William J. Clinton
Presidential History Project

Briefing Materials
Samuel R. Berger
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SAMUEL R. BERGER TIMELINE
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1972  Berger serves as a speechwriter for George McGovern during his campaign against President Richard Nixon. During the campaign, he becomes friends with Bill Clinton, who is a field organizer for the campaign. (The Washington Post, 12/06/1996)

1972-73  Berger works as a legislative aide for New York City Mayor John V. Lindsay.

1973-77  Berger joins the Hogan & Hartson law firm in Washington, D.C., where he specializes in international trade.

1977-80  Berger serves as Deputy Director of Policy Planning for the State Department in the Carter Administration. During his tenure in the Administration, Berger also works as a speechwriter for President Carter and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance.

1980-92  Following Ronald Reagan’s defeat of Carter in the 1980 presidential election, Berger returns to Hogan & Hartson as a partner and director of the firm’s international trade group.

1992  Berger serves as Clinton’s Senior Foreign Policy Adviser during the 1992 presidential campaign. (“Biography of Samuel R. Berger”)

December  Berger serves as Director of National Security for the Clinton-Gore Transition. (“Biography of Samuel R. Berger”)

December  Berger is reportedly offered the position of Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, but suggests W. Anthony Lake, a former Special Assistant to Henry Kissinger, for the post. Lake accepts and Berger is named Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. (The New York Times, 12/23/1992, 08/25/1999)

1993

January  President-elect Clinton meets with Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari in Texas. Several key foreign policy officials from the incoming
administration, including Berger and Vice President Al Gore, also attend the meeting. (*The New York Times*, 01/08/1993)

In his last week in office, President Bush launches a cruise missile attack on an Iraqi nuclear installation. Clinton releases a statement in support of the attack: “Saddam Hussein’s continuing provocation has been met by appropriate and forceful response. I fully support President Bush’s action.” (*The New York Times*, 01/18/1993)

Berger attends a meeting at the White House between President Clinton and top military and Administration officials on homosexuals in the military, during which the Chiefs of Staff of the four military services each express opposition to Clinton’s proposal to remove restrictions on their service. (Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994, pp. 46-47)

Febr[uary](#) President Clinton says an economic recovery plan, a health care plan, welfare reform, political reform, and national service are his priorities during his first 100 days in office. The media notes the absence of any foreign policy issue among these goals, and speculates that Clinton has essentially delegated the formulation of the Administration’s foreign policy to Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Defense Secretary Les Aspin, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Anthony Lake, and Berger. (*The New York Times*, 02/08/1993)

President Clinton commissions the National Security Council to examine U.S. efforts in Somalia and Bosnia. Berger heads the group charged with constructing this policy. (*The New York Times*, 09/23/1993)

Six civilians are killed and over 1,000 wounded when terrorists bomb New York City’s World Trade Center on the 26th. (*The Washington Post*, 02/26/1993)

March North Korea announces its intention to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in protest of international pressure for inspections of suspected clandestine nuclear sites. (*USA Today*, 03/12/1993)

On the 16th, exiled Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide meets with President Clinton in the White House to discuss America’s role in restoring democracy to the island nation. Clinton expresses his desire to have Aristide return to power, but declines to endorse Aristide’s call for a solid date of return. (*The Washington Post*, 03/17/1993)

April On his way to the G-7 summit in Tokyo, President Clinton holds two days of talks with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in Vancouver, British Columbia. The leaders agree that the U.S. will extend economic aid to
Russia in return for progress on democracy and human rights. (*Financial Times*-London, 04/06/1993)

**May**

Following a four-hour meeting with his top national security advisers, President Clinton agrees in principle to commit American air power to halt fighting in Bosnia. He dispatches Secretary of State Christopher to Europe to gain the support of America’s allies before making a final decision on the use of force. (*The New York Times*, 05/02/1993)


**June**

North Korea backs off its threat to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, after reaching an agreement with the U.S. on the 11th. However, the government in Pyongyang still refuses to agree to inspections of its nuclear facilities. (*The Washington Post*, 06/12/1993)

On the 26th, the Clinton Administration orders a missile strike on Iraq’s intelligence headquarters in retaliation for Baghdad’s role in an attempted assassination plot against former President Bush during an April 1993 trip to Kuwait. Plans for the strike are kept from the public in order to maintain the element of surprise, with only select members of the national security team and White House staff involved. The media credits Berger and Lake with successfully managing the operation. (*The New York Times*, 06/28/1993)

**July**

Haitian military leader General Raul Cedras accepts the UN-negotiated Governors Island Accord, which assures the safety and eventual return to power of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was overthrown by a military junta in December 1990. President Clinton says the compromise marks a historic moment for Haiti, the Western Hemisphere, and the “principle of democratic rule.” (*The Christian Science Monitor*, 07/06/1993)

The National Security Council group headed by Berger, charged with formulating a new military peacekeeping policy, approves a draft that commits the U.S. to deploy peacekeeping troops “on a case-by-case basis” and to place troops under the “operational control” of United Nations military command on a regular basis. Opposition to the proposal leads Lake to call for more limited criteria for deploying troops in peacekeeping efforts. (*The New York Times*, 09/23/1993)

**August**

Pope John Paul II meets with President Clinton at Regis University in Denver, Colorado. Berger and Raymond L. Flynn, U.S. Ambassador to
the Vatican, join Clinton and Pope John Paul after their private meeting.  

