MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis of Greece (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Lawrence Eagleburger, Deputy Secretary of State
Michael Sotirhos, Ambassador to Greece
Thomas Niles, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs
Nelson Ledsky, U.S. Special Cyprus Coordinator
David Gompert, Senior Director for European and Soviet Affairs, NSC Staff, Notetaker
Katherine Stewart, Interpreter

Greece
Constantine Mitsotakis, Prime Minister
Antonios Samaras, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Christos Zacharakis, Ambassador to the United States
Efthymios Christodoulou, Minister of National Economy
Byron Polydoras, Deputy Minister to the Prime Minister
Constantine Lymberopoulos, Director of Political Affairs
Loucas Tsilas, Director of the Diplomatic Office of the Prime Minister
Dora Bakoyiannis, Member of Parliament
Anna Kyrtsou, Interpreter

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: December 12, 1991, 12:15 - 1:30 p.m.
Residential Dining Room

The President: I am very anxious to talk to you about the Yugoslavia crisis. I would like to get your views on what our role should be. We have been behind the EC so far. (P)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: We agree with you on policy. We disagree with most of the other members of the EC. Recognition
of Croatia and Slovenia will create problems instead of solving
them. It won't solve the problem of the Serbian minority in
Croatia but instead make it worse. And Greece has an additional
reason. Once recognition starts it will spread to what is known
as the Republic of Macedonia, which we call the Republic of
Skopje. Civil war will move from north to south. We therefore
oppose recognition, and we oppose selective sanctions. What we
need is a ceasefire. We need to get United Nations peacekeepers
in. It is true that we have good relations with Serbia but we
are trying to use those good relations to influence them. I
spoke with Milosevic recently. I told him to retain Markovic and
to also respect the ceasefire. And I think he might make good on
his promises to me. But Kohl says he is going to proceed with
recognition and I have to tell you tentatively that Andreani
claims that the Pope is pressuring him. (q)

The President: Let me ask Larry Eagleburger to offer our
comments on the question of recognition. (f)

Deputy Secretary Eagleburger: The UN Secretary General has sent
a letter to the EC appealing not to recognize. They have
predicted everything that has happened. Over the last two years
we knew when the Soviet Union and Croatia declared independence
that it would come to this. Now recognition will create an even
worse blood bath. (f)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: The so-called Republic of Macedonia
cannot stay with Serbia. Their constitution is inadmissible to
us. It creates a real problem for Greece. Their constitutional
forces the expansion of so-called Macedonia. I sent our
Ambassador to talk to the leader of Macedonia and I think this
was an important gesture on our part. But I don't think we will
get any results because nationalism is stronger than the
government is in Macedonia. You have to understand that we
cannot accept the dispute of our borders or a republic setting a
fire within our borders. Therefore the unity of Yugoslavia must
be maintained. And, Mr. President, let me comment on other parts
of the Balkan situation. (f)

With regard to Bulgaria, their new government is a center-right
government. We supported Zhelev, but his party is broken up. We
won't intervene. Actually Bulgaria is more stable than the other
countries in the Balkans. Albania is facing a political crisis.
a void has been created. We have to watch Albania very
carefully. The problem there is a great minority, but we have to
watch it carefully and we are trying to help. We see Romania in
a positive light more than before. The political situation is
moving in a positive direction. We need to understand that the
former communists must be included. (f)

The President: Thank you very much. (U)

Under Secretary Eagleburger: With regard to Yugoslavia we are
not as confident as you in the word of Milosevic and the JNA.
Clearly Milosevic wants a greater Serbia. We do not know what to
do about Yugoslavia. All we know is what not to do. Perhaps if
there is a ceasefire and the peacekeeping force for them, things
could turned around. (G)

The President: Is the political opposition within Germany for or
against recognition? (G)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: All parties in Germany are in favor of
recognition. (G)

The President: Does anyone here have any guess on what the
situation in Yugoslavia will look like in one year? Will the war
continue? Will we see independent Yugoslav states? Will the
whole thing be resolved? (G)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: I think we will see independent
republics within one year. The main reason for this is that the
Serbs and Croatians cannot co-exist peacefully. But the question
is whether they can get from here to there peacefully. It is
absolutely important that we try to win time. (G)

Minister Samaras: We should work on the Germans too. They
agreed not to provide arms to the conflict. (G)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: Even if the governments don't provide
arms, organizations will. Mr. President, Greece wants to work
with the United States and the Balkans. We obviously work with
our European partners but this does not exclude working with you
too. At the end of the day, the United States will play the key
role in this part of the world. The EC is not yet ready to do
so. Maybe some day it will. But the United States will have the
last word about the region. We want you to know that through all
my contacts in Europe it is clear that U.S. prestige is greater
than ever. Europe is still a dream and they all look toward the
United States. (G)

The President: Well, in a way, that is nice to hear but in
another way it really complicates our lives. We are trying to
manage change in the Soviet Union carefully. We are under
pressure to recognize republics there but we think it is better
to let them sort out their relationship between the Center and
the Republics. They both look toward the United States. Our
position is that we will support the forces of democracy and
reform. We will support Kravchuk Yeltsin but we will support
Gorbachev too. We don't say that you must absolutely have a
Center. My point is that even though they look to us, it is
better to leave it to them to sort out their arrangements while
we look after our own interests -- such questions as the control
of nuclear weapons, the sanctity of borders, CSCE norms, human
rights. We will help the situation in the former Soviet Union
with humanitarian assistance but we can't sort it out, all we can
do is see to it that our interests are protected. That said we
are quite apprehensive, above all, we do not want to see military
force used so far with regard to the nuclear weapons and the
avoidance of force in order to affect change we are getting these
assurances we want. (G)
Prime Minister Mitsotakis: There are some similarities between the situation in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. We must maintain some unity in both. In a way the Soviet Union is easier than Yugoslavia because it does not have differences as bitter as those between Croatia and Serbia. Humanitarian aid to the Soviet Union is crucial. The U.S. role in providing help is of paramount importance. (🔗)

Minister Samaras: My prediction for one year from now is that economic matters will have grown in significance and the economic powers of Europe will have great influence. The U.S., Germany, Britain and France will get the inside track. But there are companies both in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union, except for oil, I do not see the American private sector moving very progressively. (🔗)

The President: Well we are trying to get our business engaged. We don’t really want to leave the field to others. (🔗)

Minister Samaras: Take Albania for example. I could see us doing U.S.-Greece joint ventures. There are some things that could be the basis for business in Albania. We want the United States private sector involved. (🔗)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: I think one general conclusion we have Mr. President is that it is very difficult to forecast. Therefore, it is best to concentrate on specific objectives. You are right about humanitarian assistance to the Soviet Union. This is urgent. (🔗)

The President: That is why we are expediting our effort. (🔗)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: EC also agreed to do more in Maastricht. We will not only accelerate our effort but we will also support triangular assistance whereby the East Europeans are able to sell some of their surpluses in food. (🔗)

-- End of Conversation --