

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Francois Mitterrand of France on April 16, 1991

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Francois Mitterrand, President
Nicholas Burns, NSC Staff (Notetaker)

DATE, TIME April 16, 1991, 1:07 - 1:21 p.m.
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Bonsoir. Hey, Francois, can you hear me OK? (U)

President Mitterrand: Bonjour. I hear you fine, just fine. How are you? (U)

The President: Beaucoup de problemes avec les Kurds. (S)

President Mitterrand: I know we do. (U)

The President: I'd like to run over some of the ground that Mr. Morel talked to Brent Scowcroft about. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, I know about it. (U)

The President: I think we agree that we have got a hell of a problem and that we have to get these Kurds down out of the mountains to the flat places. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, absolutely. (U)

The President: Ozal says he can take about 40-50,000 refugees, but we're talking about the need for 5 or 6 camps in the flat places in Iraq and we don't see any other way to take care of these refugees. Now, the refugees will not come down from the mountains and into these flat places in Iraq unless they have some guarantee of security. So that brings me to the idea that Scowcroft and Morel talked about. Let me repeat what we're thinking about. We think your idea of way stations is very good. We would like to work with you if we can be useful in building up that idea of getting the people to go back to the cities. It has got to be our fundamental objective. But in the short run, we are worried, as you are, about the loss of life and an immediate

need is to encourage these refugees to get down to the low lands. And we think that the U.S. military is best suited to build these temporary encampments in a hurry just because we've located all the supplies. Obviously, we would welcome a cooperative effort. But we would pledge to build these camps. We've got the equipment coming out of Europe and it's a massive construction job. Now the Turks, British and everybody else would be a part and we would work with everyone else to get it moving from Turkey to these places in Iraq. Now on security, U.S. air forces operating out of southern Turkey could provide cover. Our view is that we would probably need a ground presence, primarily to reassure the Kurds to move into Iraq without fear. We don't believe, and I'd be interested in your view, that any amount of promises by Iraq for safehaven will satisfy the Kurds. (S)

President Mitterrand: Certainly not. (U)

The President: What Scowcroft broached to Morel was the UK and France and subsequently others would supply troops for this purpose and if necessary and Morel felt that might be difficult, the U.S. would join in that. (S)

President Mitterrand: That would be the principle thing. These three forces would be the main ones. (S)

The President: Unless the Turks would help. (S)

President Mitterrand: I don't think as a military presence inside Iraq, no. (S)

The President: You think the Turks would not or should not? (S)

President Mitterrand: Should not. (S)

The President: I'm sure they would welcome someone else doing it. (S)

President Mitterrand: I think they could render greater service by staying inside the Turkish border. (S)

The President: Good point. Francois, I just talked to Javier Perez de Cuellar who is going to be talking to you tomorrow and I went over this with him. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, I know about that demarche.

The President: I just talked to him now. (S)

President Mitterrand: France must be associated as much as possible with that. (S)

The President: He was very supportive of these ideas. I think, with all respect, you could impress that on him more than I did. I think he's for it but needs to hear from others that this is not just some U.S. thing. (S)

President Mitterrand: I agree that the French army should participate in this effort to provide humanitarian aid under the umbrella of the UN, of course, together with our American and UK friends. And everything else that you have just said seems to me quite right. These people have got to be saved. (S)

The President: Can I mention more about the UN? Sadruddin Agha Khan and some Belgian gentleman are in Baghdad now. The Belgian is the legal adviser to the Secretary General. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, I know him. (U)

The President: Well, they reported to Perez de Cuellar a few minutes ago that they were 90 percent sure that Iraq would permit these human centers -- they call them human centers -- to be set up in Iraq. They did not raise with Iraq having some security for these human centers. (S)

President Mitterrand: I see. (U)

The President: But de Cuellar seemed very agreeable to this and we would call them military observers. They cannot wear blue helmets because that would require a separate resolution in the UN Security Council. (S)

President Mitterrand: I don't think that is true. (U)

The President: That's what he says. (U)

President Mitterrand: I think Resolution 688 would suffice. (S)

The President: I agree, but to get blue helmets in the human centers in Iraq, the opinion of the Secretary General was that there would have to be a new resolution. (S)

President Mitterrand: I really don't think its all that necessary. (S)

The President: I agree. What did you say? (S)

President Mitterrand: It shouldn't prove all that difficult to get such a UN resolution. The Russians would probably be agreeable. (S)

The President: But, Francois, did you see what China said today? They're very firm against something like this. (S)

President Mitterrand: I see. (U)

The President: But, in any event, de Cuellar says what we ought to do is expand UNIKOM under the existing resolution - extend the terms of assistance to the refugees under 688. That's your idea. (S)

President Mitterrand: But its not necessary. Its not obligatory to have the blue helmet. (S)

The President: I agree and the way he ended the conversation was with "I will support you". But I'd like to get this thing going. I think that France, England and the U.S. together ought to just say we're going to do this and get started. (S)

President Mitterrand: I'm ready to start tomorrow morning, Mr. President. (S)

The President: Fantastic and I'm not surprised. I'm very pleased. (S)

President Mitterrand: I am going to mobilize all means. I'll communicate immediately with the prime minister and the foreign minister and have them contact the proper people in the U.S. -- General Scowcroft and others -- to see what needs to be done. (S)

The President: That's very good and very positive and we're very grateful about your leadership about getting these people back to their cities. (S)

President Mitterrand: No, I'm absolutely ready to act in this way. (S)

The President: We'll be back in touch through Scowcroft and I'm available. I think if we go ahead and get this program going other people will join in and we can worry about the technical details with the UN later on. (S)

President Mitterrand: I absolutely agree 100 percent with that. (S)

The President: It was nice talking to you and we'll be back in touch with details and look forward to hearing from your people. (S)

President Mitterrand: Then we'll talk very soon, my dear friend. (S)

The President: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --