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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: February 5, 1991, 9:12 - 9:17 a.m. EST
The Oval Office

The President: Senor Presidente, how are you? (U)

President Salinas: Buenos dias, George, how are you? (U)

The President: I'm calling on something I think you know about, the free trade agreement. I understand from my staff that we've worked out the details for proceeding with a trilateral FTA. (Ø)

President Salinas: Absolutely true. (U)

The President: I want to recite to you what I understand are the four key points. First, we will not use the negotiations to retreat from the U.S.-Canada FTA, although we are open to using the trilateral mechanism to improve on the bilateral agreement. (Ø)

President Salinas: That's true. (U)

The President: That was point one. Second, we're going to stick to our end-of-1991 timetable. (Ø)

Third, we have left open, I understand, the possibility that some issues, because they are special, may have to be solved bilaterally, as opposed to trilaterally. (Ø)

President Salinas: That's very important, yes. (U)

The President: Fourth, Canada will withdraw if its continued participation would delay or jeopardize the U.S.-Mexico FTA, thus allowing the bilateral negotiations to go forward. Canada has agreed to pull back if this were the case. (Ø)

President Salinas: For us it was important for us to assure that the bilateral agreement would move forward. (S)

The President: If this is acceptable, I just want to call Brian to make the same points to him. (S)

President Salinas: I'm totally comfortable with this. This insures that at least the bilateral agreement would come through. We will create the biggest free trade area in the world here in North America. (S)

The President: I want this Free Trade Agreement to be one of the major accomplishments of your and my presidencies. You've got my personal commitment to the success of the negotiations. (S)

What I would like to do, but only if you're comfortable with this. If you're agreeable, I would like to propose that we make the announcement today. I would like to make the announcement at my press conference today at 11:30. (S)

President Salinas: That's okay with me. (U)

The President: Then we'll shoot for an announcement this morning. I would like to lead off my press conference with this announcement. (S)

President Salinas: This will show your total commitment to this process. (S)

Also, congratulations on your State of the Union address. (S)

The President: Thanks. I think it went okay. I don't think it (the Persian Gulf War) will be dragged out too far. Things are going pretty well, according to plan with no real surprises. But we don't want to see this man (Saddam Hussein) clutch victory from the jaws of defeat through a cease-fire now. At the same time, we don't want to drag this out too long. (S)

President Salinas: I'm glad of the overwhelming support of the American people for your position. (S)

The President: It seems pretty good. (S)

President Salinas: (laughs) It's overwhelming. (S)

The President: Who knows how long it will last, though? But I'm glad it is holding strong now. (S)

President Salinas: Best wishes to you and your family. (U)

The President: Best wishes to you, too. Our love, and over. (U)

President Salinas: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --