepositioned food. Some of it we've lost access to. But there was a lot of prepositioned food there. The President mentioned the amount in tonnage today. I mentioned the amount, as has Julia Taft, the assistant secretary of State for Refugees, in terms of numbers of meals. But the fact that there was a lot stored there doesn't mean we don't have to send in more, and that's what's happening.

Q: Did any of this catch you unaware? Was there any part of the refugee crisis that you had not anticipated or planned for?

Mr. Bacon: Barbara, if you go back to what George Tenet, the director of the CIA said back in February, I think it's clear that we had anticipated the possibility of a humanitarian problem. I think that everybody knew there was the possibility of a humanitarian problem. That's not to say that we knew exactly how it would unfold or the speed with which it would unfold. We certainly knew that Slobodan Milosevic had the capacity to wreak havoc on a population that he wants to eliminate or exterminate, and that's exactly what he's done. We've seen this in Bosnia. This is not new behavior on his part.

Taking that and saying we predicted exactly what was going to happen, I can't do. But certainly we knew there was the possibility of a humanitarian problem.

Q: Ken, I think many people have the image that the American military can move very quickly. Can you describe then why it takes so long to get the Apaches to where they need to go? Why it takes the week or the two weeks? Can you describe what it is that...

Mr. Bacon: Sure. We could move the Apaches there extremely quickly. But as I said yesterday, we are very aware of sequencing the move of military equipment with the humanitarian equipment coming in to Albania. It is going to have to require a balancing.

The military can move quickly, but it also likes to move in an intelligent way, not a helter-skelter way. And the helicopters will get there as quickly as possible. It's not going to be a matter of days. It's going to be a week to ten days, possibly even longer. But right now we are concentrating on primarily the humanitarian aid, but secondly, getting the helicopters there.

Q: Just so we can understand, does that mean you just don't want to clog up the runway, and, therefore, you're not going to carry them in until food comes in first? What does that mean?

Mr. Bacon: No. I think it will be sequenced, and we'll be able to do both at the same time.

Q: How far (indiscernible)? My question is, NATO gets open-ended commitments from its allies, but is there an end for the commitment of NATO operations? All the references are being made to a long-term. How long term are we talking about politically? And could there be -- some allies start saying, stop, we're not going any longer?

Mr. Bacon: So far I believe that the behavior of Slobodan Milosevic, the brutality, has only strengthened the resolve of the allies. We have said from the very beginning, and I think that if anything we should get an award for consistency, maybe a greater award for consistency sometimes than you sometimes get for listening. But we have said from the very beginning that this was going to be a long and difficult operation. The President said it's not a 30-second commercial. We have always said from the beginning that it was going to take time and patience.

I believe that the allies, if anything, realize more than ever today what we're up against in an adversary, Slobodan Milosevic. We are agreed more than ever that this is a scourge in the Balkans on the Kosovar Albanian people that cannot go without response. We also realize that he has created a humanitarian crisis of unbelievable proportions in a short amount of time, and that we as the NATO allies have to work together to reverse this, to create the conditions that can reverse that humanitarian crisis.

We have always been very clear from this podium that the military goal is limited. It's to degrade and diminish his military to the point where the price becomes too high. We will continue to do that.

The broader goals are diplomatic goals; they're political goals. The military can only do its part. And we have been very clear about what that part is, and we will continue to work until we achieve that part of the military goal.

Q: What steps is the United States and NATO both taking to preclude a repeat of the apparent blocking of a Turkish relief plane from crossing Greek airspace? It was loaded with supplies for the Kosovar Albanians.

Mr. Bacon: I, frankly, am not aware that that happened. I'll look into it.

Q: One last question to flog a dead Warthog here. Would you take the question on the Warthogs and let us know when you found they started using them in ground attacks?

Mr. Bacon: I will, but Charlie, I've been very explicit in telling you that the primary role of the A-10s has been in the observation capacity because of their loiter ability. And I would anticipate that that will continue to be the case. But I will -- we will do our level best to tell you the first time that an A-10 knocks out a tank. I suppose that's what you want. We will do our level best.

Q: How do you plan to accommodate Albanian refugees to the Souda base on the island of Crete?

Mr. Bacon: Sorry?

Q: Are you planning to accommodate some of the Albanian refugees to your Souda base on the island of Crete?

Mr. Bacon: I'm not aware that we are. I've never heard that as a candidate.

Q: On the ongoing operation, do you use your facilities in Greece or Crete facilities?

Mr. Bacon: Isn't Crete part of Greece? Isn't that what you asked me? If we're using facilities in Greece or in Crete? Isn't that like asking if we're using facilities in the United States or Massachusetts?

Q: No, no, no, no. Your facilities in Greece or Greek facilities for military operations.

Mr. Bacon: We are using some facilities in Greece, yes.

Q: AWACS in the area reported that a MiG-29 had violated both Hungarian and Czech airspace. It caused a diversion of a psychological operation a Commando Solo. Was there any military response to that?

Mr. Bacon: Did you say Bulgarian and Czech?

Q: No. Hungarian and Czech airspace. A MiG-29, Yugoslav MiG-29.

Mr. Bacon: I have not seen that report.

Q: Okay. Has the NAC approved the Apaches?

Mr. Bacon: I believe...

Captain Pietropaoli: We expected that to happen to day. There was an indication it may have happened just before I walked in, but I'm still waiting for confirmation.

Mr. Bacon: We don't have final confirmation, but they were expected to do it today.

Q: And one more?

Mr. Bacon: Is this Chinese water torture? (Laughter) Mushrooming questions.

Q: Armchair warrior time. This is such an intensive environment that you guys sent in your single most expensive asset, the B-2; and you've been saying on and on that the integrated air defense system is really tough. You have a full division of certified Longbows, a battalion of certified Longbows sitting out there. These things can protect the pilots so much better. They've got much better targeting, much better stand-off range. Why not send them? I know General Clark didn't ask for them, but is he getting the best military advice? I mean this is the best thing we've got, and we're using the best B-2s we've got. Why not?

Mr. Bacon: General Clark's an Army officer. I have to assume he understands the capabilities of the Army's premier weapons. All I can tell you is that we gave him what he asked for.

Q: If you can update us please on the situation in Bosnia. As to the rail line that was destroyed there, what sort of goods were being shipped there that are not now?

Mr. Bacon: That rail line was destroyed because we believed that the rail line was going to be used to transport Yugoslav troops through Bosnia in violation of the Dayton Accords to Montenegro.

Q: Do you have a estimate on the cost of the military operation in Yugoslavia so far? And the cost of the humanitarian operation? And the expected cost of the humanitarian operation?

Mr. Bacon: I don't have the answer to any of those questions.

Last question.

Q: What percentage of attacks on Yugoslavia are being conducted by U.S. aircraft? Also, is there any movement on the allies pointing out the need for attack helicopters in the near future?

Mr. Bacon: I'm not aware that the allies are going to commit attack helicopters at this time, but, of course, that could change. And I don't know the percentage of U.S. strikes, but I would, whatever it is, I would expect it to decline somewhat because during the bad weather we had the assets that were able to operate in all-weather capability, in all-weather conditions. So by definition, we would have performed more of them. With the weather improving, I would expect the allies to perform a greater proportion of the strikes.

Thank you very much.

Press: Thank you.



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