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Dini: NATO attack in 1999 could have been avoided

KosovoCompromise Staff

Former Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini says the 1999 NATO military intervention against Serbia could have been avoided.

The 78 days of attacks would have been averted "if a single word had been removed from the agreement which was offered at the Rambouillet conference", Dini said.

He argued that the western countries, the United States and Serbia were on the verge of reaching an agreement.

The problem was one adjective and Serbia insisted that the word "military" be taken out of the agreement leaving only "international presence" in Kosovo, but the United States insisted that NATO gets permission to enter the province, Dini said.

Addressing students at the Bocconi University in Milan, Dini said that in the crisis that followed, Italy advocated that the bombing be limited strictly to military objectives, but that Pentagon wanted a blank permission for all targets.