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THE DEPUTY SECRETARY

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TAGS: PREL, PARM, OSCE, AM, AJ, TU

SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY TALBOTT AND MINSK CO-CHAIRS  
MEET TURKISH UNDER SECRETARY OYMEN, JUNE 1

Classified by: b. lynn pascoe, special negotiator,  
s/nis/ra, Department of State. Reason: 1.5 (b, d)

1. ~~(e)~~ Summary: The Deputy Secretary briefed Turkish MFA Under Secretary Onur Oymen June 1 on discussions in Yerevan, Stepanakert and Baku during the just-completed visit of the Minsk Conference Co-Chairs. Talbott stressed the need to keep Turkey well-informed, but also noted that Co-Chairs and parties had agreed not to share the new negotiating text with others. Oymen emphasized Turkey's eagerness for a quick resolution, and its willingness to play a positive role in achieving and implementing one. He balanced concerns that Azerbaijan might place hopes in the use of force with concerns about Russian arms sales to Armenia; he was worried about Iran's role. While pledging to support the Co-Chairs, Oymen also staked out independent support for

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certain Azerbaijani positions, including on territorial integrity. End Summary.

2. ~~(s)~~ Oymen hosted a dinner for the Minsk Conference co-chairs and their delegations on Sunday, June 1, for the planned debrief on their meetings in the Caucasus. After an expression of Turkey's strong interest in the process and appreciation for the group's visit for the television cameras, he lost little time when the meal began to ask Deputy Secretary Talbott (speaking for the co-chairs) to review the meetings.

3. ~~(s)~~ The Deputy Secretary provided a general briefing on the discussions in Yerevan, Stepanakert, and Baku (see text of agreed joint briefing in para XX), emphasizing the importance of the co-chair unity for the process and our hope for Turkey's close cooperation. He noted that the Minsk Group co-chairmen planned to return to the region in about two weeks to receive the response of the parties to our proposals. The Deputy Secretary noted the co-chairs had decided to maintain strict confidentiality of the talks at the request of the parties involved and asked for Turkey's understanding and support.

4. ~~(s)~~ Oymen said a settlement of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh was quite important for Turkey, that the Turks wanted to be helpful in encouraging the negotiations (particularly with the Azerbaijanis), and made an (easily deflected) pitch for the text of the document. He reviewed their own efforts at mediation last fall just before the Lisbon conference and reaffirmed Turkey's willingness to open the border with Armenia as soon as the negotiations had some success. He also suggested a clear timeline might be necessary to move the parties to serious negotiations. Oymen emphasized the importance of normal relations among the countries for Turkey's economic and security interests. His bottom line was that Turkey needed to be involved and desired to play a constructive role both in the negotiating phase and by participating in the OSCE peace force when it is set up.

5. ~~(s)~~ Strategic factors were very much on Oymen's mind. He expressed open concern about Iran's role and more oblique (due to Lozinski's presence) worry about the Russian game. He went to considerable lengths to press the co-chairs to have all parties rule out the use of force in the conflict and to halt the supply of arms to the region by outsiders. During the discussion,

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Oymen returned to the non-use of force issue and outside military aid several times. The Russians present did not rise to the bait of his obvious references to their military aid to Armenia.

6. (c) During a review of points to tell the press, Oymen said he would make it clear that he felt the co-chair approach was consonant with Turkey's policy, but he would also express Turkey's position that the concept of territorial integrity for Azerbaijan was critical to a settlement. Talbott said that while the co-chairs needed Turkey's support, a close public embrace by Turkey could well be counter-productive in Armenia and NK. He also urged that Oymen keep statements about Turkey's position well separate from discussions of the co-chairs' efforts.

7. (c) Begin text of Agreed Joint Briefing:

-- The Minsk Conference Co-Chairs feel special responsibility to keep Turkey well-briefed on negotiation efforts on Nagorno-Karabakh.

-- The conflict has taken place almost on Turkey's borders. It involves a close friend of Turkey, Azerbaijan; and another country, Armenia, whose history is inextricably bound up with Turkey's and with which the Turkish government clearly wishes to improve its relations.