**September**  
President Clinton, Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin appear together on the White House lawn to celebrate the signing of the 1993 Declaration of Principles, known as the Oslo Accords, which contains plans for a limited Palestinian self-rule.  
(The Boston Globe, 09/14/1993)

**October**  
Eighteen U.S. soldiers are killed, seventy-five wounded, and one pilot, Michael Durant, is captured alive during a firefight in Mogadishu, Somalia on the 3rd.  

A shipload of American and Canadian military engineers, sent to retrain the Haitian police forces, are met at the dock by armed mobs shouting anti-American chants, forcing their ship to turn back.  
(Chicago Sun-Times, 10/12/1993)

**December**  
President Clinton signs the bill implementing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on the 8th.  
During the signing ceremony, Clinton says global trade is an irresistible force and urges other countries to work with the U.S. on a more comprehensive free trade agreement.  
(San Francisco Chronicle, 12/09/1993)

**1994**

**February**  
Secretary of Defense Les Aspin resigns from office on the 3rd.  
He is replaced by William Perry, who is confirmed by the Senate, 97 to 0.  
(Chicago Sun-Times, 02/04/1994)

**March**  
The last American peacekeeping forces pull out of Somalia on the 25th.  

**April**  
NATO begins air strikes on Bosnian Serb ground positions after Serbian tanks attacked Gorazde, a Muslim “safe haven,” and a contingent of UN military observers and aid workers.  
President Clinton asserts the U.S. must “be firm” with the Serbs and warns that NATO will bomb more targets “if we are requested” in order to protect UN forces in the region.  
(USA Today, 04/11/1994)

**May**  
Berger and Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott hold a closed-door meeting with lawmakers on Capitol Hill to discuss the Administration’s new Haiti policy.  
The new plan, which strongly increases pressure on the Haitian military to relinquish control and even leaves open the
possibility of U.S. military action, draws sharp criticism from some members of Congress. *(The New York Times, 05/04/1994)*

The Clinton Administration approves Presidential Decision Directive 25, a presidential study on peacekeeping operations that dramatically revises the policy on national building and humanitarian intervention. The directive states that to use substantial military force, a vital national or allied interest must be at stake, and there must be a clear commitment to win. *(William G. Hyland, *Clinton’s World: Remaking American Foreign Policy*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999, p. 64)*

**August**

In an effort to deter Cuban immigration to the U.S., the Clinton Administration reverses the 35-year-old policy of granting asylum to most Cuban refugees and decides to send them to the American military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. *(The New York Times, 05/21/1995)*

**September**

After conducting talks with the Cuban government in New York, the Clinton Administration elicits a promise from Havana to end the flow of boat people into the United States, marking a victory for the Administration. The media reports that since Lake and Christopher were on vacation while the issue came to a head, Berger, Under Secretary of State Peter Tarnoff, and Chief of Staff Leon Panetta managed Cuba policy during this time. *(The New York Times, 09/11/1994)*

On the 15th, President Clinton addresses the nation on the situation in Haiti. He says the U.S. has exhausted diplomatic efforts and is prepared to use military force to remove the junta of General Raul Cedras from power: “The message of the United States to the Haitian dictators is clear. Your time is up. Leave now or we will force you from power.” The junta agrees to relinquish authority and Jean-Bertrand Aristide is restored to power. *(The New York Times, 09/16/1994, 09/19/1994)*

**December**

On the 1st, a bipartisan coalition in the Senate approves the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) by a vote of 76 to 24. President Clinton signs the agreement on the 8th. *(The Boston Globe, 12/02/1994, 12/09/1994)*

The Pentagon announces it will send 3,000 Marines back to Somalia to provide “cover” for the evacuation of the remaining 14,000 UN peacekeeping troops in Mogadishu. Clinton approves the action during a meeting with his national security team, including Berger. *(The New York Times, 12/17/1994)*
January  After Deputy Defense Secretary John Deutch expresses reservations about leaving the Pentagon to become the new Director of Central Intelligence, the media speculates that Berger is among the possible candidates to fill the intelligence chief’s position. (The New York Times, 01/19/1995)


March  Following the failed nomination of retired Air Force General Michael P.C. Carns, President Clinton nominates Deutch as Director of Central Intelligence. (The Washington Post, 03/12/1995)

The White House announces President Clinton will issue a directive preventing American oil companies from making business agreements with Iran. Berger is part of the Administration group that formulates the directive. (The New York Times, 03/15/1995)

