

Will U.S. troops enforce a Russian 'Monroe Doctrine'?

by Edward Spannaus

A confused policy debate (perhaps deliberately so) has broken out in Washington around proposals for the United States to become involved in "mediation" of conflicts and peacekeeping in the former Soviet Union. Two issues have become linked in the debate: 1) the appointment of diplomat James Collins as a so-called U.S. "mediator" for conflicts involving Russia and the former Soviet republics, and 2) a proposal that U.S. troops would serve under United Nations command as peacekeeping troops in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere.

However, neither effort can be expected to accomplish anything useful unless the United States first were to reestablish its credibility by taking forceful action to stop Serbian genocide in Bosnia, and were to abandon its support for free-market "shock therapy" reforms in Russia. Western policy toward Russia is creating an enormous anti-western backlash, which is only compounded by talk of intervention and mediation.

And so long as the United States continues to capitulate to the British-French-U.N. game in the Balkans, it has no credibility for any efforts anywhere else. Particularly in Russia, the United States is increasingly viewed as a paper tiger, willing to use its power only against far weaker adversaries.

U.S. mediator named

On Aug. 10, the U.S. State Department officially announced that the deputy chief of mission in Moscow, Jim Collins, had been named to coordinate U.S. efforts to "encourage peaceful solutions to conflicts" in the former Soviet republics. The announcement did not say when Collins would take up his new assignment or exactly what it would entail, but he will report to Strobe Talbott, the special ambassador to Russia and the other former Soviet states.

State Department spokesman Michael McCurry had said the day before that the United States has been working, mostly through the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), "to play an intermediary role between parties that are in conflict in each of these former Soviet republics." He referred specifically to Georgia, Tajikistan, and the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan. "Our interests are, 1) in making sure that the violence is quelled, and 2) to see if they can enter into any type of long-

range negotiations that would prove to be fruitful in creating peaceful conditions there," McCurry said.

The appointment of such a U.S. mediator had been forecast by columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak on Aug. 2. They said that Collins was being given the mediation job because of "rising U.S. alarm about free-wheeling Russian maneuvers against weak, independent states of the former Soviet Union." They added that, up until now, President Clinton "has done little to restrain Moscow, fearing damage to President Boris Yeltsin. That has to change."

U.S. troops under U.N. command

The appointment of Collins was followed the next week by leaks concerning plans to put U.S. troops under U.N. command for peacekeeping deployments in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere. On Aug. 18, the *New York Times* quoted Clinton administration officials as saying a presidential policy directive, a draft document known as Presidential Decision Directive 13 (PDD 13), permitting regular assignment of U.S. troops to U.N. command, had been drafted "and is expected to be signed by President Clinton next month."

That same day, a State Department spokesman officially confirmed that a fundamental policy review was under way, but said that "substantial questions" remained to be addressed before changing the traditional policy of having only U.S. commanders for U.S. troops.

The general idea of putting U.S. troops under U.N. command was met with an immediate barrage of criticism. Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.) denounced the plan as a "nutty idea," and said, "I can't imagine the Congress going along with it." Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) termed it a "dangerous precedent." Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) said, "I'm surprised all this has occurred without much discussion with the Congress." Lugar said that U.S. troops would come into harm's way, and "the War Powers Resolution would have to at least be adhered to by the administration." He also pointed out that integrated commands have not necessarily worked very well in the past, and pointed to the example of Somalia.

Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.V.) characterized the plan as "more than dubious," in a commentary in the *New York Times*. As an example of the problems inherent in such a

plan, he cited the U.N. operation in Somalia as “not worth American lives lost and injuries sustained.” Byrd called for the removal of U.S. combat forces from Somalia as soon as possible.

Russian-centered policy

PDD 13 reportedly contains a section on the former Soviet Union and the variety of ethnic and regional conflicts which beset Russia’s periphery. The PDD 13 sections on the former Soviet Union were combined in some press accounts with the appointment of Collins as signalling a “tilt” in U.S. policy away from a “Russian-centered” policy to one giving more U.S. support to the claims of the former U.S.S.R. republics and the regions of the new Russian Federation.

