

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 13526
2015-0548-M (1.05)
KBH 9/9/2019

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with NATO Secretary General Javier Solana

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
Warren Christopher, Secretary of State
Leon Panetta, Chief of Staff
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Ambassador Robert Hunter, U.S. Permanent
Representative to NATO
Richard Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary of
State for European and Canadian Affairs
Leon Fuerth, Special Assistant to the Vice
President for National Security Affairs
John Kornblum, Senior Deputy Assistant
Secretary of State for European and
Canadian Affairs
Alexander Vershbow, Senior Director for
European Affairs, NSC Staff, (Notetaker)

Javier Solana, NATO Secretary General
Klaus Scharioth, Director, Secretary
General's Private Office
Jamie P. Shea, Deputy Director for Press
and Information, Spokesman
James B. Foley, Deputy Director, Private
Office

DATE, TIME February 20, 1996 5:15 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
AND PLACE: Oval Office

Secretary General Solana: What you are doing in Bosnia is really impressive. This is not only my view but that of many sensible and intelligent people in Europe. I have been to Bosnia two times and met with Admiral Smith. It is very impressive to see how things are operating on the ground, and the way that all of the commanders are doing their jobs. I believe the mission will succeed. (C)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Reason: 1.5(b,d)

Declassify On: 02/21/06

The President: I feel good about the situation. There are lots of rocks in the road, but the military operation is going well. We had a meeting today on the importance of pushing the civilian side. I will make a very big push with the Congress on providing funds for the police and other civilian activities. We don't want IFOR's time to run out before we have the infrastructure in place to preserve the peace. (C)

Secretary General Solana: If I might say, on the civilian issues, that Carl Bildt has a very difficult task in coordinating the different agencies. All of them want to be recognized. Bildt has the authority to coordinate but can't lead the effort. I had a dinner with him after my visit to Mostar and we agreed to cooperate on the civilian-military interface. We set an agreed agenda with priorities and NATO will try to help him as much as possible. He needs assistance in areas like transportation and communications, in particular. He is placing a lot of confidence in our help. (C)

Anthony Lake: The Secretary General will be meeting with Senator Cohen and a few other members of Congress and will make a strong pitch for assistance for civilian implementation, and in particular the \$200 million supplemental. (C)

Secretary General Solana: It is important that the IFOR troops should remain up until the elections in late August or September. There should not be a drawdown before the elections. I would also note that we may be forced by our public opinion to do more on things like war criminals, mass graves and the like -- especially in the spring when the weather improves. The media will be putting a lot of pressure on us. But from a military viewpoint, the operation is going well. (C)

Anthony Lake: We agreed in our earlier meeting that any debate over what will happen after IFOR would not be helpful at this stage, especially here in the U.S. (C)

The President: I agree with that. (U)

Secretary General Solana: If I may turn to NATO enlargement, may I ask how you see the calendar until the end of the year? We have started the dialogue that will proceed through the end of 1996. The next decision is in December. Our idea is that we should define clearly the way to proceed and maybe take the decision on new members in 1997, possibly at a NATO summit. (C)

The President: We should stay on the timetable that has been agreed, because it is designed to do the work that needs to be done, in a low-key, unthreatening and transparent way. We also need to walk a tightrope and not unnecessarily inflame things in

Russia or in Central and Eastern Europe. We should stay on the timetable and be almost boring, methodical, plodding, even bureaucratic. We need as much as possible to take away the emotional energy from the NATO enlargement issue in both Russia and Central and Eastern Europe, as well as among constituencies that support enlargement in the U.S. and Europe. In short, we should smile and plod ahead. (C)

Secretary General Solana: That is what we are trying to do. We are saying that the decision has been taken, and now let us look ahead. (C)

The President: We also need to make a success of IFOR as an example of the Partnership for Peace. We should highlight our long-term commitment to PFP. This idea has proven to be a bigger deal than we had expected -- with more countries, and more substantive cooperation. It has grown into something significant in its own right. We should also use IFOR to improve relations with the Russians. (C)

Secretary General Solana: Partnership for Peace will be necessary for the long term because not all members will become Alliance members. Therefore, I agree that we need to build up PFP as much as possible. Regarding Russia, there has been one interesting development. We have established a good channel to the Russian military because of IFOR and it will be important to keep that channel open. When General Joulwan was in Moscow, Yeltsin congratulated him through General Shevtsov and even wanted to decorate him with Russian awards. We may need to use this channel in the future; it may be a better means of sending messages than Ambassador Churkin in Brussels. (C)