April  On the 19th, a bomb explodes outside a federal building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, killing 168 people. Berger joins a large group of top officials in Chief of Staff Leon Panetta’s office to assess the situation and President Clinton’s response. (Elizabeth Drew, Showdown: The Struggle Between the Gingrich Congress and the Clinton White House, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997, p. 195)

In response to state-sponsored terrorism on the part of the Iranian government, President Clinton announces that the U.S. will end all trade and investment with Iran. Of the decision, Clinton says, “I am convinced that a trade embargo with Iran is the most effective way our nation can help curb Iran’s drive to acquire devastating weapons and support terrorist activities.” (The Times-London, 05/01/1995)

May  The Clinton Administration announces that the 21,000 Cuban refugees being held at Guantanamo Bay will be admitted into the U.S., but any new refugees picked up at sea will be sent back to Cuba, reversing over three decades of Cuba policy. A group composed of Berger, Special Assistant to the President Morton Halperin, and Under Secretary of State Peter Tarnoff constructs the policy. (The New York Times, 05/21/1995)

August  On the 30th, NATO forces begin “Operation Deliberate Force,” a sixteen-day bombing campaign against Bosnian Serbs in response to their attacks on Sarajevo. The campaign ends after the Serbs agree to remove heavy weapons from the region around the capital and to open two major roads
and the airport in Sarajevo. The agreement, reached after two days of shuttle diplomacy by U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke, also includes provisions for talks between the Serbs and Bosnia’s Muslim-led government for a broader cease-fire. *(The New York Times, 08/31/1995; Chicago Sun-Times, 09/15/1995)*

**September**  
Berger tells the United States Export-Import Bank not to give financial support to China’s massive Three Gorges Dam project due to environmental and human rights concerns arising during the construction of the dam. *(The New York Times, 01/15/1996)*

On the 28th, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat sign a peace accord transferring power over much of the West Bank to Palestinian authority. Under the agreement, Israel will withdraw its military forces from most of the West Bank by March 30, 1996, and will transfer authority to a new, elected Palestinian council. *(The New York Times, 09/29/1995)*

**October**  
After three and a half years of fighting, a Bosnian cease-fire agreement is reached on the 10th. *(The New York Times, 10/12/1995)*

The United Nations begins a three-day session to celebrate its 50th anniversary. During the session, President Clinton meets with Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Chinese President Jiang Zemin. Clinton’s meeting with Jiang is part of an effort to repair Sino-American relations after recent disagreements over Taiwan and human rights issues. White House Press Secretary Michael McCurry describes the meeting as “the best of three meetings” between the two leaders and one that will “help improve the opportunity for comprehensive engagement with China.” *(The New York Times, 10/25/1995)*

**November**  
Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated in Tel Aviv on the 4th. *(The New York Times, 11/05/1995)*

On the 13th, a car bomb explodes outside a U.S. military training facility in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, killing six soldiers and wounding sixty. President Clinton calls the attack “a hideous act” of terrorism and vows to “devote an enormous effort” to find those responsible. *(Houston Chronicle, 11/14/1995)*

On the 21st, the presidents of Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia sign the Dayton Peace Accords, bringing the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina to an end. The accord partitions Bosnia into a Muslim-Croat federation and a Bosnian Serb entity, united under a weak central government. Under the agreement, American troops will be sent to the region to maintain the accord. *(The Washington Post, 11/22/1995)*
President Clinton travels to Northern Ireland in an effort to turn a fifteen-month cease-fire between Protestants and Catholics into a permanent peace agreement. Clinton, the first U.S. president to visit Northern Ireland, calls on both sides to abandon “old habits and hard grudges” and end the longstanding dispute. (The Washington Post, 12/01/1995)

December

In a 69 to 30 vote, the Senate approves the deployment of U.S. soldiers to enforce the Bosnian peace agreement. The resolution earns the support of 24 of the Senate’s 53 Republican members after it is agreed that the U.S. will lead the international effort to arm and train Bosnian Muslim troops. President Clinton travels to Paris on the 14th to witness the signing of the accord. (The New York Times, 12/14/1995)

On the 15th, the U.S. and North Korea conclude a $4.5 billion agreement whereby the U.S. gives North Korea two light-water nuclear reactors in exchange for a North Korean pledge to freeze its nuclear development program. (The Washington Post, 12/16/1995)

1996

March

Berger and Peter Tarnoff hold a secret meeting in New York City with Taiwan’s National Security Adviser. This is the highest-level meeting between the U.S. and Taiwanese government since formal diplomatic ties ended in 1979. (Warren Christopher, In the Stream of History: Shaping Foreign Policy for a New Era, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 427n)

Berger and Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott travel to Azerbaijan and Armenia to negotiate a settlement between the two nations over the war-torn region of Nagorno-Karabakh. (The New York Times, 03/14/1996)

