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TRANSCRIPT: REEKER BRIEFS ON DAY TWO OF KOSOVO PEACE TALKS FEB. 8

(Reiterates Contact Group's strategy)

Rambouillet, France -- Philip Reeker, spokesman for the negotiators at the Kosovo Peace Talks, briefed reporters on the second day of the talks February 8 and reiterated the Contact Group's basic strategy:

"When the Contact Group at the ministerial level made their statement in London on January 29, they invited two delegations [Serbs and Kosovar Albanians] to attend talks at Rambouillet in order to come to a peaceful solution for the Kosovo crisis. With those invitations was a set of basic principles, nonnegotiable elements.... by which the talks and the negotiation process would be conducted. By accepting these invitations, the members of both delegations fully understood and accepted those elements."

He added, "The two delegations are working very hard on the text of the agreement -- a process which is taking place on the basis of a set of principles and elements."

Following are excerpts from the press briefing:
(Begin excerpts)

Kosovo Peace Talks Transcript
Press Briefing Opening Statements and Excerpts
Rambouillet, France
February 8, 1999

Brief introduction by Anne Gazeau-Secret, French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman.

Philip Reeker, Spokesman for the Negotiators: Thank you, Anne, and welcome everybody to day two of the Rambouillet Talks. I am here, of course, representing the three negotiating ambassadors: Ambassador Petritsch of the European Union, Ambassador Mayorskiy of Russia -- along with Sergey who can help on any specific Russian questions, and on EU questions Jan Kikert is also here afterwards to help you on specific European Union-related issues -- and of course, Ambassador Chris Hill of the United States.

Today was indeed a very busy day at Rambouillet in the Chateau. There were a number of large meetings. Plenary sessions included the three ambassadors with each delegations, and there were opportunities for a number of small meetings as well. Of course, we will not say much about the negotiations because the three negotiators firmly believe that public discussion does not contribute to this important and delicate process. The delegations continue to get organized. They have met with some advisors and outside experts. They formed working groups. As we mentioned yesterday, they asked for computer equipment, which they are using. We move forward. This process is not easy, but again, we're moving forward as we continue through this week of talks.

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Question: Richard Blystone, CNN: Phil, can you clear up for us the confusion over, I think, it's principles and something else? The delegates -- the delegations -- by coming here committed themselves to, let's say, principles. Do those principles include the territorial integrity of Serbia and Yugoslavia? I ask this partly because there's been a communique from the KLA third of the

Albanian delegation saying they hadn't signed up to any such thing and they're never going to concede anything on the independence issue. They insist on a clear, unambiguous wording on independence in the final document.

Philip Reeker: Let me say, Richard, that the leaks and rumors and communiques emerging around town are a positive sign because it does show that the negotiation is going on and the process is continuing. They are working very hard on the text and let me reiterate what we spoke about last night -- when the Contact Group at the ministerial level made their statement in London on January 29, they invited two delegations to attend talks at Rambouillet in order to come to a peaceful solution for the Kosovo crisis. With those invitations was a set of basic principles, nonnegotiable elements. By accepting the invitation, the parties have agreed to those elements. And, in fact, we're moving on and negotiating the document, the agreement. There is, in fact, no need to renegotiate points that have already been agreed to.

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Question: I'd like to come back to this question of interpretation: who agreed to what? Is it like this -- you think that by coming here to Rambouillet they agreed already, but that the delegation doesn't think like this and says, "We came, but we didn't agree?"

Philip Reeker: Let's say it one more time: invitations were issued and accepted on the basis of a set of principles and basic elements by which these talks and this process would be conducted. By accepting these invitations, the members of both delegations fully understood and accepted those elements. The two delegations are working very hard on the text of the agreement -- a process which is taking place on the basis of a set of principles and elements. I don't think it could be much clearer.

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Question: At Dayton, there were a lot of military officials involved in the negotiations. In fact, the agreement has a very substantial military annex which sort of undergirds and secures the civilian side of the agreement. Are there such people involved in these negotiations and given the fact that, as I understand it at least, NATO or European and American forces would be very important in securing this agreement and enforcing it, if they're not involved here, why not? And what's the significance of it? Why was it necessary in Dayton and not here?

Philip Reeker: I think the three negotiators are being advised and supported by a broad range of people from their individual countries, indeed from the full contact group of countries. Certainly from the United States there is a broad selection. Our inter-agency process includes a delegation working on a wide variety of aspects of this. Beyond that, I can't speak specifically for the other countries, but we have a lot of advisors of all types present and working with the negotiators. The focus, of course, is working with the two delegations and that is where the time of the three negotiators is spent -- full, long days beginning in the morning, straight into the evening working on these talks with the two parties.

Question: Is there a military official, comparable to General Clark in the Dayton Agreement process, working in this, and if not, why not? Because it sounds to me as if the deployment of forces on the ground is just as vital to the success of this agreement as the deployment of NATO was in Bosnia. Maybe I'm missing something.

Philip Reeker: I can tell you that with the three negotiators there is no military official present. Beyond that is out of my purview, and I'd have to refer you to the Defense Ministries of the various contact group countries or other points.

Question: I have a question for the spokesman of Ambassador Mayorskiy. Just a week before the 6th of February a high NATO official said that there is a strong possibility that a high NATO representative will be present like a fourth person who will be like an intermediary, negotiator with both parties to deal with military aspects of Kosovo. Can you tell me please why the six contact group countries did not agree on that, on NATO presence in Rambouillet?

Sergey Bazdnikin: Well, if I actually wanted to avoid your question fairly nicely, I would immediately refer you to the NATO headquarters. But I will not do that. However, I will say that we do not know of any such request as you allege has been made. The Contact Group, as far as we understand, has never considered this possibility. And we believe, we actually hope very much, the efforts undertaken by the three negotiators, will be enough. We will come to a successful conclusion of the talks.

Question: Not to belabor the point, but I'd like to ask the representative of the French government, which was in charge of the invitations to the talks, being the host government: was a NATO delegation invited to these talks?

Anne Gazeau-Secret: Sir, the basis for that invitation is derived from the document to which my American colleague just again drew your attention. That is, the document adopted by the six member countries of the Contact Group in London on January 29. It's all there, it is the bible, the basis formally and on substantive questions we are working today, on which the delegations have come, on which the negotiations have begun. It is the document which I would recommend you consult.

(End excerpts)