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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone conversation with President Carlos Salinas de Gortari of Mexico (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Carlos Salinas de Gortari, President of Mexico
Notetaker: Donald C. Johnson

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: September 25, 1990, 5:23 - 5:27 p.m. EST
The Oval Office

The President: Carlos? (U)

President Salinas: This is Carlos. (U)

The President: How are you? (U)

President Salinas: Very well, Mr. President. (U)

The President: Listen, I'm calling on a trade matter. I was very glad to get your letter of August 21 proposing that we negotiate a free trade agreement. I agree that we should negotiate such an agreement, and I have just signed the formal notification to the Congress that I intend to negotiate such an accord with Mexico. (Ø)

As you know, Congress has a certain amount of time to decide whether to give me "fast track" negotiating authority. I don't know about exact timing. I believe our people have been talking about it. I expect we will be able to begin formal negotiations late next spring. (Ø)

Of course, there is going to be a lot of talking. Our negotiators will have extensive discussions prior to the formal start. I would hope we could conclude formal negotiations by December of next year, so that the FTA could get through the Congress in 1992. I know the talks will involve a lot of complicated issues and are going to require changes in both our economies. But I am convinced, and I'm sure you are, that our economies will be stronger as a result. (Ø)

President Salinas: I'm very convinced of that. (U)

The President: You know that Brian Mulroney has expressed a strong interest. He's been talking about negotiating a three-way arrangement among our countries. I welcome the opportunity to work with our neighbors on this issue. I understand that Jaime, John Crosbie, and Carla Hills are planning to consult actively in the next few months. (Ø)

But you have my commitment to proceed on our agreed timetable, provided Congress gives us the necessary authorization, and that we will go with a bilateral agreement with Mexico if our consultations show this is the best way to go. I want you to know that we're not backing off at all. We've worked out a consulting arrangement, but we're committed to a bilateral agreement if the consultations show this is the best way to go. (Ø)

As you know, there was this last-minute complication with the Canadians. But I want you to know I haven't changed my mind on that. (Ø)

President Salinas: I'm very pleased that we're going on a bilateral basis. I am also aware that the Canadians want consultations for a trilateral agreement. I'm convinced that this agreement will be very good for our countries. (Ø)

The President: Well, I just wanted to know that I had signed the letter to the Congress today. (Ø)

President Salinas: That is really good news. (Ø)

The President: I look forward to seeing you soon. (Ø)

President Salinas: I understand we'll meet this coming Sunday. (Ø)

The President: That is soon. Well, we have a lot to talk about. (Ø)

President Salinas: Yes. (U)

The President: Well, goodbye. (U)

President Salinas: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --