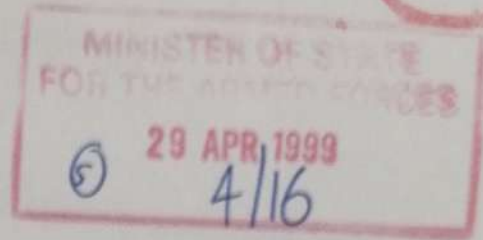


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Policy Director



308/9A

D/Policy Dir/6/8/1(346/99)

29 April 1999

PS/Secretary of State

Copy to:

PS/Minister(DP)	PFO	Hd of Balkans Sec
PS/Minister(AF)	DCDS(P&P)	Special Advisers
PS/US of S	DCDS(C)	FCO – Mr Manning
PUS	CDI	
CDS	ACDS(Ops)	
VCDS	ACDS(Prog)	
CNS	ACDS(Pol)	
CGS	AUS(H&O)	
CAS	Deputy Policy Director	
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KOSOVO: GROUND FORCE OPTIONS

Issue

1. Strategic Planning Group discussion paper on Kosovo ground force options.

Recommendation

2. That the Secretary of State should:
 - (a) note the discussion paper at Annex A;
 - (b) note the further work described at Annex B;
 - (c) note that it is intended to pass the paper privately and informally to the US;
 - (d) pass the summary at Annex C to No 10 under cover of the private secretary letter at Annex D.

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Timing

3. Immediate, if we are to influence US thinking on ground force options, we need to pass the paper to them very quickly.

Public Presentation

4. No issues at present.

Detail

5. The newly- established Kosovo Strategic Planning Group has prepared a discussion paper which provides a provisional assessment of pol/mil issues affecting ground operations. It does not address directly wider opposed operations to defeat the Serb armed forces and topple Milosevic, although some of its considerations inevitably touch on that option as well. The paper was endorsed by the COS earlier this week and is attached at Annex A, taking into account points made at their meeting.
6. The COS have commissioned a range of further work deriving from the paper. This is set out at Annex B.
7. Our planning is ahead of that of the US, other Allies and SHAPE on these issues. We believe that the US may be developing its initial thinking on ground force options this week. Our paper could exercise significant influence on their conclusions. The COS therefore agreed that we should pass it to the US privately (through military and policy channels) as quickly as possible. AUS(H&O) is looking at how best to do so and whether the paper needs to be sanitised.
8. We need at the same time to make clear to No 10 and the Cabinet Office that although we can influence planning for a possible ground campaign, we cannot expect the US or SHAPE to accept British views easily or unreservedly. There is a great deal of reluctance and scepticism to overcome, and decisions need to be taken quickly if we are to launch an operation before the winter. Early agreement in principle to a ground campaign will therefore be more important than the details of that campaign. This means that we will need to be flexible if our ideas conflict with emerging US thinking, and that we may not be able to produce definitive advice on ground force options until the US position has evolved. To get that message over, I attach a summary of the main paper and a covering Private Secretary letter to No 10 at Annexes C and D respectively.

[Signed]
RICHARD HATFIELD

ES

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STRATEGIC PLANNING GROUP: GROUND FORCE OPTIONS

1. This Strategic Planning Group discussion paper provides a provisional assessment of Pol/Mil issues affecting ground operations and identifies areas for further work.
2. The issues are addressed under five headings:
 - categories of operation,
 - maintaining political cohesion,
 - Serbian escalation,
 - factors affecting ground force operations,
 - post conflict issues.

Categories of Operation

3. Although there may be a political distinction between permissive and semi-permissive operations, from a military perspective the important question is the degree and effectiveness of any resistance offered by Serbian forces. Even in a politically permissive environment, NATO forces could face resistance at company level or below (including by the MUP, militias and armed civilians), with or without Serbian government collusion. In the light of this assessment, we need urgently to consider whether our planning for a short notice politically permissive operation should be amended, including the size of force required and build-up times.

4. Against that background, ground force options should be characterised for planning and other purposes as:

- Cooperative-entry – with the full agreement of Serbia and the active cooperation of Serb forces in Kosovo.
- Minimally opposed – no general organised Serb resistance but localised opposition possible at company level or below, following an agreement, unilateral Serb withdrawal or a successful air campaign. Because a collapse in Serb resolve is likely to vary between units and may be affected by events after the operation has started (eg KLA activities), Serb resolve should not be a major criterion for deciding when to launch an operation in the absence of organised resistance.
- Limited opposed – against organised Serb resistance and with the NATO aim of liberating Kosovo only. Overspill into other areas of Serbia should be minimised and there should be no permanent military presence elsewhere in Serbia.
- Wider opposed – against organised Serb resistance, and with the NATO aim of defeating the Serb armed forces and if necessary toppling Milosevic.

Maintaining Political Cohesion

Front-line States

5. Both Albania and Macedonia are critical to both minimally opposed and limited opposed operations. Even air mounted ground options would need re-supply and reinforcement from Albania and Macedonia. Without access, NATO would be obliged to adopt the wider opposed option; even if our political aims were more limited, it would be impossible to constrain the scope of war with Serbia following invasion from Hungary, Romania or Bulgaria. Other front line states are less important for minimally opposed and

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limited opposed ground operations, although they are essential politically and for air operations, and may have a part to play in strategic deception options.

6. A package intended to keep Albania, Macedonia and other front line states on-side is now on the table following the Washington Summit. There are means which Britain can employ to reinforce this political initiative at the defence level. This applies in particular to Macedonia, where troop levels are already causing problems. MOD should therefore consider urgently :

- diverting defence diplomacy resources to assist Albania, Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria (and perhaps Croatia and Bosnia);
- persuading allies that PFP resources should be targeted similarly;
- increasing defence representation on a temporary basis in the capitals concerned.

7. We should also recognise that the current package may not be enough for some front line states as the crisis escalates. We therefore need to consider options for developing a form of association with NATO short of full membership but beyond PFP and a security forum, including to guarantee their longer term security against Serb retaliation.

NATO Allies

8. Minimally opposed and limited opposed options depend fundamentally on Greek agreement to use their port facilities and air space. Without Greek acquiescence, we would have no choice but to mount a wider opposed operation from Hungary, Romania and/or Bulgaria, which would be even more difficult politically for NATO to agree. It would also involve major delay while forces were redeploying. Use of Italian facilities is similarly essential