

Careerists in revolt over Bosnia policy

by Scott Thompson

Hundreds of mid-level career officers of the U.S. State and Defense Departments are in revolt. To varying degrees, they are all protesting the Clinton administration policy permitting the dismemberment of the sovereign nation of Bosnia and the coverup of Serbian acts of genocide against Bosnian Muslims. Some of these people are putting their careers on the line by resigning their posts in protest.

On Aug. 4, the second Bosnian desk officer within a year at the U.S. State Department resigned. Marshall Freeman Harris issued a public letter in which he opposed Secretary of State Warren Christopher's apparent policy of dangling possible air strikes against Bosnian Serbs as the carrot, while Christopher's envoy Ambassador Reginald Bartholomew was insisting at Geneva, along with Lord David Owen, that the Bosnian government must accept ethnic partitioning of their sovereign state.

The revolt was first reported on the front page of the July 25 Sunday Boston *Globe*, which said that Christopher's claims that the administration had run out of policy options for Bosnia "masked what administration officials say is an ongoing, fierce debate within the administration about what, if any, action it should take to relieve the siege of Sarajevo." According to the *Globe* account, there had "been at least two meetings in the past 10 days of senior administration officials where military options were discussed but opposed by representatives of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as too risky."

The resignation of Harris followed that of his predecessor, acting Bosnian desk officer George Kenney, during the Bush administration. Harris's resignation was followed on Aug. 8 by the resignation of John Western, Bosnian policy analyst in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, who had been involved in investigating genocide by the Bosnian Serbs against Muslims. Western said that he could no longer continue assembling evidence of hideous Serbian atrocities against the Bosnians knowing that the United States was unprepared to take any action to prevent further killing.

In his public letter of resignation, Harris wrote to Secretary of State Christopher: "I can no longer serve in a Department of State that accepts the forceful dismemberment of a European state and that will not act against genocide and Serbian officials who perpetrate it. . . . [The Clinton admin-

istration] is driving the Bosnian government to surrender its territory and its sovereignty to victors in a war of aggression."

Hundreds more?

On Aug. 5, Harris appeared before the press with Rep. Frank McCloskey (D-Ind.), who had just called for President Clinton to demand the resignation of Lord David Owen as EC negotiator for a Bosnian partitioning settlement. Asked about the extent of the dissent among his colleagues, Harris said on the Aug. 5 ABC News "Nightline" program, that it counted in the hundreds:

"I don't want to characterize my colleagues' feelings on this issue. I know that the depth of feeling is very strong. I know that when 12 of us dissented very strongly back in April, we felt this all very deeply. And my colleagues still feel the same way. I mean there are hundreds of people in the State Department, at least hundreds, who feel very strongly that we ought to be doing more, maybe not enough to resign."

Harris is referring to the private petition to Secretary of State Christopher last April calling for military action against the Serbs, which he signed together with 11 colleagues in the department.

Christopher should resign

On "Nightline," interviewer Barbara Walters asked both Harris and Kenney whether they thought that it was necessary to fire Secretary of State Warren Christopher, in the following exchange:

Walters: "Let me ask you something about the State Department. . . . If there is dissension, and if there's a great deal of dissension, do most of you feel that the Secretary of State should resign? . . ."

Kenney: "I think a lot of people do."

Walters: "Feel that he should resign. Do you?"

Kenney: "I do, yeah."

Walters: "Do you, Mr. Harris?"

Harris: "Yes, I think he probably should, too. The thing that most disturbs me about his record on this issue is obscuring who is guilty in Bosnia. . . . In my letter of resignation [Secretary Christopher's failure] . . . to address the issue of genocide in clear policy terms is reprehensible."

Walters: "Well, are there that many of you within the State Department who do feel this way?"

Harris: "Oh, absolutely."

Walters characterized the opposition to Christopher's constant efforts to stop forceful U.S. action against Serbia as a "mutiny."

At a London press conference reported on Aug. 12, Harris called for the arms embargo on Bosnia to be lifted and air strikes to be mounted against Serbian positions. He said that the American military is deeply divided over strategy in Bosnia, and that some senior Defense Department officials are convinced that 70% of Serbian artillery capabilities could be readily destroyed by air strikes.