June

Twenty-three Americans are killed and nearly 250 injured after terrorists detonate a truck bomb at the Khobar Towers military complex in Saudi Arabia. (The Washington Post, 06/26/1996)

July

After a long and bitter campaign, Russian President Boris Yeltsin wins reelection over Communist Party candidate Gennady Zyuganov by 13.3 percent. Yeltsin sounds a conciliatory tone after the election, pledging to work with all parties, even the communists, in order to unite the country. Zyuganov, on the other hand, promises that “if the social and economic status of our citizens continues to deteriorate, I do not rule out the possibility of mass riots.” (The New York Times, 07/05/1996)

September

On the 24th, President Clinton travels to the United Nations building in New York City to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. In a speech to the General Assembly, Clinton hails the treaty as “the longest-
Berger: 1996-1997

sought, hardest-fought prize in arms control history.” (USA Today, 09/25/1996)

October
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat meet for a two-day summit in Washington, D.C. in an attempt to rejuvenate the stalled Mideast peace process. (Financial Times—London, 10/02/1996)

November
The media reports that Berger is a possible candidate for the positions of White House Chief of Staff and Director of the National Economic Council in a second Clinton term. (The New York Times, 11/08/1996, 11/10/1996)

President Clinton takes his first foreign trip since his reelection, making stops in Australia and Thailand, and attending an Asian-Pacific economic conference in the Philippines. Berger says the trip signals the importance the Administration will place on Asia policy during the second term. He says, “In a global economy, in a post-Cold War world, America must look to the East no less than to the West.” (The New York Times, 11/17/1996)

December
President Clinton announces the appointment or nomination of four new members of his national security team; Berger as Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Madeleine Albright as Secretary of State, William Cohen as Secretary of Defense, and Anthony Lake as Director of Central Intelligence. (The New York Times, 12/06/1996)

In an appearance on ABC’s “This Week,” Berger says the U.S. will pursue “better and more effective steps” to capture Bosnian war criminals and put them on trial at the International Criminal Court. He says the 1995 Dayton Accord is “an unfinished work” that the world community’s “going to have to push at every day.” (The Washington Post, 12/09/1996)

1997

March
Berger outlines “six key strategic objectives” for the Clinton Administration’s foreign policy during the second term: “working for an undivided, democratic peaceful Europe, forging a strong, stable Asia Pacific community, embracing our role as a decisive force for peace in the world, building the bulwarks through a more open and competitive trading system, and maintaining a strong military and fully funded diplomacy.” (James M. McCormick, “Clinton and Foreign Policy: Some Legacies for a New Century,” in The Postmodern Presidency: Bill Clinton’s Legacy in U.S. Politics, Steven E. Schier, ed., Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000, p. 65)
Berger, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy General Barry McCaffrey, special envoy for the Americas Thomas McLarty, and NSC Director for Latin America James Dobbins travel to Mexico to meet with President Ernesto Zedillo and his senior aides. The two parties discuss joint anti-drug efforts and preparations for President Clinton’s upcoming visit to Mexico in April. The media speculates that the main reason for the visit is to pressure President Zedillo to fight a tougher war on drugs, due in large part to Congress’s increasingly vocal charges that the Administration is being “soft” on Mexico. (*The New York Times*, 03/06/1997, 03/08/1997)

At a White House news conference, Berger and Secretary of State Albright maintain that NATO enlargement will continue this summer as scheduled whether Russia likes it or not. They emphasize the Administration’s hopes of improving relations with Russia, but they will not cede any ground on offering former Warsaw Pact countries membership into the organization. (*The Washington Post*, 03/19/1997)

A compromise between the White House and the Senate over the certification of Mexico as an ally in the war on drugs collapses over the severity of conditions to be placed on Mexico. Berger is part of a group of Administration officials sent to Capitol Hill to work out an agreement. (*The New York Times*, 03/19/1997)

Anthony Lake withdraws his nomination as Director of Central Intelligence after a long and difficult confirmation process. George Tenet, Deputy Director for the CIA since 1995 and acting Director for the previous three months, is nominated for the top post on the 19th. (*The Washington Post*, 03/18/1997, 03/20/1997)

President Clinton travels to Helsinki, Finland for a two-day summit with Russian President Boris Yeltsin. The summit brings no major breakthroughs on arms control negotiations, with the only agreement being a four-year delay on the implementation of SALT II. The mood between the two leaders is noticeably cool during the meeting. (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 03/23/1997)

In an appearance at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Berger notes the gravity of the charges of Chinese interference in American politics and promises to take “appropriate action” if evidence shows any signs of wrongdoing. On the other hand, Berger defends the Administration’s policy of engagement with China, saying the U.S. has “an extraordinarily important interest” in fostering a better relationship with Beijing. (*The New York Times*, 03/28/1997)
April  Berger announces he is instituting new rules to limit the Democratic National Committee’s access to his staff and to screen foreign visitors to the White House. (*The New York Times*, 04/21/1997)

