As the shuttle team regrouped in Washington, the UN’s military leaders on the ground in Bosnia worried about how to end NATO’s air campaign. Lt. General Bernard Janvier, who had reluctantly agreed to resume the airstrikes, remained skeptical about their effectiveness. The French UNPROFOR commander had never liked the airstrikes—when the bombing had begun he had written a memorandum revealing his worries about NATO making UN troops “a party to the conflict”—and now he believed that the bombing produced little of value tactically or psychologically, especially under the limited “Option Two” targets. Making matters worse, NATO was running out of things to hit.

The top UN military official in Sarajevo, British Lt. General Rupert Smith, was concerned about the diminishing political advantages of bombing, arguing that if the Bosnian Serbs perceived that “Holbrooke doesn’t have his hand on the [bombing] lever, they will refuse to talk.” Smith recommended a second bombing pause to organize the political–military strategy.1

Senior Washington officials agreed that they could not just keep dropping bombs without a strategy. Following meetings with NATO air commanders in Italy, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Walter Slocombe told Defense Secretary Perry that the “fundamental problem” with the air campaign was that, other than punishing the Serbs, it was not tied to any overarching plan. “We clearly have moved beyond retaliation for the market attacks and even beyond stopping the shelling of Sarajevo,” he explained. “Our explicit demands are weapons withdrawal [from around Sarajevo] and full access [to Sarajevo], but these take Bosnian Serb agreement; it is dubious whether this will be forthcoming.” The air campaign’s initial goals had been achieved, but they had not decided how long bombing should last, and to what end. “Is it then our intention for bombing to continue indefinitely?” Slocombe asked. “Until we get agreement on this, it will be difficult to make decisions on the future of the campaign.”2

Yet NATO pressed on, broadening the use of weapons available in its arsenal even as the targets ran out. On September 10, the U.S. Navy cruiser USS...
Normandy fired 13 Tomahawk cruise missiles at 10 Bosnian Serb air defenses around the city of Banja Luka in northwest Bosnia. In military terms, this attack represented two significant departures in the air campaign: it was the first strike outside the primary area of operations in eastern Bosnia, and it was the first time these radar-guided, $1.3 million dollar weapons with 700-pound warheads had been fired at Bosnian Serb targets. General Shalikashvili had informed the President and his top advisors of such an operation during their September 7 meeting, and NATO command had been planning the attack for several days.3

The Tomahawk strike upset the Europeans and the Russians. United States and NATO military planners believed that the attack had been authorized by NAC-approved rules, which allowed hitting targets in northwest Bosnia to destroy Bosnian Serb command and control. Yet at an emergency meeting at NATO, France joined Spain, Canada, and Greece to argue that the attack “insidiously slid” the air campaign from Option Two to Option Three.

“We got criticized fairly heavily for [not checking] more carefully with our allies,” Perry recalled. “We figured that the authority that NATO had given to go ahead was a broad enough authority that we did not have to go back and check on every mission that we bombed.” The Secretary of Defense admitted that the operation was “a significant escalation in the perception of what we were doing.” In terms of destructive capacity, the Tomahawks were less powerful than the hundreds of 2,000-pound bombs being dropped by American planes. Nevertheless, Perry explained, the “effectiveness”—and obvious technological capability—of these weapons symbolized to many that the air campaign had reached a more lethal phase.4

The Europeans also worried that NATO had become, in effect, the air force for Bosnian Muslim and Croatian troops on the move in western Bosnia. While the Sarajevo government had pledged that it would not take advantage of NATO air operations by attacking areas in and around NATO targets, it still pursued offensive operations in northwest Bosnia, away from the air campaign. These military successes, while relatively small, fueled the perception that they were coordinating attacks with the Alliance. NATO and UN officials admitted publicly that airstrikes “clearly play” to the Bosnian Government’s advantage, and understood that this further upset the already unstable consensus in support of the bombing. This was certainly the case with America’s newest and most reluctant partner, Russia.5

**The Russian Dimension**

Russia’s role in the Bosnia crisis confronted American officials with a special challenge. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States had sought to create a cooperative relationship with its former adversary, and to encourage its evolution into a democratic state at peace with itself and its neighbors. But the two countries’ differences over Bosnia threatened this transformation. And as Bosnia forced itself on the U.S.-Russian agenda, it set the stage for renewed tensions between the two countries. American officials had