

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: President's Meeting with Prime Minister Yilmaz of Turkey (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Mort Abramowitz, U.S. Ambassador to Turkey
James F. Dobbins, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs
Nicholas Burns, Director for Soviet and European Affairs (Notetaker)

A. Mesut Yilmaz, Prime Minister
Safa Giray, Foreign Minister
Ozdem Sanberk, MFA Under Secretary
Kaya Toperi, Spokesman
Mehmet Ali Irtemcelik, Advisor to Prime Minister

DATE, TIME July 20, 1991; 2:00 p.m. - 2:24 p.m.
AND PLACE: Office of the Prime Minister, Ankara

Prime Minister Yilmaz: I am delighted to have you here. (U)

The President: I am pleased to be here. Here we are in Ankara while Secretary Baker is on a trip to the Middle East in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Israel. (U)

Prime Minister Yilmaz: It is hot here. (U)

The President: Well, it is hot in Houston where I come from too. (U)

Prime Minister Yilmaz: (reading from a prepared statement) Mr. President, we are very pleased to see you here in Turkey. Your visit takes place at a crucial time of profound changes in the world. There are new challenges and new opportunities. We must stand together and have close relations based on our common values and interests. We think we must build relations and broaden them. Our relations must be strategic. Our aides have been working on a framework for a binational steering group. We now have the agreement to establish the steering group. Mr. President, our talks give us an excellent opportunity to exchange views. (Z)

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We want to give thanks to the U.S. on Cyprus, especially for your efforts to draft UN Security Council resolution 649. We believe this resolution constitutes a fair and complete basis for an agreed settlement. As you know, the Turkish Cypriots have been cooperating with the UN Secretary General. Mr. Denktash has met with him. We support the UN Secretary General's effort but a settlement requires both parties to cooperate and engage in serious negotiations. Vassilliou expects the U.S. and others to pressure Denktash before a meeting. This is not constructive but it does have Greece's support. (Ø)

I cannot help wondering if Greece is satisfied with the status quo. Greece is abusing its EC status to affect Turkey's relations with its western partners. This should not be permitted. I believe the U.S. has good relations with Greece and is well placed to induce Greece to reconsider its position for a settlement. If the Greeks change their mind, a quadripartite meeting could be the impetus for a settlement. (Ø)

On Greek-Turkish relations, I appreciated the reference to Ataturk and Venizelos in your remarks. This is the atmosphere we want to create. There are a number of problems and we are ready to meet them. We are sincere and serious. It is the only way. The major problem is that Greece is reluctant to engage with us. In May 1988, I visited Greece and proposed an agenda on the Aegean. The Greek reaction was that the Aegean could only be for Turkish tourism. The Greeks are using Cyprus as a precondition for our bilateral relationship. A useful role for the U.S. would be to encourage Greece to have a better attitude. Greece should not mar Turkey's relations with the West. (Ø)

We seek U.S.-Turkish cooperation which will also be important for our relations with Europe. Good U.S.-Turkish relations will help on European integration. Turkey is a democratic and secular model for others. We want EC membership and hope for a consensus that Turkey should join. Recent events have shown the importance of a pro-western state of mind at home. So that means we are ready for the EC. We want cooperation with Europe. After being admitted to the EC, Turkey will have assumed its proper place. We appreciate U.S. help and continuing this help. I hope during our meetings, we will have the opportunity to benefit from your views on the G-7 meeting and your trip to Athens. (Ø)

The President: I would also like to tell you about my meeting with Gorbachev and the START agreement. This will be good for the entire world. I saw some kids along the route today coming in to Ankara and thought that this kind of thing is an opportunity to benefit their generation. The U.S. has the size and stature which makes me redouble our efforts to reduce tensions and let these kids grow up without fear. (Ø)