The Senate votes, 74 to 26, to approve the Chemical Weapons Convention, marking the first major foreign policy success of President Clinton’s second term. (*The New York Times*, 04/25/1997)

May  President Clinton, Boris Yeltsin, and NATO leaders sign a “Founding Act” of mutual cooperation and security between Russia and NATO. Berger says the agreement is “a reflection of the momentum of today, in which Russia and NATO entered a new era.” (*The New York Times*, 05/28/1997)

June  In an interview at the White House, Berger says Congress’s decision to continue most-favored nation trade status with China remains “an open question” as opposition to China increases on both the left and the right. He says it is difficult for the Administration to improve relations with China “if we don’t have a national consensus behind the policy.” (*The New York Times*, 06/07/1997)

July  Formal invitations for NATO membership are agreed upon for Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary at the NATO summit in Madrid. (*The Washington Post*, 07/11/1997)

August  Berger travels to Beijing to hold talks with Chinese President Jiang Zemin, Prime Minister Li Peng, and other senior officials. The main topics discussed are improving bilateral relations and preparing for Jiang’s trip to the United States in October. (*The New York Times*, 08/13/1997)

The media reports that Berger is on the shortlist of possible candidates to replace White House Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles, who is expected to leave his post in the near future. (*Business Week*, 08/25/1997)

September  Berger appears before the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee to answer questions for the congressional investigation into improper fundraising activities by the Clinton campaign during the 1996 presidential race. Berger denies any impropriety on his part during the campaign, but says the White House lacked an effective vetting system for people seeing President Clinton, something which Berger addressed just months into the new term. (*The Washington Post*, 09/12/1997)

In a speech at Georgetown University, Berger says U.S. and European troops will likely remain in Bosnia past the scheduled withdrawal date next June. He tells the crowd that it is imperative for troops to remain in
order to bring peace to southeastern Europe and maintain the credibility of NATO. (*The New York Times*, 09/24/1997)

**October**  Chinese President Jiang Zemin conducts a two-day state visit with President Clinton at the White House. During the meetings, the two leaders agree on a series of measures, including a pledge for future meetings between the two nations, the setup of a presidential hotline, a Chinese promise to cut tariffs on high-tech imports, and the U.S. sale of 50 Boeing aircraft, worth $3 billion. The most significant agreement reached is a lifting of the U.S. ban on exports of non-military nuclear reactors to China in return for a Chinese promise to limit nuclear trade with rogue states. (*The Economist*, 11/01/1997)

**November**  Berger agrees to pay $23,043 to settle a civil conflict-of-interest lawsuit brought against him by the Justice Department for failing to sell 1,300 shares of Amoco Corporation stock for fifteen months after government attorneys advised him to do so. (*The Washington Post*, 11/11/1997)

**December**  On the 18th, President Clinton announces American peacekeeping forces will remain in Bosnia past the June 1998 deadline without a definite return date. Clinton admits that the administration misjudged how long troops would remain in the region, and says that until Bosnia achieves a “self-sustaining, secure environment,” removing American troops could lead to a renewal of ethnic violence. (*The Washington Post*, 12/19/1997)

**1998**

**January**  On the 16th, President Clinton signs the “Charter of Friendship” agreement, requiring the United States to advocate early membership for Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania in NATO. Although the agreement is not a guarantee for NATO membership, Clinton promises “America is determined to create the conditions under which Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia can one day walk through that door.” (*The New York Times*, 01/17/1998)

**February**  In an address before the National Press Club, Berger says that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein’s chemical and biological weapons capabilities pose a threat to American national security. He also warns that the U.S. “will be prepared to act again if we have evidence (Saddam) is trying to rebuild his weapons of mass destruction capabilities.” (*The Jerusalem Post*, 02/15/1998)

Berger, Cohen, and Albright present the Administration’s Iraq policy to an audience at Ohio State University. The presentation is interrupted several times by jeers from opponents of the Administration’s policy, some of whom complain that the U.S. is acting too aggressively in Iraq, and others
who argue that they are not doing enough. (*The New York Times*, 02/19/1998)

**March**

The Clinton Administration calls on the United Nations to extend the peacekeeping force now stationed in Macedonia in order to prevent violence in neighboring Kosovo from getting out of control. The mandate for the 700-member force is set to expire August 31st. Berger says he hopes Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic gets the message “that the international community will not tolerate violent suppression of the Kosovans.” (*USA Today*, 03/13/1998)

After the Indonesian military suggests it may suppress the growing wave of student protests against the regime of President Suharto, Berger warns that the U.S. will “condemn violence from any source in Indonesia” and encourages Suharto to make efforts to reform the deteriorating Indonesian economy. (*USA Today*, 03/13/1998)

The House and Senate each pass measures rebuking the Clinton Administration for not seeking a United Nations resolution condemning China’s human rights violations. Days before the House passed the measure by a vote of 397 to 0, the Administration announced it would break with past policy and not seek UN condemnation, pointing to positive strides China has made on human rights issues in the past year. (*1998 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1999, p. 16:37)

**April**

Catholic and Protestant leaders sign the Good Friday Peace Accords in Northern Ireland. Former U.S. Senator George Mitchell leads the negotiations between the eight participating parties to conclude the most important agreement since the founding of Northern Ireland 77 years earlier. (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 04/11/1998)

On the 30th, the Senate votes, 80 to 19, to amend the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty and admit Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic into NATO. (*1998 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 8:21)

**May**

India surprises the world by completing three underground nuclear tests. President Clinton reacts to the event by calling the tests a “fundamental mistake.” (*Newsweek*, 05/25/1998)

The House of Representatives votes to cut off satellite trade with China. (*1998 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 16:24)

**June**

Berger: 1998

Berger travels to Beijing to finalize the agenda for President Clinton’s upcoming visit to China. Berger is expected to discuss a wide range of issues with Chinese officials, including environment and energy issues, military cooperation, Chinese entry into the World Trade Organization, human rights issues, and nuclear weapons proliferation, particularly in the wake of recent nuclear tests in India and Pakistan. (South China Morning Post—Hong Kong, 05/29/1998)

President Clinton travels to Beijing to begin a nine-day, five-city tour of China and to hold a summit with Chinese President Jiang Zemin. During the summit, President Clinton praises the Chinese leadership and expresses optimism that China is heading toward greater democracy and freedom. (The New York Times, 07/04/1998)

July

The House of Representatives votes, 264 to 166, against a resolution opposing President Clinton’s decision to continue normal trade relations with China for another year. (1998 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 16:34)

By a vote of 390 to 1, the House of Representatives passes a resolution reaffirming America’s commitment to the security of Taiwan as stated in the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act. The Senate also passes a similar measure. (1998 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 16:37)

August

President Clinton orders air strikes on a chemical plant in Sudan and terrorist camps in Afghanistan in response to the August 7th terrorist attacks on U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, which killed 263 people, including 12 Americans. “Our target was terror,” President Clinton said in an address to the nation following the attacks. (USA Today, 08/21/1998)

September

President Clinton travels to Moscow for a summit with Russian President Boris Yeltsin. Yeltsin praises Russia’s good relationship with the U.S., but expresses his displeasure at the American bombing of terrorist sites in Sudan and Afghanistan, and the recent NATO expansion. (The Boston Globe, 09/03/1998)

October

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat sign the Wye River Memorandum on the 23rd. The agreement puts a greater amount of the West Bank under Palestinian control in return for increased efforts to protect Israel’s security, and clears a path for negotiations on a permanent settlement. (Chicago Sun-Times, 10/25/1998)

November

President Clinton approves a substantial bombing raid in Iraq in response to Saddam Hussein’s non-compliance with UN weapons inspections, but the action is canceled after Hussein promises to resume inspections.

President Clinton orders a group of B-52 warplanes to the Persian Gulf to prepare for possible air strikes against Iraq in response to Baghdad’s consistent refusal to allow UN weapons inspectors inside its borders. The announcement comes just hours after Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz agrees to allow weapons inspectors to return immediately. Berger, believing that the latest offer is just another delay tactic, calls the proposal “unacceptable” and says the U.S. is “poised to take military action.” (*The Toronto Sun*, 11/15/1998)

**December**

In a speech at Stanford University, Berger says the Administration will work “in a practical and effective way” to destabilize Saddam Hussein and eventually bring regime change in Iraq, using “effective force if necessary” to complete the task. Berger cautions, however, that “change in Iraq will take time.” (*The Washington Post*, 12/09/1998)

The Clinton Administration, in coordination with Great Britain, launches missile strikes in Iraq from the 16th to the 19th to destroy the nation’s weapons of mass destruction program. President Clinton declares he is “confident we have achieved our mission,” but does not rule out the possibility of future strikes if Saddam Hussein attempts to rebuild his chemical or biological weapons programs, or threatens his neighbors. (*The New York Times*, 12/20/1998)

In a speech before the National Press Club, Berger says U.S. policy in Iraq is limited to two outcomes: either total Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions, which Berger says is unlikely, or regime change in Iraq, which he says is inevitable. He says, “Change will come to Iraq, at a time and in a manner that we can influence but not predict.” (*The Washington Post*, 12/24/1998)

President Clinton says the Mideast peace process is “back on track” after meeting with Netanyahu and Arafat. Berger tells the media that the peace process is “a bumpy track.” (*Newsweek*, 12/28/1998)

**1999**

**March**

Berger offers his strongest statement yet concerning China’s acquisition of important U.S. military intelligence, saying “there’s no question” they benefited from the information leaked from Los Alamos National Laboratory. (*The New York Times*, 03/15/1999)
The Senate passes a resolution in support of NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia, which begin the next day in order to force a Serbian withdrawal from Kosovo. (*1999 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2000, p. 14:19)