Warning about the dangers of such interventions came in recent editorials in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*, which attacked the idea of sending U.S. troops to the former U.S.S.R. as peacekeepers, or even of direct diplomatic intervention. The *Times* argued that such efforts would be seen by many Russians as humiliating and provocative.

The *Wall Street Journal* warned that the interventions envisioned under PDD 13 could risk both “fanning the flames of Russian nationalism” and “blowing Boris Yeltsin’s reform efforts out of the water.” The editorial was accompanied by a commentary by Therese Raphael, one of its European editors, entitled “Russia and the Perils of Intervention.” Raphael wrote that PDD 13 seemed to be an attempt to correct the imbalance of the present “Russia-centered” U.S. strategy, but she also warned that U.S. and U.N. mediation “is more likely to fan Russian nationalism than to suppress it.” She pointed to the killing of CIA operative Fred Woodruff, which “has all the earmarks of an assassination,” as an example of the dangers of interventionism.

The *Wall Street Journal* contended that “Directive 13 is a tilt away from a Russia-centered policy and toward greater recognition of the ethno-centric claims of new nations on Russia’s periphery.” However, this claim of a “tilt” was denied by a State Department source who argued that there is no new tilt, and that the official U.S. State Department policy is what is called the “new partnership” with Russia — being conducted in the belief that the United States can save Yeltsin and influence Russia positively through this “new partnership” policy.

The leaks around PDD 13 did indeed provoke angry reactions in Russia. *Krasnaya Zvezda* (*Red Star*), the Russian Defense Ministry newspaper, in its Aug. 10 issue, called PDD 13 “blatantly cynical” and “outright brazen interference in the internal affairs of Russia and a number of neighboring states.” It said that it is “an attempt to cause confrontation between the Russian authorities and the Army,” and that it represents “an unconcealed desire to see a headlong collision between the Russian political leadership and the military.”

The liberal *Moscow News* of Aug. 15 said that PDD 13 smacks of “arrogant force” and that Moscow is regarded “not

so much as a partner, [but] as an object of possible U.S. pressure.”

The reactions in both Russia and the United States quickly led the administration to deny any intention of trying to act as a third-party mediator between Russia and its former states, or of having U.S. troops be part of peacekeeping operations in the former Soviet Union. According to the Aug. 23 *Washington Post*, an unnamed “senior administration official” called reporters to the White House to “correct the record” on news reports that the administration was planning direct intervention and direct mediation of disputes in the former Soviet Union.

Likewise, the *New York Times* on Aug. 29 quoted “senior American officials” as denying that the U.S. intends “to intercede in or formally mediate conflicts in the former Soviet Union,” and as proclaiming that the United States “has no intention of getting involved in conflicts within the Russian Federation or intervening in domestic Russian politics.”

One informed Washington source told *EIR* that this was the intention: to float the proposal, let others shoot it down, and then use this as an excuse to do nothing.

Cover for Russian actions

Other Washington intelligence sources contend that Yeltsin himself is not adverse to such a plan, and indeed would favor it under certain circumstances, as a way of weakening his opponents. The Russian government has asked for U.S. support in financing its own “peacekeeping” efforts in the region, so as to bypass the rigid financing requirements on official U.N. peacekeeping forces.

Recently, Russia and the United States obtained U.N. Security Council approval for 88 observers to be sent to Georgia. The Aug. 29 *Boston Globe* reported that, while some in the former Soviet Union see this as an opening for a counterbalance to Russian power in the region, others believe that Russia is backing U.N. involvement in order “to receive an international blessing for reasserting its military might in the former republics.”

Regarding the Georgia operation, the *Globe* quoted former State Department official Paul Goble: “The Russians want to have enough military power inside the Republic of Georgia in order to make sure the government in Tbilisi will be pliant. It’s called neo-imperialism when other countries do it. If the Americans are craven enough to let the Russians have their way on this, then maybe you’ll have in effect a U.S. cover for Russian policy.”

If there is to be any U.S. intervention or “mediation,” a State Department source told *EIR*, it will only be done in “partnership” with Russia. The State Department “will deny it up and down” that it accepts a Russian “Monroe Doctrine,” this source said, but it will show extreme sensitivity to Russian concerns, and U.S. troops won’t get involved in peacekeeping in the former Soviet Union unless there is a “heavy Russian influence” in the peacekeeping forces.