

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with President
Francois Mitterrand of France (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Francois Mitterrand
Interpreter: Carol Wolter
Notetaker: David Pacelli

DATE, TIME December 20, 1989, 7:41 - 7:56 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Francois, how are you? (U)

President Mitterrand: Fine. I am going in a few minutes to the
German Democratic Republic. (Ø)

The President: I know you are. It will be a very important
trip. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: I am going to spend two and a half days
there. I will give you a call on any progress. (Ø)

The President: I agree that that would be very useful. Before I
get into discussing Panama, I want to thank you again for your
trip to St. Martin. I learned a lot from that meeting. I really
appreciated your coming such a long way, and I appreciated your
hospitality. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: That was the least I could do after I had
the benefit of your hospitality earlier in Maine. (Ø)

The President: I would like to raise another subject if you have
three minutes. (U)

President Mitterrand: Yes, Yes. (U)

The President: We have tried very hard to consult with
hemispheric leaders, and other leaders such as the Federal
Republic, to peacefully resolve the situation and help bring
democracy to Panama. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: Yes, yes, yes. (U)

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The President: Last Friday, Noriega declared a state of war with the United States. The next day, the PDF shot to death an unarmed serviceman. They wounded another. They seized and brutally beat another and sexually threatened the wife of the last one. So to make a long story short, I decided we had to take military action to protect the lives of Americans and to restore democratic government to Panama (or helping to do that). Endara and his two elected Vice Presidents, Calderon and Ford, were sworn in by Panamanian magistrates. Noriega has gone underground. (S)

President Mitterrand: Where is he now? (S)

The President: I'm not sure. We are still looking. (S)

President Mitterrand: What is the situation in Panama City? (S)

The President: The situation is mostly under control. Secretary Cheney will be giving a briefing in a few minutes on CNN. I'm sure that your people will get it. It's mostly calm, with pockets of resistance. The majority of the PDF, if not in disarray, then it is heading in that direction, which is a good sign. The officers who opposed Noriega in the coup have now been released from prison by our soldiers. They are very happy, understandably. (S)

And now, I am in the process of sending our Ambassador back, of lifting all the economic sanctions off Panama, and, of course, we have recognized the government of Endara, Calderon, and Ford. I am hoping that after the dust settles, others will recognize Endara's government. I think a lot will in this hemisphere. (S)

There are a lot of unsubstantiated reports of the numbers of dead. We have some American servicemen -- we think it is nine. There have been some Panamanian deaths. So far, it doesn't appear to be many. I hope not. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, yes, yes. (U)

The President: I wanted to bring you up to date. There is sufficient force to bring the situation under control in a short period of time. That is where we stand. I appreciate your taking the call before heading off to the GDR. (S)

President Mitterrand: Thank you. Obviously, to have to intervene in a sovereign country is always delicate. The initiative taken by Noriega -- or his Army -- to kill U.S. officers is an important contribution to explaining this situation, not forgetting the drug situation. (S)

The President: Francois, what gets me the most was the interrogation and sexual abuse of the wife of a Navy lieutenant. That got to me almost as much as the death of the Marine. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, I understand all of this. What is necessary is for the United States position to be clearly expressed regarding the safeguarding of U.S. men and women, as well as the war against drugs. The democracy element is important, but not sufficient, because there are lots of dictatorships in the world, and it does not justify acting against all of them. (Ø)

The President: That is a very good point. I've just been on American television. And as I said, it just came to a situation where I said "enough is enough" to protect American lives. Francois, I do worry about intervention and what it will do to us in the hemisphere. I do worry also about the drugs and the threats to civilians. But I appreciate your words of caution and your words of advice. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: I know you, my dear George, and you are concerned about democracy and the rights of peoples, and so I am not one of those to criticize these things. You probably thought of this. You know all too well the predictable reactions in Latin America. As for recognizing the government, I will get all the documents, but France will not cause you any problems. (Ø)

The President: Thank you. It sounds like a wonderful trip you have planned to the GDR. I would love to hear about it. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: I will send you a diplomatic note on it. (Ø)

The President: Sounds good. (U)

President Mitterrand: Good luck to you and good luck to the American people. (Ø)

The President: Thanks and have a good holiday season. Au revoir. (U)

President Mitterrand: Au revoir. (U)