**April**

On the 28th, in a tie vote, the House of Representatives rejects the March 23rd Senate resolution in support of the NATO air assault in Yugoslavia. The same day, the House also approves a measure prohibiting the use of ground troops in Kosovo unless authorized by law. (*1999 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 14:19)

**May**

On the 4th, the Senate tables a resolution that would have given President Clinton the authority to use “all necessary force” in Kosovo. Then, on the 25th, the Senate tables an amendment to the 2000 defense authorization bill proposed by Arlen Specter (R-PA) which prohibits ground troops in Kosovo except in peacekeeping efforts unless Congress authorizes their use either through a joint resolution or a declaration of war. (*1999 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 14:19)

Berger and Attorney General Janet Reno say they have no intention of resigning in the face of criticism from some Republicans in Congress who argue that neither of them was aggressive enough in investigating allegations of Chinese spying at U.S. nuclear technology sites. (*USA Today*, 05/28/1999)

Berger presents President Clinton with a covert plan to destabilize Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic. Clinton supports the plan and decides to issue a finding authorizing the CIA to begin training Kosovar rebels in sabotage tactics to undermine public support for Milosevic and damage targets inside Serbia that are unreachable through air power. The finding also instructs the CIA to initiate a cyberwar against Milosevic by tapping into, and disrupting, his foreign bank accounts. Berger appears before the House and Senate Intelligence Committees to brief the members on the clandestine operation. (*Newsweek*, 05/31/1999)

**June**

Berger submits a plan to send NATO ground troops to Kosovo if negotiations with Milosevic fail. The proposed operation, called Plan B-minus, would send 175,000 NATO troops, including 100,000 Americans, to invade in early September. (Sidney Blumenthal, *The Clinton Wars*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003, pp. 648-649)

Berger appears before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence to answer questions about the White House’s response to allegations of Chinese espionage into U.S. nuclear intelligence. (*The Washington Post*, 07/01/1999)
Berger: 1999-2000

September

President Clinton meets with Chinese President Jiang Zemin at the Pacific Rim summit in New Zealand. Berger says that Sino-American relations are back on track after the mistaken U.S. bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in May. Berger also says the two leaders agreed to resume talks on bringing China into the World Trade Organization as early as January, 2000. (Newsweek, 09/20/1999)

October

The Senate votes, 51 to 49, to reject the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. (The New York Times, 10/16/1999)

President Clinton vetoes the fiscal year 2000 foreign aid spending bill on the 18th. He argues that the bill, $1.9 billion less than his budget requested, is part of a slide by the GOP toward isolationism. During a news conference, Clinton says the bill “seems to me to be the next big chapter in American isolationism, right after the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.” (1999 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 2:73)

In a speech at the Council on Foreign Relations, Berger responds to the recent defeat of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in the Senate and criticizes the “new isolationists” in Congress who seek to build “a fortified fence around America.” His comments are intended to open a debate over America’s role in the world “between leading the world and hunkering down.” (The New York Times, 10/22/1999)

November

On the 15th, the Clinton Administration reaches a trade agreement with the Beijing government that will pave the way for China’s entry into the World Trade Organization, as long as the U.S. Congress approves permanent normal trade relations in 2000. (1999 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 23:3)

2000

January

During a major foreign policy address at the National Press Club, Berger warns that Russia could reemerge as a threat to the U.S. if it continues its move toward nationalism. This, Berger says, means that the U.S. has “a stake in Russia’s success,” and that “the world will be watching very carefully” to ensure that acting President Vladimir Putin protects the democratic process in the upcoming March presidential elections. (The Washington Post, 01/07/2000)

Berger gives the first account of American efforts to prevent terrorist attacks during the New Year holiday. Berger says, “Terrorist cells were disrupted in eight countries and attacks were almost certainly prevented” due to “the largest U.S. counterterrorism operation in history.” (The San Diego Union-Tribune, 01/07/2000)
February

President Clinton, Berger, Attorney General Janet Reno, and Commerce Secretary William Daley are among a large list of business and political leaders attending the White House Internet security summit. The summit is organized to discuss ways that the private and public sectors can work together to address Internet vulnerability, particularly in the face of recent high-profile cyber attacks on major Internet companies and websites. (*The Industry Standard*, 02/21/2000)

May

President Clinton and his top aides increase pressure on Congress to pass a bill approving permanent normal trade relations with China. In an address at Columbia University, Berger says, “Rejecting permanent normal trade relations would be the worst possible blow to the best possible hope we have had in 30 years to encourage positive change in China.” (*The New York Times*, 05/02/2000)


June

President Clinton travels to Moscow for a two-day summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The main issue discussed during the summit is the prospective U.S. missile defense system, but no major breakthroughs on the subject are achieved. President Clinton also delivers an address to the Russian Parliament. (*Houston Chronicle*, 06/06/2000)

