

Tue **Deathbed Conversion for Death Head Diplomat**

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written by [David Swanson](#)

Richard Holbrooke's
Deathbed Conversion
by [David Swanson](#)



For all the talk of strategic counterinsurgency that oozes out of Washington, and all the manuals explaining that 80% of our investment in a nation-building operation should be civilian, we've been investing about 3% of our efforts in Afghanistan into a civilian project the leader of which has described it as a way to support the military. That leader was, until he died yesterday, Richard Holbrooke.

Asked at a U.S. Senate hearing earlier this year what in the world he was doing and toward what end in Afghanistan, Holbrooke repeatedly failed to produce an answer. That could explain his deathbed conversion and his final words to his surgeon:

"You've got to stop this war in Afghanistan." As if his doctor could do what he refused to play any role in.

Before any more makers of war break their own hearts and beg for forgiveness, they should follow the examples of people like Ann Wright and Matthew Hoh and get out of this dirty business themselves while they have some life left in them.

[For complete article features, [please see original at War is a Crime here.](#)]

This short excerpt from [War Is A Lie](#) is relevant here:

When, in 1995, Croatia had slaughtered or "ethnically cleansed" Serbs with Washington's blessing, driving 150,000 people from their homes, we weren't supposed to notice, much less drop bombs to prevent it. The bombing was saved for Milosevic, who — we were told in 1999 — refused to negotiate peace and therefore had to be bombed. We were not told that the United States was insisting on an agreement that no nation in the world would voluntarily agree to, one giving NATO complete freedom to occupy all of Yugoslavia with absolute immunity from laws for all of its personnel.

In the June 14, 1999, issue of The Nation, George Kenney, a former State Department Yugoslavia desk officer, reported:

"An unimpeachable press source who regularly travels with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told this [writer] that, swearing reporters to deep-background confidentiality at the Rambouillet talks, a senior State Department official had bragged that the United States 'deliberately set the bar higher than the Serbs could accept.' The Serbs needed, according to the official, a little bombing to see reason."

Jim Jatras, a foreign policy aide to Senate Republicans, reported in a May 18, 1999, speech at the Cato Institute in Washington that he had it "on good authority" that a "senior Administration official told media at Rambouillet, under embargo" the following: "We intentionally set the bar too high for the Serbs to comply. They need some bombing, and that's what they are going to get."

In interviews with FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting), both Kenney and Jatras asserted that these were actual quotes transcribed by reporters who spoke with a U.S. official.

Negotiating for the impossible, and falsely accusing the other side of noncooperation, is a handy way to launch a "defensive" war. Behind that scheme in 1999 was special U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke.

And here's [something](#) Sam Hussein wrote in December 2008:

Shortly before the bombing of Yugoslavia began in late March 1999, Richard Holbrooke met with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. By his own account, Holbrooke delivered the final ultimatum to Milosevic -- that if Yugoslavia didn't agree to the Rambouillet text, NATO would begin bombing.

The Rambouillet text called for a defacto occupation of Yugoslavia. On major U.S. media, after the bombing of Yugoslavia began, Holbrooke claimed that what was called for in the Rambouillet text, despite Serbian protests, "isn't an occupation". Several weeks later, when confronted by a journalist familiar with the Rambouillet text, Holbrooke claimed: "I never said that". This was a lie, it was also a tacit admission that the Rambouillet text did call for an occupation (why else would Holbrooke deny saying it when he had?) So the U.S. demanded that Yugoslavia submit to occupation or be bombed -- and Holbrooke lied about this crucial fact when questioned about the cause of the war.

Here are the specifics: The [Rambouillet text](#) of Feb. 23, 1999, a month before NATO began bombing, contained provisions that provided for NATO to basically occupy the entire Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), not just Kosovo. Excerpts from Appendix (B) ([I attempted to draw attention to this at the time when I became aware of it.](#)):

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- 7. NATO personnel shall be immune from any form of arrest, investigation, or detention by the authorities in the FRY.
 - 8. NATO personnel shall enjoy... free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout the FRY including associated airspace and territorial waters.
 - 11. NATO is granted the use of airports, roads, rails and ports without payment...
 - 15. [NATO shall have] the right to use all of the electromagnetic spectrum...
-

On April 6, 1999, about two weeks after the bombing began, Holbrooke appeared on the Charlie Rose show and was asked about what started the war. ([Video is here](#), approximate times in the interview are provided):

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[3:45] "The 81 pages of the Rambouillet agreement, which the Serbs rejected, contain all the elements of a really solid interim solution. ... Although Rambouillet itself was rejected, the principles embodied in the Rambouillet agreement make a hell of a lot of sense. ..."

[13:00] "The [Yugoslavian government] decision was to trigger the bombing of their own country instead of accepting this very reasonable political offer." ...

[14:00] Asked how to explain the actions of the Serbs, Holbrooke claims the Serbs said: "The choice you've given us is to have our sacred soil violated by an invading force. I said this isn't an invasion, it isn't an occupation, it's an international peacekeeping force that will save the Serb minority in Kosovo. ..."

[15:00] "We walked the last mile for peace."

[17:00] "The bombing must continue and must intensify until the Yugoslav leadership realizes they have to change their positions."

On April 23, 1999, journalist Jeremy Scahill of Democracy Now questioned Richard Holbrooke as he was leaving the Overseas Press Club's 60th anniversary dinner:

Holbrooke: "One question."

Jeremy Scahill: "You've said, since you gave the ultimatum to President Milosevic, that the Rambouillet accords do not call for the occupation of Yugoslavia. In --"

Holbrooke: "I never said that. That's the end of that. You got the wrong person and the wrong quote. That's your question."

Scahill: "Do the Rambouillet accords ... Are the the Rambouillet accords a call for the occupation of Yugoslavia -- how do you reconcile that with Appendix B?"

Holbrooke: "I was not at Rambouillet. You'll have to address it to the people --"

Scahill: "You delivered the ultimatum, you're familiar with with the text --"

Holbrooke: "I did not discuss that detail with him. That's your question."

Scahill: "You haven't answered the question though."

Holbrooke: "I have answered the question. Good night." (See the [April 23, 1999 Democracy Now, especially beginning at 29:00.](#))

It's tempting for many to think that the current Bush administration and the 2003 invasion of Iraq are totally unique. They're not, the methods of the U.S. government lying its way into a war are long standing and many of the culprits are still very much part of the political structure.

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