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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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JL 8/21/09

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Call to Francois Mitterrand,
President of France

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Francois Mitterrand
Julian Wolfe, Notetaker

DATE, TIME September 16, 1989, 7:15 - 7:32 a.m.
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: I am calling in reference to Lebanon. It seems that our efforts to get the Arab League re-engaged have succeeded. The Saudi Ambassador here has informed us that the Arab League will announce the renewal of their efforts today. They will call for a lifting of the blockades, a cease-fire and an end to arms shipments. It establishes a mechanism to deal with this issue. The announcement has an assurance that others, read Syria and Iraq, will not supply weapons. There is linkage to the political process. Lebanese Parliamentarians are to meet in September to discuss a new national charter. You are more active there than we are, but we believe this is a good first step. The Saudis have asked for a statement of support and we will issue one today. In summary, it says stop the shooting and get to the bargaining table. You have influence there and a role to play. The Lebanese Christians listen to your words. I hope you can use your voice to persuade Aoun to accept the cease-fire and support a political process. Aoun may see a lot to object to. He needs to see that his war of liberation is untenable. We should encourage him to seize this chance to move the fight to the political arena. We had to pull our diplomats out of Beirut because of the demonstrations; I hope to get them back when we are confident of their safety and they can carry out their mission. I just wanted to get your views on this and see what support you can provide Aoun.

President Mitterrand: I am pleased to hear from you and hope everything is well. Thank you for these intentions. I had these same thoughts. The Arab League has made progress, I agree. I think we won't be able to end the situation without reform of Lebanese institutions, so I approve of this. I was informed of the Parliamentarians' meeting and that the Arabs and Moslems were pressuring Aoun to make concessions. I am about to call Aoun. It will be a secret call but I will make it public if necessary, so that our points of view are in agreement. I have no reservations about what you have just said. I hope the U.S. will

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return its diplomatic presence when the danger subsides. Our policy has been to bring Aoun around. We intend to show Aoun our policy and that France will remove its fleet to show support for the Arabs and to show Aoun that he cannot get unconditional support from France.

The President: I think you are way ahead of us. A call to Aoun could be critical. We have strongly supported your decisions with regard to the fleet. This will be well received. I don't believe the Tripartite members felt threatened by the fleet in the first place. We are in agreement. We do want to go back in, but only after the conflagration subsides.

I had one other item, if I may. On the NATO talks, Jim Baker has been in touch with Roland Dumas on one point. We have come up with the idea of a "placeholder" for the issues outstanding so that we can get the bulk of the proposals tabled in Vienna. There is an upcoming meeting and I hope we can get together on this and move forward. Without going into details, can you talk with Roland about getting France on board?

President Mitterrand: I too hope for negotiating progress. We have stressed that debate should start in a serious manner. It would be bad for the West to look as though there was ill-will in the process. It is a delicate point in East-West relations. The fact is that the USSR could come into France in a few days. This difficulty will be discussed by my ministers. We don't want the Soviets to say they were ready to negotiate and we were not. I will contact Roland.

The President: I want to say that this man Boris Yeltsin is fascinating. I might write you a letter on this character.

President Mitterrand: I would be happy to receive it. I know you must show your distance without breaking off from Yeltsin. Have a good weekend.

The President: Well, it's raining at Camp David, but it will be a good weekend anyway. Thank you my friend.

President Mitterrand: Au revoir.