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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Francois Mitterrand, President of France

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Francois Mitterrand, President of France
Adrian Basora, NSC Staff (Notetaker)
Eliza Burnham (Interpreter)

DATE, TIME: February 27, 1991, 10:37 - 10:50 a.m.
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Bonjour, Francois. (U)

President Mitterrand: Hello. (U)

The President: Hello. How are you, sir? (S)

President Mitterrand: Good Morning. How are you? (U)

The President: Tres bien. (U)

President Mitterrand: I am very happy to hear you this morning. I think there are many events we can discuss. (S)

The President: Yes, there are many. Things are going very well on the battlefield, aren't they? (S)

President Mitterrand: What do you thing about the stage we've reached in the military situation? (S)

The President: I think the fighting is almost over. The southern half of Kuwait is almost liberated. We are now engaged with the Republican Guards. There is only one division left in a high state of competence and even that may not be combat effective. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes. (U)

The President: I think it is going very well and it went much faster than we thought. We're very proud of the French troops and also very fortunate that the casualty figures appear to be far lower than we ever anticipated. (S)

President Mitterrand: Absolutely. What is the timing, in your opinion, at this point? Do you think that from a military standpoint everything will be done by the end of the week? (S)

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The President: Definitely by the end of the week. I've just talked to the Secretary of Defense who thinks there needs to be one more day of fighting, which would be Thursday here. He thinks that that could pretty well conclude any fighting on the ground. (S)

President Mitterrand: So now we enter the phase of diplomacy. It is especially as regards the diplomatic situation and what takes place in the Security Council that I wish to talk to you today. How do you see events shaping up at the Security Council in upcoming days? (S)

The President: I'd be delighted to get your views on that one. Right now there is not much pressure in the Security Council, since most agree Saddam Hussein must accept all 12 UN resolutions. Dumas, I believe, is here or coming soon to talk to Jim Baker on the subject of the Security Council. We think that somebody in Iraq should be compelled to state compliance with the rest of the resolutions, and so we are not in a hurry to go to the UN Security Council. (S)

President Mitterrand: Mr. President, can I ask you whom you mentioned was coming? (S)

The President: I thought Dumas was coming here. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, indeed. He should be in Washington tomorrow. (S)

The President: And today Hurd is here, and Jim Baker is trying to work with both of them to make recommendations as to what we should do next. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, indeed. That's precisely the reason I am sending him to have discussions with Secretary Baker -- to discuss the end of the war, but also the beginning of the post-war period, specifically from the diplomatic standpoint. And I also think we are less pressed by events now. I think the pressure exerted by the Soviets, and by other countries, has lessened as well. (S)

The President: I agree, Francois, and I think that's very important. We have to get rid of all the other resolutions. The sanctions can be gotten rid of, but we also have to be sure that Iraq is on board on everything else. They have come in now on Wednesday, today, and told the UN that Iraq would accept demands for reparations and abandon its claim to Kuwait. So we have a little time, and things are moving in the right direction. We have prisoners of war and Scud missile firings to deal with. We've tried to get them to end all the killing. There is no mention of third country detainees. Even the Soviets say the Iraqi response is insufficient. I think it is inadequate, but we do have a little time. (S)

Like you, I think the Baker-Dumas meeting and the one with Hurd is very important. And then, Francois, I would like to suggest

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that you and I get together afterwards. (S)

President Mitterrand: What time are you suggesting -- in March?
(S)

The President: Sometime early in March. I'd like to just be sure we're on the same wavelength. We have big problems in the Middle East. I'd like to get your view on the role of the UN and on what kind of peacekeeping is required. I want to get our troops out as soon as we can. I think the Arabs are suspicious of our troops.

President Mitterrand: Indeed. I will look at my schedule. I think it should be feasible for us to meet. I will discuss this with my immediate staff and we will get back to you with an answer as to what might be feasible. In any event, I do agree with you that such a meeting would be useful. (S)

The President: And I think it is better to do this on a bilateral basis -- just you and me. (S)

President Mitterrand: Agreed as well. (U)

The President: Let me just be sure -- I was a little unclear -- but I want to go back to something I mentioned earlier. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes. (U)

The President: I was responding to a Reuters tape just handed to me that said Iraq had said on Wednesday, had told the UN it would accept the demand for reparations and abandon the claim to Kuwait in return for a cease fire. That answer gets rid of all the other resolutions. We cannot agree to the elimination of sanctions until we get every other matter resolved. There is no mention of third country detainees, and there's no mention of Scuds, so these things are problems. But I agree with you, we've got time. We control the battlefield, but I want to assure you that we want to end the shooting as soon as we can. (S)

President Mitterrand: I agree with you. You are right. We will be working to that end as well, of course, and to make this quite clear to public opinion, because they are in a hurry to see the end of the war. (S)

The President: Exactly. (U)

President Mitterrand: But Saddam Hussein must be compelled, forced to, at the very least, acknowledge his failure and his liability. (S)

The President: Exactly. The arrogant tone of his statement infuriated me and everybody that heard it. (S)

President Mitterrand: Absolutely. (U)

The President: Francois, there's some interesting intelligence

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that indicates he may be trying to leave Iraq. I don't know if your people have picked it up, or how good it is. (S)

President Mitterrand: Indeed. We will look into these reports. In the meantime, may I please say again that I agree with your proposal that we meet soon, and we will look into details. Congratulations to you for the courage and determination of yourself and your troops. (S)

The President: The same is true for the French and we are grateful. I'm told your troops got there ahead of schedule and saw combat out there. It's been wonderful standing together. And, Francois, in our country now there's a wonderful patriotic feeling, a feeling of the allies working together and succeeding. I hope it's true in France. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, indeed. Between 75% and 80% of the population are absolutely in favor. In fact, our polls indicate that not only do the people support me on this, but that they also support you and your actions. This is very positive. They stand for the unity of the coalition. (S)

The President: That's great. Now we have got to win the post-war challenge. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, indeed. We'll have an opportunity to discuss this and work on these issues together when we meet. (S)

The President: I might get Brent to call Lanxade to work on that. (S)

President Mitterrand: I would also like to thank your interpreter. She's done all my work for me. (S)

The President: I'll tell her in person. (S)

President Mitterrand: Well, almost all the work, since I have my interpreter as well. (S)

The President: He's very fast. I can hear him myself. Tres rapide! (S)

President Mitterrand: Goodbye. (U)

The President: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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