-- In addition to the obvious political and security dimensions, resolving the conflict is of great economic interest to Turkey. We know that when progress is made, Turkey wants to open its border with Armenia -- with great benefits for both countries and for the region as a whole.

-- Another background factor: since Turkey is a key member of the transAtlantic community, of the OSCE and of the Minsk Group, we did not want to miss the opportunity of stopping in Ankara and consulting with you after our first visit to the region and consultations with the parties.

-- The Co-Chairs of the Minsk Conference -- from Russia, France and the United States -- met in Washington on May 15. We agreed on a unified approach to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. That approach incorporates the ideas of all three countries.

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-- We think a unified approach among three key Minsk Group members is the advantage of the current co-chairmanship. Their unified approach will discourage "mediator shopping." The parties should not negotiate with the Co-Chairs or other Minsk Group members. Rather, they must negotiate among themselves. The role of the Co-Chairs is to facilitate and speed up those negotiations. We aim to do so through our proposals, which form a new basis for negotiations.

-- We presented our new proposals to the Armenians and Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians yesterday in Yerevan and Stepanakert, and to the Azerbaijanis today in Baku.

-- At the request of the Parties, and by agreement among ourselves as the Co-Chairs, we have agreed to maintain the confidentiality of the current negotiations. We can neither give you the text of the proposed agreement, nor can we go over with you its contents in all of its details.

-- We realize that this aspect of our approach requires a high degree of understanding, even forbearance, on your part, but since you know the rather frustrating history of this diplomatic venture so well -- and since you clearly wish this new initiative to succeed -- we hope you will not only tolerate this requirement but even welcome it.

-- But within the confines of confidentiality, there are several key points we can make that will give you an accurate sense of our approach.

-- All parties to the conflict, as far as we know, wanted the Co-Chairs to come up with a unified approach. We have done this to the best of our abilities.

-- It is now up to the parties to the conflict. We presented our approach as the basis of negotiation among the parties. We stressed that it is not a negotiation between the individual parties on the one hand and the Co-Chairs on the other.

-- We will facilitate negotiations among the parties, at first through intensive shuttle diplomacy on all issues. We have promised that our Minsk Group Co-chairs

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will return to the region in the next two weeks to hear the detailed positions of the parties.

-- We do not expect any breakthroughs, certainly not immediately. At each stop on our trip, we encountered varying degrees of reserve; we heard reiterations of familiar past positions; and, of course, we heard voiced suspicion with regard to the other parties. But we also heard promises to study the proposals carefully.

-- That is about where we expected to be at this point. Over the coming period we will work on narrowing differences through shuttle diplomacy, on re-establishing the direct negotiations and on unblocking the Minsk Group negotiation.

-- The most we can say about our approach is that we see two agendas: one is on immediate steps to end the armed conflict, including troop withdrawals, deployment of an international peacekeeping force, return of displaced persons, establishment of security measures to protect the populations of the region, and so forth. We have tried to deal with the difficult issues, including Lachin and Shusha.

-- For this agenda we have drawn heavily on the progress made so far in the Minsk Group. We have tried to address the concerns of both sides: of Azerbaijan, for the liberation of its occupied territories and the return of displaced persons; and of the Armenians, for security.

-- We have also tried to place as much responsibility as possible for implementing the agreement on the parties themselves.

-- The second agenda is to determine the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, including permanent security guarantees, that will be ratified by the Minsk Conference.

-- Recognizing the sensitivities of status issues for domestic politics, we have separated these agendas, to allow the parties to negotiate each at its own pace, but with a clear understanding that at the end of the day the various outstanding issues will have to be resolved comprehensively.

-- In our presentation of the proposal, we focused on

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the larger context -- and particularly on the benefits to be gained by peace: the normal life all the peoples of the region can live once peace is restored.

-- The Co-Chairs' initiative represents the international community's efforts to assist the parties to achieve peace. We ask you to use your influence to steer the parties toward serious negotiation on the new approach. We ask you to urge the parties to give the international community the serious response it deserves.

End Text.

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