

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With
President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia
September 8, 1993

Q. Mr. President, are you going to ask President Clinton for air strikes?

President Izetbegovic. I have to thank Mr. President Clinton for receiving me, on behalf of me and of my colleagues here, and then thank to the United States and to the peoples of the United States for the support, for the very beginning of the independence of the Bosnia-Herzegovina.

And just now, I have thought to say that I have some issues to discuss with Mr. President, but one point is of essential importance for us. It's we are now hard working for the peace, to make a peace, to reach an agreement about peaceful solution in Bosnia-Herzegovina. But one point is very important: It's a problem of guarantee for the agreement. We will ask and request from the President Clinton that the United States participate in these guarantees, of course, between NATO forces and so on. But for us, it's essential, of essential importance that the United States participate in these guarantees.

President Clinton. I'd like to make a brief statement, in view of what President Izetbegovic has said. First of all, I want to welcome him again to the White House and to express, as I have so many times in the past, my admiration for the leadership that he has shown in this very difficult period. I want to encourage the peace process. The United States has done what it could to mobilize the forces of NATO to stop the attempt to overcome Sarajevo and the areas in the east and to push the Serbs and the Croats to make reasonable decisions in this peace process.

If they can reach a fair agreement, I would support, as I have said since February, the United States participating along with the other NATO nations in trying to help keep the peace. Of course in the United States, as all of you know, anything we do has to have the support of the Congress. I would seek the support of the Congress to do that. But I think these peo-

ple that the President represents—the Vice President was here, others have been very courageous and brave, and they're trying to now make a decent peace. And I think we ought to support that process, if there is an agreement that is not forced on them but one that is willingly entered into and is fair. And if we can get the Congress to support it, then I think we should participate.

Q. Would you agree to a date certain, Mr. President, by which the Serbs would have to withdraw from Sarajevo, free the city, after which you would use air strikes?

President Clinton. I believe that all that has to be part of the negotiating process. I don't think the United States can simply impose an element of it. I think they know what the conditions are that NATO has imposed and that we have certainly taken the lead in for avoiding air strikes. They know how to avoid the air strikes. And so far they've done that, and I presume they will continue to do that.

Q. Are you willing to go along with the President's request for a guarantee?

President Clinton. I've been willing to do that since February. But in order to do it, we have to have a fair peace that is willingly entered into by the parties. It has to be able to be enforced or, if you will, be guaranteed by a peacekeeping force from NATO, not the United Nations but NATO. And of course, for me to do it, the Congress would have to agree.

But I'm glad that the President has said what he has said, and I think the Congress and the American people need to know that the Bosnian government would look to the United States to be a part of any attempt to guarantee the peace.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:25 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.