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THE WHITE HOUSE
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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with Mikhail
Sergeyevich Gorbachev, Chairman of the
Supreme Soviet of the USSR (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, Chairman
Interpreter
Notetaker: Condoleezza Rice, NSC

DATE, TIME January 31, 1990, 7:04 - 7:30 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Good morning. (U)

Chairman Gorbachev: Good morning, Mr. President. (U)

The President: I want to thank you for taking the call. I want to start by wishing you well. There have been wild rumors here in Washington and there are a lot of interesting events. Obviously, we cannot talk about everything on an open line but I am glad to have this chance to talk to you on an arms control matter. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: Good. I welcome your initiative. I understand that our possibilities on this open channel are limited -- so greetings and I welcome the chance to talk to you. As for the rumors, there are many here in my country and in yours too. (S)

The President: That's for sure. Maybe it is just best if I go through my proposal and then we can talk about it. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: Good. (U)

The President: At Malta, our two governments agreed to place a very high priority on the early conclusion of a CFE treaty. Our common aim remains to sign the treaty this year. I have been considering ways to accelerate progress at the Vienna talks, and Jim Baker will be prepared to discuss the full range of CFE issues with Mr. Shevardnadze, including some new ideas on the aircraft proposal. (S)

The conclusion of this treaty is even more urgent today because of the hopeful and fast-moving events taking place in Eastern Europe. We need to do everything possible to make sure that the

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military situation reflects the new political realities. I have been examining with my advisors, and with U.S. allies, the question of the maximum number of troops that the United States and the Soviet side should have stationed on foreign territory in Europe when this CFE agreement has been fully implemented. (S)

I have come to the conclusion that the 275,000 figure is too high for both your country and mine. I hope you agree that we should set a new lower manpower ceiling for the treaty. (S)

My proposal is that we agree to drop the 275,000 figure for the U.S. and Soviet stationed forces and revise the current position on manpower in CFE to set a new ceiling for those forces at 195,000 in the Central Zone of Europe. 195,000 in the Central Zone of Europe is the proposal I will make. (S)

Tonight I will announce this proposal to the American people in a speech on the State of the Union. If the proposal is acceptable it will be a clear signal that the CFE negotiations in which we are now engaged can keep pace with the political events that are changing the continent. (S)

We have had consultations with our key allies and there is general agreement that this is a good, sound proposal. We intend to keep a substantial military presence in Europe for the foreseeable future -- that is an Alliance decision -- and it would hold regardless of the decisions you take about your own forces. I hope you recognize that the U.S. presence makes a helpful and important contribution to European stability. (S)

But for today, the issue is how to treat U.S. and Soviet manpower in this agreement and I believe this proposal is fair. It doesn't push either side too fast but it shows a readiness to change. (S)

The main thing is we want to conclude the CFE agreement. I do not want this new proposal to delay our CFE negotiations in any way. But my experts think it is possible to accommodate this change and have an agreement that is a little more in line with current conditions. (S)

I will push our side and I hope you will push your side. It is a major priority of my Administration to conclude this treaty by the time we meet in June. (S)

I know this is sudden but I wanted to give you the courtesy of telling you before my speech tonight. If you want to react now that's fine or if you want to wait until you have had time to talk with your people. (S)

Well. Over to you. (U)

Chairman Gorbachev: Thank you for letting me know what you will tell Congress. Let me react to two or three points. (S)

First of all, we share your approach to the talks in the context of the changes now happening in the world and I agree that the

Vienna talks -- the pace and content of the Vienna talks -- must keep pace with the new realities. (S)

And I fully agree that we must push forward the process to live up to the hopes of the peoples of Europe. (S)

The President: Yes. (U)

Chairman Gorbachev: I believe that under no circumstance should we abandon or slow down the process. We need to work to find mutually acceptable solutions. (S)

As I understand it -- your proposal envisions a new and lower ceiling. You have emphasized that the U.S. will maintain its military presence in Europe after the negotiations are completed. If I understand you, this is regardless of what the Soviet Union does. (S)

The President: Yes. (U)

Chairman Gorbachev: We'll give it thought. But let me say that we will need to talk about the Central Zone of Europe and other zones. We'll need to talk not just about U.S. and Soviet forces but other forces. Baker and Shevardnadze will have a lot to do. You and I will need to talk too. You can expect our cooperation -- our constructive cooperation. (S)

And you can be assured that my response means that I am happy that we are keeping in touch to look at the most important problems today. I fully expect you will get more detailed answers from me or when Baker is in Moscow. (S)

Let me say that I share the spirit of your approach -- we must act consistently with the changes in Europe. (S)

The President: This call is interesting for me. As you were talking I was thinking that I wish we could talk more often without a fixed agenda because there are so many problems and changes to address. I just hope we can find ways to talk more often. Baker will talk with Shevardnadze and he has our full confidence and that is a useful channel. But I wish we could talk more often. I appreciate the spirit of this phone call and I wish you well. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: Mr. President, I fully agree. I do believe that both of us feel the need for personal contact and work is underway to get a secure communications link for us that will allow us to talk more freely. (S)

Today the President of Brazil gave me a verbal message from you. Well, I want to thank you and I value these gestures from the President of the United States. (S)

Let me thank you -- you are just beginning your working day and I wish you a good day. Raisa and I send our best to you and Barbara. (S)

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The President: I want to say one more thing in substance. We have wrestled with the proper number in discussions here and with our allies. You'll have your own ideas on that but let me say that the number was achieved after consultations with the Allies and with the military here. This number was not pulled out of the hat. We are, therefore, attached to the number. (S)

Chairman Gorbachev: Mr. President, I take note of this and assure you that we will look at it carefully and seriously. (S)

The President: I did have a good talk with the Brazilian President and I'm glad he remembered me to you. My best to Raisa. (C)

Chairman Gorbachev: Goodbye (in English) (U)

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