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No decision has been taken to change US policy toward New Zealand, nor are there any plans to resume top-level contacts. DoS Report. (930818)

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(U.S. mediation, Bosnia, Woodruff killing, Chinese ship, **New Zealand**) (1400)

NEWS BRIEFING — Spokesman Michael McCurry discussed the following topics: U.S. MEDIATION, PEACE-KEEPING PROPOSALS UNDER REVIEW A broad range of United States activities — from bilateral mediation efforts in local disputes to multilateral peace-keeping operations under the United Nations — are currently under review, the spokesman told questioners.

The focus of the study is what is being called Presidential Review Directive-13, McCurry explained. He noted that it is “fairly unusual to see such widespread reporting on a Presidential Review Directive” because it has not yet been sent to the president for a decision. A variety of media articles have appeared in recent days with special focus on what mediation actions the U.S. might take in dealing with disputes and conflicts in the new states of the former Soviet Union.

“It’s far from cast in stone,” the spokesman said. “The president has not been presented formally for a decision the work of the interagency group that looked at the large global issues surrounding peace-keeping in what is now known as PRD-13.”

He acknowledged that the United States is willing, if requested by parties, to provide “any help we can” to resolve disputes that emerge on the periphery of the former Soviet Union.

“As we have made clear to parties themselves, we’re willing to be available only to the degree that there’s a willingness on the part of parties to involve us directly,” McCurry said.

“Our goal,” he explained, “is to help parties in the region find peaceful solutions to disputes. We are prepared to be involved diplomatically when we can enhance prospects for peace and stability.

“We will concentrate on cooperating in multilateral organizations such as the U.N. and CSCE because we don’t have any plans to act unilaterally to insert ourselves in any of these ongoing crises in the region.”

“We are very sensitive to the concerns that Russia has,” the spokesman said. “We’ve discussed those (concerns) directly with Russia, and I think they are well aware of our views on it as we are of their views.”

The policy review also includes the issue of peace-keeping functions in general, he said, referring to the Pentagon description of U.S. troops as being under the operational control of others who are participating in a multilateral peace-keeping effort.

“It’s a question that is significant because of the growing importance of these multilateral efforts,” the spokesman said. “And it’s something that the United States felt was very important to look at as a question of long-term policy, and that was the purpose of this overall policy review.”

He said “substantial questions” remain to be addressed in the work of the PRD process before the document goes forward to the president for decision.

Among those related to U.N. peace-keeping operations are such things as “procedural safeguards” on a variety of issues ranging from accounting to command-and-control, he said. “We would certainly want to work carefully to be satisfied that the United Nations is capable of taking on that type of role,” he said.

U.N. COMMANDER IN BOSNIA VIEWS PRACTICE AIR STRIKES The commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia visited Bihac August 18 “to witness the first full air support exercise involving simulated weapons delivery” by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) aircraft on ground targets, McCurry said.

The exercise was “carried out precisely to look at technical command-and-control and communications issues and how the U.N. decision-making chain would operate,” the spokesman explained. He said the UNPROFOR commander “expressed his full satisfaction saying the exercises went very smoothly.”

Citing the exercise as an example of “the reality of what’s happening on the ground” in terms of cooperation between U.N. and NATO commanders, McCurry said it was “a lot more reliable and authoritative than some of the press comments that have been exchanged back-and-forth.” Some senior UNPROFOR military officers have voiced doubt about plans for NATO air strikes.

In the mountains overlooking the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo, meanwhile, U.N. peacekeepers “are trying to determine the exact location, not only of Serb forces, but also those that may have been responsible for some shelling that occurred in Dobrinja,” near the Sarajevo airport on August 17, McCurry said.

He pointed out that a “demarcation of lines that was worked out between Serb forces, Bosnian government forces and U.N. mediators” is the current guide to military positions on the two key mountains that dominate the approaches to Sarajevo.

The most important indication the opposing forces are satisfied with the demarcation is “reflected in the fact they continue to negotiate in Geneva,” the spokesman said. Bosnian President Izetbegovic, who earlier suspended his participation in the Geneva talks on exactly that issue, is back at the table, “so the fact that he’s now negotiating certainly indicates that they are at least satisfied for the moment,” McCurry said. “I imagine that they, like we, are watching that very carefully,” he added.

The spokesman withheld specific comment on a plan for a U.N. protectorate for Sarajevo “until there’s a better opportunity to learn more and understand more about how that would work. That’s something that the parties themselves are discussing currently,” he noted.

The United States is committed “to help implement a political settlement that is reached by the parties, that is viable, and that the parties themselves are actually implementing, and that commitment stands,” McCurry said.

When asked if the U.S. would participate in the creation of a U.N. protectorate for Sarajevo, the spokesman said there was no information available yet “about the specific nature of the plan.” He added: “We haven’t had any requests from the U.N., so it’s premature to answer that question.”

U.S. TEAM INVESTIGATING DEATH OF WOODRUFF IN GEORGIA Since August 12, a team of American investigators, including forensic experts and agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the State Department’s Bureau of Diplomatic Security have been in Georgia investigating the August 8 shooting death of Fred Woodruff, a foreign service officer.

McCurry said he was aware of reports that Georgian authorities say they have arrested an individual in connection with the case. Georgian authorities termed it a “chance killing,” not premeditated, and said only one person was involved. Woodruff was fatally shot near Tbilisi, Georgia, while riding in a vehicle driven by President Shevardnadze’s chief of security.

“We are awaiting a full report from the team that we’ve got over there before we talk about any of the details of the murder itself or of the investigation and the apprehension of any suspects,” the spokesman said. “There has been a good cooperative effort on the part of Georgia,” McCurry said, adding that “President Shevardnadze and others have expressed a great deal of regret because of this murder.”

U.S. SEEKING HELP FOR CHINESE SHIP INVESTIGATION McCurry said the United States is “talking to a number of countries in the region” about the Yin He, a Chinese ship currently in the Gulf of Oman which is believed to be carrying chemical weapons precursors from China to Iran.

“I don’t have any details for you on the results of those diplomatic exchanges,” he said. “The ship still remains in the Gulf of Oman and has not yet docked at any port.”

He declined to speculate on when the matter might be resolved. “We certainly are working on the problem,” he said. “There are some ideas about how to proceed,” the spokesman continued. “We’re talking with other parties in the region and that certainly implies that we’re looking to get some assistance in conducting an inspection.”

NO DECISION TO CHANGE POLICY TOWARD **NEW ZEALAND** The spokesman told a questioner that there has not been any decision taken to change U.S. policy toward **New Zealand**, nor are there plans to resume **top-level** contacts.

“The administration has been examining our policy toward **New Zealand**,” McCurry acknowledged, but he said the process is ongoing and no date has been set for its completion.

He dismissed as “personal views” recent comments by David Walker, who until recently was the U.S. charge d’affaires in Wellington. Walker said last week that the United States wanted to resume high-level contacts with **New Zealand**.

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