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April 28, 1999

VIA FAX 512-322-9896

Mr. Josh Bolten
Office of Governor Bush
Box 1902
Austin, TX 78767

Dear Josh:

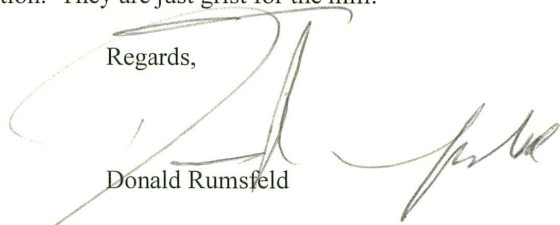
As I recall, some days back you asked me to send any thoughts I might have on Kosovo. Attached are some very rough, very random thoughts. Please don't connect my name to them.

Also, I would caution about getting some of these thoughts in the Governor's head, because a number of the statements are not the kinds of things that someone ought to be saying publicly right now.

I am asked to be on television on this subject and I have been dictating observations which I use for my own thought process. These are not crafted for public consumption, nor am I offering them to you with the suggestion that they become some sort of a position. They are just grist for the mill.

Regards,

Donald Rumsfeld



c: Dr. Condi Rice w/attachment

Attachment
kosovo2.doc
DR/nsp
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FAXED
4-29-99

Kosovo

U.S. forces are engaged. We need to support our forces. The diplomacy that led to our drifting into this conflict is another matter and should be addressed separately. Our goal ought to be to avoid crises, rather than to manage them once we drift into them.

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At this point, the stakes are high – for the U.S., for the NATO alliance’s credibility, and for the lives of all those involved, including the hundreds of thousands of refugees. Let’s hope the air war works. It may. If so, the Serbs will be brought back to the negotiating table.

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There seems to be a pattern in this administration. First there is neglect of an important national security issue for a long period, ending in a diplomatic crisis. Next, threats are made, but not backed up. That is followed by a breakdown in negotiations and U.S. warnings that, “this is your last chance.” The Secretary of State then flies in and issues a scolding take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum, putting the other side into a political corner publicly that it can’t accept. Then the U.S. announces it is initiating an antiseptic, precision air campaign to achieve our diplomatic goals (implying little or no civilian -- collateral -- casualties and limited potential allied casualties), and, above all, without the use of U.S. ground forces.

* * *

The U.S. needs to conduct policy in a manner such that we will be believed. Everything the U.S. says or does or fails to say or do in one part of the globe is listened to and taken aboard in every other part of the world. Specifically, the U.S. needs to be believable:

- That the President is doing what he does and saying what he says for the reasons he states (arguments of convenience come back to hurt us);
- That U.S. warnings and deadlines are real and, in fact, will be backed up -- that we will follow through on what we say; and
- That we, and through our leadership our Allies, will have the staying power to finish whatever we start.

* * *

“Graduated response” didn’t work in Vietnam for President Johnson. It will cost lives. If the U.S. is going to get into a fight, it is worth winning, and we should hit hard up front. Hoping for a measured, antiseptic war (immaculate coercion) to be successful, without deaths on either side, is the hope only of the unschooled.

* * *

- The U.S. and NATO should stop saying what the Allies will or will not do. For example:
 - “We will hit only these targets.” Why should we tell the enemy that? It helps only them.
 - “We will only hit those targets at 2:00 a.m. when no one will be hurt.”
 - “We won’t use ground forces.” Why rule anything out? It helps the opposition.
 - “We are running out of cruise missiles.”
 - “We are bringing in A-10 aircraft, or Apache helicopters, in four weeks.” Why say that? It only helps the other side.

Our goal should be to make more complicated the problem for the other side, not to simplify it. Once in the war, NATO needs to let Milosevic know it means business. The President and NATO need to stop calibrating each public utterance to try to please and appease their domestic audiences. We ought not conduct U.S. national security policy through the prism of domestic politics.

