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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Mitterrand of France

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Francois Mitterrand, President
Interpreter: Carol Wolter
Notetaker: Tony Wayne, NSC Staff

DATE, TIME: September 24, 1991, 12:52 - 1:05 p.m.
AND PLACE: Waldorf Astoria, New York

The President: Francois! (U)

President Mitterrand: Hello. (U)

The President: How are you? (U)

President Mitterrand: How are you? (U)

The President: Tres bien. (U)

President Mitterrand: I've very pleased to hear you. (U)

The President: It's nice to hear your voice. (U)

President Mitterrand: I have three issues to talk to you about. I don't want to take up too much of your time so I want to start right away with these issues. First of all about Iraq, what is the situation? We have been told that the letter expected from Iraq to our Ambassador, since we have the chairmanship (of the Security Council) right now, saying that resolution 687 and 707 would be fully implemented but this letter has still not arrived. Do you have news on your side? (C)

The President: We have not seen any such letter. Jim Baker, who sends his best regards, is sitting here with me and neither of us has heard about the arrival of any such letter. The state of play is getting increasingly worrisome because the Iraqis have grabbed another group of the UN inspectors. They apparently are holding those inspectors and apparently not releasing the documents or permitting them to have access to the documents that relate to nuclear weapons. (C)

President Mitterrand: For the time being, therefore, their mission has been frozen, blocked. (C)

The President: True. (U)

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President Mitterrand: But we can't leave things as they are now. (S)

The President: No, exactly. We are beginning to talk to others and decide what the United States can do. There are two options, one of which is to escort helicopters and to have gun ships along to be sure that the helicopters have access to what they want. The other plan, which might go along afterward or at the same time, would be targeting certain of their nuclear-related facilities and just saying we are going to hit these facilities until you (Iraq) tell us you are going to comply with the resolutions. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes. That is an approach. What do the others say? (S)

The President: We haven't really begun consulting on that yet. As I say, I'm going back to Washington tomorrow and having a meeting with several of our top people to decide what we recommend. In the meantime, Jim Baker is staying up here to talk to some of the others, but we have no definite conclusion from any of the other countries yet. (S)

President Mitterrand: I don't think we should wait more than 2 or 3 days. Otherwise, Saddam Hussein will believe he can do anything he wants. (S)

The President: That is generally our idea. There is one item which complicates and that is that the Saudis have requested Patriot batteries. Those batteries will not be in place for a few days. (S)

President Mitterrand: Yes, that's normal for the execution. It will take time, but for the warning to Iraq, we must proceed quickly. (S)

The President: I think that is a good suggestion. We've been talking with our people to get their thinking about when to issue a warning, and I think you have a very good point there. (S)

President Mitterrand: So, perhaps we can talk again or at least have our direct staff talk to each other because I think this is a very serious matter. (S)

The President: I think that's fine. Either you and I or Jim can handle it here at the UN with Roland. (U)

President Mitterrand: Fine. The other issue deals with Yugoslavia. As you know, among the five (permanent members of the Security Council) things are going well. The non-aligned countries are naturally less satisfied because they fear that we will get involved in their domestic problems. But I think you might agree with two points. First of all, it would be good for the Security Council to give its support to any measure which could protect the observers of the Community. I hope that the

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text will include a paragraph on that particular issue. Second, we have to decide, of course, but I think everyone is ready to agree that there will be an embargo placed on weapons. (S)

The President: Absolutely. (U)

President Mitterrand: That's a very important issues. Otherwise, we might see some of your European friends providing weapons to different camps. This could have negative effects on the climate which exists among the allies. I'm just coming back from a three-day trip to Germany. We've settled a lot of points. I think that our two countries - France and Germany - have really gotten involved well in this matter. This is not an easy matter because historically the Croatians have always had the support of the Germans or the Austrians. Serbia was the traditional ally of the French and British. So I think it's not a good thing to wake up those old memories. But we agreed with Kohl and the German President. (C)

The President: Jim tells me that we three, the U.S., France and England, are in agreement on what is going on at the UN. And yes, on the embargo, we are with you on that 100 percent. (C)

President Mitterrand: Fine. Thank you. The third issue I want to talk about doesn't warrant a lot of debate. It is the issue of Zaire. As you know, coordination between our military and yours and our diplomats and yours is going well. But we have to take certain precautions. I am sending certain assets to be able to evacuate the French and, if need be, the Belgians. We have 4,500 French citizens in Kinshasa but it's only a matter of helping them get across the river and then they can go into the Congo and there they would be fully protected. In the same way, we can do everything necessary in order to protect your citizens. So we can be of mutual assistance, and I wanted to tell you we are fully ready to do so. (C)

The President: That's good, Francois, and I understand we are working together on transport and things of that nature. You have a lot of expertise in the region, and I appreciate your concern for our citizens because we are working closely to be sure that proper evacuation plans are in place. (C)

President Mitterrand: Yes. You can be helpful to us with your air force, although we do have certain aircraft there and in proximity to the Congo. We have bases in Gabon and Central Africa, so we can be useful to you if need be. So that, dear friend, is what I wanted to tell you. (C)

The President: This is a great coincidence. I told Roland, nee to whom I was sitting at lunch, that I was going to call you so I'm delighted to hear from you. (U)

President Mitterrand: Thank you. I will instruct my close staff, in other words, Admiral Lanxade and Mr. Dumas, to remain in close contact with your staff because these are serious situations that could deteriorate. (C)

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The President: We will be in very close touch. Jim Baker and Brent Scowcroft are right here and I will fill them in on the conversation. I agree with you on Iraq. We need to make a statement soon. (C)

President Mitterrand: How's your health? (U)

The President: Well, I'm very lucky. It's good. (U)

President Mitterrand: See you soon and my regards to your spouse. (U)

The President: Au revoir. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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