

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Call with President Francois Mitterrand of France

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Francois Mitterrand
Interpreter: Stephanie Van Riegersberg
Notetaker: Adrian Basora, NSC Staff

DATE, TIME February 5, 1991, 1:08 - 1:22 p.m.
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

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The President: Francois how are you? (U)

President Mitterrand: Hello dear friend. (U)

The President: I'm fine. I wanted to be back in touch to share views on the Gulf war. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, please go ahead. (S)

The President: Frankly, we think the war is going well. Saddam Hussein is a tough adversary but he is still capable of surprises. I understand that Brent Scowcroft is in regular touch with Admiral Lanxade and providing assessments, but you and I should also be in touch often. The coalition is holding together well. (S)

President Mitterrand: We are completely committed. We will do what is necessary to be done. (S)

The President: I know we are close on the issues. I see no sign of movement by Saddam Hussein. I detect no change on their part. (S)

President Mitterrand: No, none at all. All of our contacts both direct and indirect confirm that whenever there is talk of a pullout it is out of the question for them. (S)

The President: I spoke to Ozal a couple of hours ago. He said that Rafsanjani sees things the same way we do. He is a good interlocutor. (S)

President Mitterrand: Rafsanjani has been wanting to talk to me. (S)

The President: We appreciated the readout on the visit to Iran of Secretary General Scheer. It is important to keep pushing the

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Iranians on the issue of full compliance with the UN resolutions, but I see no problems on this score at present. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, that is right. (S)

The President: I have still done nothing in the Maghreb, even though we talked about it several days ago. I would be interested in any suggestions you have on what would be effective. I am delighted that we had that briefing for you yesterday and glad that you found it useful. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes. Regarding the Maghreb, we have good relations and contacts with leaders of the region, especially the Algerians. We have had reports from the Algerian foreign minister on his contacts with the Iranians and the Iraqis. The Algerian government confirms its solidarity with Saddam Hussein, but without emotion. They want good relations with France as well. (S)

France has a delicate relationship with these countries -- Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. They are French speaking, and they naturally tend to turn against France in a situation like this. The political opposition is taking advantage of the situation to attack the King and the President. It is an unpleasant situation for us, but it is tolerable. For the moment, the most delightful situation involves Quadhafi. Quadhafi called me the other day for the first time in many years. He says that he continues to favor self-determination for Kuwait. He told me that, with so many crazy people running around, wise men like he and I needed to be in touch. (S)

The President: (laughing) How did you reply diplomatically? (S)

President Mitterrand: (in humorous tone) I said that I was happy to find him in that frame of mind. (S)

Morocco is more complicated, however. The King is being criticized on many other issues than the war. I hope that in the post conflict period, which should come soon -- hopefully this spring -- that we can work on reconciliation. Normally, winning the war should be the key. These countries tend to turn towards the victor. (S)

For the rest, I see no particular problem. We are waiting for the signal. We are in no hurry. Our planes are doing their work along with your troops. (S)

The President: They are doing very well. I hear good reports. (S)

President Mitterrand: We have got some very well trained pilots. (S)

The President: I think we are well together, and I appreciate this chance to exchange views. It is understandable that people are now saying "let's have peace", but we must have Saddam Hussein pull out of Kuwait first. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, the prior condition to peace is the liberation of Kuwait. (S)

I have noticed that there were campaigns against France in the UK and the US. I spoke to John Major about this earlier today. With Joxe as Defense Minister, things are under control. He is just getting back from the Gulf today. (S)

I am so glad you called. I had wanted to call you. (S)

The President: Brent and Admiral Lanxade are staying in touch and that is good, and we should talk frequently too. (S)

President Mitterrand: Public opinion is holding up well in France. (S)

The President: Ours is too. (S)

President Mitterrand: Thanks for calling. (U)

The President: Au revoir

-- End of Conversation --