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Remarks by Ambassador Richard S. Williamson, United States Alternate Representative to the United Nations, on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the Security Council Stake-Out, June 19, 2002

Ambassador Williamson: Does anyone want to ask questions?

Reporter: Could you tell us what the intent of the United States in circulating this draft resolution was?

Ambassador Williamson: Sure.

Reporter: And what's going to happen if it is or it isn't (inaudible)

Ambassador Williamson: I think there are three fundamental principals involved that we tried again to reiterate in the Council. 1) We recognize the right of sovereign states to make decisions in their interest and therefore recognize the right of those states to decide to join the International Criminal Court and in this exercise we're not trying to change their position but 2) the United States also has a sovereign right and has made a decision not to join the International Criminal Court and the other members of the Security Council will not change our position. So therefore 3) All the members of the Security Council, including the United States support and have supported the effectiveness of U.N. peacekeeping around the world and we hope to find a pragmatic way in which we can strengthen peacekeeping while respecting the United States position that we will not put American men or women under the reach of the International Criminal Court while serving in a United Nations peacekeeping operation. Period.

Reporter: And what happens if you don't get your way? Are you talking about withdrawing all U.S. personnel from the blue-helmeted U.N. operations and U.N. authorized state operations like Kosovo and Bosnia?

Ambassador Williamson: Obviously the whole spectrum of United Nations peacekeeping operations will have to be reviewed if we are unsuccessful at getting the protections we demand be in place for U.N. peacekeeping operations to have United States citizens participate.

Reporter: If the Bosnia and Herzegovina resolution is not going to include the proposed amendment in the paragraph you're contributing, will you vote for it?

Ambassador Williamson: We've made clear that we need to have the ICC issue addressed before we could support a resolution.

Reporter: Is this some diplomatic blackmail as critics would say?

Ambassador Williamson: No, it's part of what I call the normal diplomatic dialogue - try to get a discussion and a resolution. Every one of our colleagues on the Security Council reiterated their desire to seek a pragmatic solution to address our concerns. We think that can and should be possible - we've tendered two resolutions in draft form that we think could take care of our concerns. We've invited input from others, but the bottom line that the United States will not

endanger U.S. citizens to the reach of the ICC treaty, that we have not agreed to, is firm principal that has been laid out by the U.S. government time and again.

Reporter: Last month the U.S. Ambassador Negroponte raised the possibility of other ways of achieving this goal including bilateral agreements between the United States and other countries where it's got its troops and personnel stationed. Does this remain a possibility?

Ambassador Williamson: Well, there are a series of bilateral agreements in the international arena, the so-called SOFA, Status of force agreement, SOMA, Status of mission understandings that the U.N. has, so-called Article 98 agreements - all of which are helpful but the U.S. position is they are not adequate in and of themselves to protect U.S. citizens under U.N. peacekeeping operations.

Reporter: (inaudible)

Ambassador Williamson: I wouldn't characterize it as an implicit threat. We're stating that the United States, just like every other country, has an obligation to pursue its national interests. We've made our views very well known on the ICC. We've now made our concerns known about the ICC reach potentially to American men and women servicing in U.N. peacekeeping operations.

Reporter: One more question. Can you (inaudible) off a few of the differences that this resolution (inaudible), a few of the extra protections that are not implicit in the SOFAs and SOMAs?

Ambassador Williamson: The view of the lawyers is that a U.N. resolution has a more blanket effect. SOMAs and SOFAs are bilateral so therefore travel to a third country would not necessarily be covered.

Reporter: Is that the only one or are there others?

Ambassador Williamson: That's the one that comes to my mind right this second, but if you call Nic Rostow he might be able to give you more. Thanks very much.