Let me thank you for the welcome today. I was moved by the number of people in the streets. I could sense the feeling of good relations. There was no way you could have arranged that -- that was spontaneous. We were very moved and it is a good beginning. You ought to know the respect we feel for you. I'm a

politician and I'll have to decide on next year. But I use the word politician for you in a positive way. You have a lot of friends in the U.S. and there is tremendous support for you and there is also great respect for President Ozal. I don't want to embarrass you and perhaps you aren't as well known, but there is a wonderful respect for you. I do not want to interfere in your domestic politics but we want broad relations with Turkey's leaders. On Cyprus, I would like to think -- maybe I am naive -- that there can be progress with you and the Greeks. We have confidence in Nelson Ledsky. This problem has been going on for too long. Mitsotakis is bright and reasonable and is a good man. He has the same family values as the Turkish people do. On Cyprus, he talked about the Gobbi line. My appeal is that the time is right now to get something done. (Ø)

I saw a poll that said a big percentage of Turks want the problem solved. I want you to know that we are ready to facilitate. I would love to say to the world soon that the Turks and Greeks will talk even though the details must be worked out. There is nothing worse than having an unsuccessful meeting. We back the UN Secretary General and want to get the parties together. We are dealing with reasonable people on both sides. So, I appreciate what you said and hope we can be a catalyst. There is nothing worse than a superpower interfering but if we can be a catalyst, we will be. I hope you approach this without every t crossed and i dotted. The UNSYG is presently engaged and that is good. He wants a triumph for the UN and has shown that he can be effective. We think Perez de Cuellar will do everything he can to move forward. And I would love to see us help. I don't want to set up a new process because we have the UNSYG's initiative. We have unique and good relations with Greece and Turkey and hope we can be objective and fair. Let's try. You guys talk and we will see if we can go to the Greeks or the UN. (Ø)

General Scowcroft: They are concerned about territory. (U)

The President: Right. I said I would pass that along. I know you have issues too. Again, the time is right and U.S. credibility is high. We could use that to help here and will do that. This is the same approach we are taking in the Middle East. We were pounding away at Syria and they have now decided to take part. So Israel now must decide. Our coalition saved the necks of some others in the area. So, let's use our credibility in Middle East. The international response I have received is that there were no curves in Syria. That reassured Jim Baker. He had his shortest meeting on record -- three hours. He usually meets Assad for nine hours. He is in Egypt and will go to Saudi Arabia, Jordan and then Israel. I know that people want us to pressure Israel but that may be the wrong way to solve it. We are prepared and think there is a good formula. I am prepared to tell the American people what is holding up things in spite of our special and protective relationship with Israel. We want to use our clout to force peace. The challenges that face us are exciting. I worry about our economy but we seem to be coming out of it. I would like to get your and Ozal's views on Iraq. (Ø)

Prime Minister Yilmaz: We are holding a water conference in the fall and it is important for us. (U)

The President: That is the peace pipeline and I think it is worth a try. This is a big vision. We need agreement in the Middle East to open doors for cooperation like this. (Ø)

Back on Cyprus, the UNSYG has our support. How can we get the parties to come to a meeting? A commitment to go would be helpful to Turkey's standing in the West. I mentioned this to the Greeks and they suggested the importance of territory and the Gobi line. There is no hidden agenda here. The UNSYG has the lead. Denktash is looking at this. There is a certain respect for him in the U.S. We need someone, not us, to make these compromises. I don't know how you feel about a meeting. (Ø)

Prime Minister Yilmaz: I am a close friend of Mitsotakis. We are both in the European Diplomatic Union. We meet once per year. I told him if Greece is sincere, they should encourage the Cypriots to take into consideration security and political equality. (U)

The President: What do you want to see Mitsotakis actually do? What would be most constructive? (U)

Prime Minister Yilmaz: First, give up using the Cyprus problem as a pre-condition in Greek-Turkish talks. Cyprus is useful to Greece to cut Turkey from Europe. They use it as a lever. (Ø)

The President: But on Cyprus per se, I would like to see progress. There is the Chief of Protocol coming to tell us that we have to end now. I want to come back to this while I am here and see what we can do. Let's talk about Cyprus. I want to thank you for your cooperation in Desert Storm and for saving the lives of the Kurds. I am worried now about the fighting in northern Iraq. (Ø)

Prime Minister Yilmaz: It was a great pleasure to receive you here. (U)

-- End of Conversation --