Once in the war, NATO’s military goal should be unambiguous -- to drive Serbian forces from Kosovo, to end the “ethnic cleansing,” and most certainly to not allow the Serbs to destabilize the neighboring areas. To the extent we provide details beyond that, we run the risk of putting Allied forces at unnecessary additional risk.

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NATO works pretty well, but only when:

- U.S. leadership is clear, steady, and right;
- The U.S. allows time for our NATO allies to arrange their political circumstances to be supportive; and
- NATO plans, exercises and is ready, as it was for a possible Soviet attack during the Cold War.

Yugoslavia is different. And, not surprisingly, we see some creaks and groans in the alliance. If eventually NATO does go in with ground forces, the U.S. must make sure that there are clear lines to the military commander. There are too many lives at risk for NATO to operate as it has during the air war, with delays for approvals on targets and the dispatching of various weapons systems.

* * *

What’s next? It’s still too early to tell. However:

- If the air war works, and the Serbs come back to the table -- fine. We were lucky -- if not wise.
- If the air war doesn’t do it, and the Serbs succeed in destabilizing their neighbors, the U.S. and NATO will face very tough decisions.

In the meantime, the U.S. should be thinking three or four steps ahead (which has not been the pattern thus far) and get prepared now for those tough decisions. We need a plan in place now to bring in ground forces to:

- Help the refugees;
- See that we have forces in the neighboring areas so that they cannot be destabilized; and to
- Make the Serbs uncertain as to our intentions.

* * *

Russian state-run television has been telling their people that the hundreds of thousands of Kosovo refugees are fleeing from NATO air attacks -- not from Milosevic's ethnic cleansing troops. We should rebut those lies, and make sure the world knows they are lies and that Russia doesn't get away with it.

* * *

President Clinton and NATO have put a great deal at stake -- the U.S.' and NATO's credibility. It is a very big chip. If we visibly fail, the deterrent effect of the U.S. and NATO on other potential flare-ups will be weakened.

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Ultimately, given the decades of hostility in the Balkans, the thing that will lead to some measure of stability is a balance of force on the ground. They don't like each other. With the end of the Cold War, we are seeing ethnic hostilities bubbling up. It is a different situation now that the regimes that previously suppressed those forces (in this case, Marshall Tito) have less authority.

* * *

If NATO ground forces are ultimately needed, it would require broad public support in the U.S. and in NATO. A ground effort in Kosovo would take time. Without strong public support the administration and allied political leaders would likely not be given the necessary time. The administration said several years ago that U.S. troops would be out of Bosnia in 6 to 12 months. They are still there, all these years later. We need to be honest. Arguments of convenience put forth to pacify the public ultimately damage credibility.

A key decision for the U.S. is whether or not U.S. leadership is capable of marshaling support in the U.S. and in NATO and sustaining it long enough to prevail if ground forces ultimately are needed. If we don't believe we can do so, and it is certainly debatable, we should cut our losses sooner rather than later. It is a great deal easier to do it before we have troops on the ground than afterwards. [The images of the President playing golf is not the picture of leadership needed to marshal and sustain support for a long, difficult ground action.] If we

seriously question whether or not we are capable of doing something successfully, then it is, without question, best not to try.

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Given the possibility of the use of allied ground forces, there are some critical questions for the planners [although they need not be answered publicly]:

- First, if NATO ground forces are to be the next step, then for what purpose? To achieve what goals? At what probable cost in dollars and lives? With what prospects for success? And over what period of time?
- Second, how will it be possible to extract them while preserving the stability that might have been achieved by their insertion? Since a balance of force on the ground will likely require arming and training others to protect themselves, will the U.S. and our allies be willing to try? Will we have the patience and staying power? And, indeed, will we together have the skill to do this difficult task?
- Finally, Milosevic's options are limited, but they are real -- do we and our Allies' publics really understand them?

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War is best not run by committee. If a consensus for the best course of action is not achievable, then the result is gradualism, and gradualism doesn't work. From the press, it appears that it currently requires clearance for each military action, first from the military arm of NATO, then the political arm of NATO, and then the 19 NATO capitals. The inevitable delays in authorization, such as for the A-10 aircraft, the Apache helicopters and the target sets, work to the advantage of the other side. This would be a particular problem with the use of ground forces, given the publicly differing views on this subject among our NATO allies and in the U.S.

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Leadership has a responsibility not to raise false expectations, which encourages others to change their behavior, and, in this case, to put their lives at risk. If expectations are raised falsely, then we share responsibility for the deaths, and both we and they would have been better off had we not intervened in the first place.

* * *

In the past eight years the U.S. military has been weakened. While we are occupied in Kosovo, U.S. intelligence assets are necessarily focused on military operations there. If another country launches a ballistic missile test while the bulk of U.S. intelligence assets are focused on Kosovo, and if that country only needs one test before deployment, then we will not have missed simply the one test, we will have missed all the tests necessary to know what and when they are deploying.

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There is a great deal going on in our world, including a deteriorating relationship with Japan, with the People's Republic of China, with Russia, a dangerous situation in North Korea, Iraq busy again on their ballistic missile and WMD programs with no UNSCOM inspections to inhibit them, India and Pakistan launching ballistic missiles and testing nuclear weapons, Iran, and other surprises yet to come. The U.S. needs to assure that it has the resources to focus on more than one trouble spot at a time. This untidy world of ours is certain not to offer us the luxury of only one problem at a time. We need to decide what is important and see that we have the necessary capabilities. The U.S. has the economic strength to make any investments necessary to assure that we have the strength to provide for our nation's security.

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No President or Secretary of Defense has the advantage (or disadvantage) of using military capabilities which result from decisions and investments that are made during their tenure. The decisions they make determine the capabilities that will be available to their successors. It is the investment decisions of their predecessors that determine the military capabilities that will be available to them. This means that it is possible for a President to benefit from the investment choices of his predecessors, fail to make the necessary investment choices in his time in office, and not have that neglect be visible to the American people and the world until he is well out of office. With defense budget reductions each year since the end of the Cold War, we are sliding into that position.

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The Congressional proposal of a \$12 billion supplemental appropriation to fund the conflict in Kosovo will likely prove to be closer to the right number than the \$6 billion being requested by the administration.

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The reserve call up is necessary and appropriate, given the substantial drawdown of active duty U.S. military forces since the end of the Cold War.

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We are seeing increased Congressional activity -- proposals to "declare war" (a poor idea), to "withdraw all forces" (a poorer idea), to "prohibit the use of ground forces without Congressional approval" (understandable, but not very helpful, since the Executive Branch is unlikely to honor it even if it is ultimately passed by the Senate. The White House would more likely fuzz it by seeming to adhere to the sense of the Resolution, but not the letter of either the Resolution or the War Powers Act), to "authorize the use of all necessary force" (a bit of a blank check, but would get the Serbs' attention). This Congressional activity is not surprising. Certainly it is proper for members of the House and Senate to express their views and to fulfill their responsibilities under Article I of the Constitution. However, it would be dangerous, unwise and impossible for Congress to try to micro-manage a war.

But the reasons underlying the growing Congressional unrest are clear. Whenever an administration -- a President, a State Department -- is floundering, drifting, seizing arguments of convenience, it is not surprising that others attempt to put structure and direction into U.S. policy. [I cannot recall a time in my adult lifetime when the State Department has had leadership as poor as it does today. U.S. foreign policy is a shambles, characterized by drift and neglect and then overreaction. As one thoughtful observer recently wrote, U.S. foreign policy is best characterized as "scold and bomb."]

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The White House's addiction to public opinion polls seems to be infecting the entire national security process. It's an "in-box" approach to foreign policy -- instead of thinking things through and establishing a strategic direction, each new problem that arrives in the President's in-box seemingly is picked up and addressed in isolation from decisions that preceded it or those that will follow. The result is that the U.S. foreign policy decision-making process is random, to the confusion of our friends and allies, to the benefit of those who wish us ill, and to the detriment of our country.

[Note: The language in brackets might be particularly inappropriate to use in public.]