July

A disappointed President Clinton announces that no agreement has been reached between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat after two weeks of negotiations at Camp David. Both sides are unable to reconcile their differences on the emotional issue of Jerusalem. (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 07/26/2000)

September

The Senate votes, 83 to 15, to approve a resolution granting permanent normal trade status to China, handing Clinton a major victory for a bill strongly lobbied by his Administration. (*2000 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 20:3)

October

On the 12th, the Navy destroyer *USS Cole* is attacked by terrorists in the Yemeni port of Aden, killing seventeen U.S. sailors and wounding several others. (*The Washington Post*, 10/18/2000)

December

President Clinton hosts the final talks of his presidency between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, but is unable to achieve any breakthroughs in a peace agreement. (*The Boston Globe*, 12/21/2000)
SAMUEL R. BERGER SUGGESTED TOPICS
Prepared by Jeffrey L. Chidester
Miller Center, University of Virginia, 01/07/2004

Joining the Administration
• How did you come to meet Bill Clinton? What were your early impressions of him? How often did you stay in contact after the 1972 presidential election?
• What was your involvement in the 1992 presidential campaign? What were the key foreign policy issues of the campaign? Comment on your role as Director of National Security for the transition.
• Discuss your appointment as Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Did you have conversations with Anthony Lake before accepting the post regarding the nature of your portfolio?

Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
• Describe your role as deputy national security advisor. What issues most occupied your time? Discuss your meetings with the Deputies Committee and the Interagency Working Groups.
• How was the National Security Council organized under President Clinton? How did this differ from previous administrations? Discuss how the presence of the National Economic Council affected your work.
• Discuss the National Security Council’s interaction with major White House offices (Legislative Affairs, Communications, Political Affairs, Management and Budget, etc.) and executive departments (State, Defense, Justice, CIA, etc.).
• With whom did you work most closely on the Clinton foreign policy team during the first term? Describe your relationship with Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Anthony Lake. Evaluate your relationship with other senior officials on the foreign policy team and with key members of the White House staff.
• Discuss your interactions with Congress. How did this relationship change after the 1994 midterm elections? What issues and events proved most contentious? How did you balance the roles of political advisor and foreign policy advisor?
• How did your interactions with Congress change, if at all, after you became the national security advisor? With whom did you work most closely on the Hill? Which members proved to be most difficult for you to work with?
• Comment on the decision-making process in deploying U.S. troops abroad (i.e. Haiti, Bosnia, Somalia, Iraq). Discuss the importance of economic affairs in the Clinton foreign policy (i.e. engagement with China, promotion of global free trade, Mexican bailout, etc.). Discuss the Administration’s efforts in confronting issues of global security such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation and drug trafficking.

Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
• Discuss your appointment as Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. How did your relationship with President Clinton change in this position?
• Comment on your relationship with other members of the Clinton foreign policy team during the second term, including Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Secretary of Defense William Cohen, and CIA Director George Tenet. Describe your relationship with key members of the White House staff.

• Which foreign policy issues engaged President Clinton the most? Did Clinton’s attention to foreign policy change as his presidency progressed? Comment on Clinton’s negotiating skills, particularly in dealing with China, Russia, Northern Ireland, and the Middle East. Describe his decision-making style in deciding on military action in Iraq and Kosovo.

• How did you communicate foreign policy options and advice to the President? Did President Clinton prefer particular briefing formats or require specific types of information before making decisions?

The Clinton Presidency in Retrospect

• What do you consider your greatest accomplishments as national security advisor?
• What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Clinton Administration in the realm of foreign affairs? How would you rate the president as a strategic thinker?
• What features of the Clinton Administration were missed or misunderstood by the press?
• Comment on President Clinton as a foreign policy leader, a popular leader and a legislative leader.
• How should the Clinton Administration be viewed by future historians? What is the legacy of President Clinton’s foreign policy?
• Evaluate President Clinton as a world leader. How did foreign diplomats and heads of state view Clinton? Were there any common misconceptions?
TIMELINES

• Samuel R. Berger Timeline, prepared by Jeff Chiddester, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 01/07/2005.

• Timeline of the Clinton Presidency, prepared by Robbie Robinson, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 05/30/2002.

SELECTED WRITINGS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY SAMUEL R. BERGER


NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

National Security Council and National Security Advisor


Organization of the Clinton Administration NSC


• “Organization of the National Security Council,” PDD 2, 01/20/1993.
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS


KEY NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES DURING THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION

**Haiti**

**Bosnia**

**Iraq**

**China**

**Russia**
- Jamie Dettmer, “Putin: Democrat or Dictator?” *Insight on the News*, 02/14/2000.
Middle East


- “Mideast Talks Continue Late at Clinton’s Urging,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 07/19/2000.

Kosovo


Terrorism


Weapons Proliferation


Other

