

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Defense Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg of Germany (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President and Deputy for National Security Affairs
Vernon Walters, Ambassador to Germany
Robert L. Hutchings, Director for European Political Affairs, NSC Staff

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Gerhard Stoltenberg, Minister of Defense
Juergen Ruhfus, Ambassador to the U.S.
Manfred Eisele, Major General, Ministry of Defense
Peter Wichert, Head of Planning Staff, Ministry of Defense

DATE, TIME: April 12, 1991, 3:15 - 3:30 p.m.
AND PLACE: General Scowcroft's Office

The President dropped by during General Scowcroft's meeting with Minister Stoltenberg. (U)

The President: Did you have good talks with Cheney? (U)

Minister Stoltenberg: Yes. Mr. President, the Federal Chancellor asked me to extend his greetings. (U)

The President: How is that skinny man? He told me he was losing weight. (U)

Minister Stoltenberg: He has great energy. We have difficulties: the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and the former GDR. We are making strong efforts to raise funds for investment there. (U)

The President: I had a long talk with Havel today. He has real concerns about the problems of shutting down his defense plants, especially in Slovakia. Walesa raised the same issue -- that they are turning out tanks that no one wants. (C)

Minister Stoltenberg: Czechoslovak Defense Minister Dobrovsky mentioned the same problem, so we should discuss this within the EC and the G-7 and give them our support. (C)

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The President: We talked yesterday with Santer and Delors. A lot of our discussion was focused on Eastern Europe. They said they will do more. (C)

Minister Stoltenberg: They ought to have open markets, and the EC should do more in that regard. (C)

The President: We are trying to do more, too. (U)

Minister Stoltenberg: Mr. President, we have great admiration for your leadership in the Gulf war, and hope you also succeed in the very difficult task of assuring stability. (C)

The President: We don't want the status quo ante. Baker is over there, probing for agreement. We are not too discouraged; in some areas there are signs of flux. I told Delors and Santer that with this Baker trip we are not trying to close others out. There is plenty of room in this briar patch. We have probably a little more leverage in some questions. But I agree that it is very important to find some answers, not just to the Palestinian Question but also Lebanon, the Arab-Israel question (which is of course bound up with the Palestinian issue), and the Gulf itself. I don't seek how we can deal with Saddam Hussein still in power. He will never be able to develop normal relations with the U.S. and others. But we won't get sucked into a Vietnam-like quagmire. (C)

Minister Stoltenberg: Is there a chance for the British proposal to create safety zones? (C)

The President: De facto we have them already. The problem at the UN is that China might veto any new resolution, but we are told that the last resolution -- 688 -- gives us the authority to take care of people in Iraq. We've told Saddam Hussein that there can be no military action north of the 36th parallel. Since we made that clear, he has taken no action, though there is some just below the 36th parallel. He's stupid, but he would be really stupid if he attacked those convoys. I don't expect him to do that. (C)

Brent Scowcroft: He has been very cautious -- very, very cautious. (U)

Minister Stoltenberg: We are concerned about the violation of the arms control treaty by the Soviet Union. I read with interest your proposal to Gorbachev. (C)

The President: I think he is trying, though he has certain constraints. But Brent is the expert on this. (C)

Brent Scowcroft: One problem is that the military says the treaty went too far -- not just to equal percentages but to equal levels. This was reinforced by the performance of their equipment in the Gulf. But Gorbachev was reassuring to the President. I'm a bit more optimistic now. (C)

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The President: One problem is whether Gorbachev will be around. I worry about his survival. It seems unlikely that they could ever set the clock back to the cold Stalin days, but we are very sensitive not to push the military too far. (S)

Minister Stoltenberg: May I raise one other issue, Mr. President? We believe it very important to continue the work on the future policy of NATO. You are involved in the political strategy, and we defense ministers are working on the military strategy. I hope by the end of May we can decide at least on an interim report, because if we postpone this our national plans will go in different directions. We need guidelines at a time when all of us face changes in manpower and planning. I hope that in the next six weeks we will agree on a coherent concept.

(S)

The President: It is very important. (U)

Minister Stoltenberg: It is in our European interest to keep substantial U.S. forces. (U)

The President: Is that view universally held among the people of Germany? (U)

Minister Stoltenberg: It is by the great majority, aside from some in the political opposition or on the extremes, left and right. It is interesting that in regions where troops are stationed, the mood is completely changing. In Rheinland Pfalz, the people say that the Americans must stay. I told them that two years ago they were saying very different things -- about low level flying and so forth. The mood has really changed. (U)

Ambassador Walters: When the President was there, the Minister-President gave me a letter noting all the problems. Now he says for God's sake don't leave before the elections. (S)

Minister Stoltenberg: It is curious, but the basic mood has changed. We all know there will be fewer troops, but the great majority want them to stay in substantial numbers. (U)

The President: You mentioned the U.S. role in the Gulf, and I thank you for that. I also want to thank you for Germany's role. I know the constraints you have, but I also know you did all you could. Germany took some shots here, but I am proud to say the Germany carried a great deal of the burden. Most of the comment has been about financial support, but we are also grateful for the tremendous logistical support. So there are no problems at all, only pride that we were together and gratitude for what you did. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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