

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister
Adrian Basora, NSC Staff (Notetaker)

DATE, TIME February 19, 1991, 4:41 - 5:00 p.m.
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Hello, Brian. (U)

Prime Minister Mulroney: Hello, George. How are you doing? (U)

The President: I'm doing fine. Things are going well. I assume you are calling about the Gorbachev idea. (S)

Prime Minister Mulroney: I saw your statement and that of John Major. I don't think that, from what I've seen, the Soviet offer is acceptable. But I wonder where we are if Saddam Hussein decides to accept it. (S)

The President: If you've got a few minutes, I'd like to discuss my concerns. First, I've tried to keep the Soviets in a constructive role. I have expressed a spirit of gratitude; I've put it in that kind of context. Second, we are going back to them with some concerns -- in more detail than the original concerns we expressed. I think you have the same concerns. (S)

Prime Minister Mulroney: Yes, we do. (U)

The President: Baker just talked to Bessmertnykh. Baker understands that they will let us know as soon as he hears from Saddam Hussein. They think it will be soon. He mentioned nothing about a report that Aziz is on his way. They understand that we have reservations. They want to be a player, but they are a little ahead of us. (S)

Gorbachev wrote that he had proposed this plan and wants Iraq to announce its intent to withdraw by a certain date, to be followed by a cease-fire. It is our view that it has got to be very soon. We propose something like 96 hours for the actual withdrawal, which means he must leave behind his armor. Mitterrand said we might wait a week. We have told the Soviets it would have to be very, very fast. (S)

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Iraq, according to the Soviets, wants a pledge that troops would not be attacked while withdrawing. We are prepared to say that. But we are not prepared to say that the hostilities have ceased. We are worried about some of the details, worried he may not go forward with all he has said. We thought he could be out in a week but he says he can't make it. We won't shoot him in the back. We won't kill him. We did say to the Soviets that any withdrawal must be unconditional and immediate, and I think all in the coalition are in agreement with that. We added that all UN resolutions had to be complied with. It's the same as for reparations. Do you remember if that was the word? (S)

Prime Minister Mulroney: Compensation. I think it's compensation. (S)

The President: They were in agreement on that. Last week they said he should pay them, and gave some indication that all resolutions should be implemented. They devastated Kuwait. We told the Soviets that there must be recognition of all resolutions, and also that we want an instant exchange of prisoners. We want to trade all on an even basis and get it done right away. We feel very strongly. Any questions before I go on? (S)

Prime Minister Mulroney: No, that's fine. Keep going, George. (U)

The President: I don't have the damn letter in front of me. Let me see if I can find it. I am in the process of sending this second message to Gorbachev with further amplification. There can not be a cease-fire and then a withdrawal. That is what the Soviets called for -- a cease-fire, and then he would start withdrawal. That is unacceptable. We will not have pauses; we will not have cease-fires. Cheney has insisted on how bad it would be to have a cease-fire and then to start on a massive withdrawal. I want to be sure Gorbachev understands there can be no cease-fire until a major withdrawal is underway. Even then, there can be no cessation of the overall state of hostilities. If you have a minute, I'd be glad to read this to you -- only two pages. (S)

Prime Minister Mulroney: Please do. (U)

The President: (reads letter)

My view is that, if he uses chemical weapons, this is a war crime. There is a problem with citing him for war crimes. How do you get him? Do we do a Noriega? That would be devastating. At least we get on record that this is a matter of utmost seriousness. (S)

(continues letter)

Gorbachev indicated when Aziz was coming and said he hoped there wouldn't be a ground war, and he made some reference to holding

up. These are the points I was concerned about. I'm told that Major agrees. Mitterrand agrees totally with Major. Mubarak said, "don't fall for any tricks." I am about to get a call from Ozal. (S)

Prime Minister Mulroney: Ozal has been the toughest one of all about not leaving him in a position of quasi-victory. I don't know the answer, but I think you have covered as much territory as possible without shooting down the chances for peace. (S)

The President: We can not let him pull a victory out of defeat. Our people are confident the ground war will be short and involve minimal casualties. I'm getting emotional when you talk about many casualties. But Colin believes the loss of life will be restricted. We are going down this path. (S)

Prime Minister Mulroney: Our cabinet met today and changed the tasking of our CF-18's to include air-to-ground support in order to be more active in the war, including on Iraqi territory. We want to step up our solidarity under your leadership. (S)

The President: That will be well received. (U)

Prime Minister Mulroney: It isn't the end of the world, but psychologically I thought it might help. This will be immediate. We won't jump at the first sign of a peace proposal. (S)

The President: Peace -- the hopes of everyone have soared. I am trying not to react so negatively that it looks like we are for war but not for peace. (S)

Prime Minister Mulroney: Has Gorbachev asked you to hold up on ground action? (S)

The President: He did last week, but we didn't agree. He didn't say outright there must be no ground action. I think he made some more indirect reference. (S)

Prime Minister Mulroney: Would it be safe to conclude that you will not say anything while this is going on? (S)

The President: I don't want to give him time. It lowers the pressure on Saddam. Mitterrand says we've got half a day. I'd rather be silent because it serves as a stick for him to get going. (S)

Prime Minister Mulroney: Saddam should move fast and meet our conditions. (S)

The President: We just can't let this guy off the hook. We can't give him a victory. Gorbachev's letter is full of linkage. I don't want to have him say, "I finally got the Palestinian issue on the agenda." (S)

Prime Minister Mulroney: If so, it would ruin Mubarak and Ozal. (S)

The President: Yes, they would be screwed to the wall. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mulroney: I think your approach is water-tight.
Good luck, and we will be with you all the way. (Ø)

-- End of Conversation --