Secretary Christopher: The Secretary General has been invited by Primakov to come to Moscow in March. I think it is a fine idea for the Secretary General to talk to the Russians about IFOR before the elections and try to neutralize the NATO issue in Russia. (C)

The President: Yes, that would be a great opportunity to work on the Russian military. One of the things that we keep hearing is that the ultra-nationalists in Russia are playing up the Cold War memory of NATO, especially among older voters in rural areas. In those parts, there are people who actually believe that NATO will bomb them the first chance it gets. You might want to consider when you are in Moscow giving a structured series of interviews in which you send a general message about NATO without appearing to interfere in their elections. This could help take the sting out of the rabid anti-NATO views in Russia. (C)

Secretary General Solana: I will be going to Moscow right after Secretary Christopher, so he will be in the hot spot on NATO. Looking to the North Atlantic Council meeting in Berlin, this will be a very important event in symbolic terms -- the first time NATO has met in Berlin. At the meeting, I would like to accomplish three things: evaluate IFOR; stress the importance of Partnership for Peace; and move forward on the internal reform of NATO, including a response to the French suggestions. How do you see the French initiative? I have not yet met with Chirac. (C)

The President: I think the French initiative is a positive thing. Chirac is very, well, French, but also a strong and imaginative leader who looks to the future. He wants France to have a more integrated relationship with NATO, and that is positive. I think he felt good about his state visit here. We have never objected to a European security pillar within NATO, although we don't want Alliance equities to be compromised. I believe Chirac's proposal can be a good thing. To make it work, France needs to be part of it. There are a lot of details and arrangements to work through, but I feel positive about Chirac's approach in general. (C)

Secretary General Solana: By the time of Berlin, I hope we can have some of the problem solved so that we can announce a package of decisions on NATO adaptation. (C)

Secretary Christopher: It is important that the Berlin ministerial, which takes place before the Russian elections, have something to do other than NATO enlargement. Adaptation and the French initiative are good subjects, along with Partnership for Peace. (C)

Anthony Lake: The communique still has to have a strong but boring statement on NATO enlargement. (C)

The President: Is there a way to focus on IFOR as well as the European issue? Should we be doing anything with respect to the Russians and IFOR? But I agree that if we can work on the French issue and IFOR, it will not give the Russian nationalists any new ammunition. (C)

Secretary General Solana: Yes, and the third topic, PFP, should be underlined as well.

Richard Holbrooke: By the time of Berlin, we will already be able to draw some of the lessons from IFOR, which will not be controversial with the Russians. (C)

The President: One of the things we need to keep in mind is what a good thing IFOR is vis-à-vis the Russians. It demonstrates to

Moscow that NATO is defining a new substantive mission that is different from its Cold War mission and not antithetical to Russian interests. The name NATO has a positive significance for freedom-loving people here and in Europe, but it carries a lot of baggage for the Russians. When we have NATO take new actions that are different from its Cold War missions, it helps to shed some of this baggage without undermining NATO's appeal in the West. So we should think of other ways to throw off some of the political baggage without weakening NATO's fundamental mission. (C)

Anthony Lake: There is one more issue we should discuss, the Aegean. (C)

The President: I thought we would expend all of NATO's forces over two rocks. (C)

Anthony Lake: The situation is not good. The Greeks are mad at us, and it is good that the Secretary General will be going to Athens and Ankara. (C)

Secretary General Solana: It is very difficult to resolve the Greek-Turkish problem from the European side. We can help, but we need your support. The Europeans are divided, with Greece in the EU and Turkey not. (C)

The President: We have to keep working on this problem. It is all very strange, with the Greeks mad at us right now. (C)

Secretary General Solana: You have good possibilities of working with the new Greek Prime Minister. He is a very good man. It is a pity that he came into power in a moment of turmoil, but we can do business with him. (C)

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The President: In the world we are living, the passion of nations is in inverse proportion to the issues over which they are arguing. It is hard to believe that we almost had a war over the little rock, Imia. (C)

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6

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Secretary General Solana: When I met with Foreign Minister Baykal, he spoke of weeks or even months before a new government would be in place. (S)

Anthony Lake: Next week we should get together and discuss a joint strategy, since the situation could explode. (S)

The President: We could find IFOR having to occupy every piece of ground in the Aegean -- with the U.S. taking rock #14, Spain rock #50 and Germany rock #3. (S)

Anthony Lake: For a moment, we thought that we had spotted a Greek flag on one of the islands off the coast of China. (X)

The President: Perhaps we should encourage Greece and Turkey to form a joint force to deal with the islands in dispute between China and Taiwan. In the world we are living, the passion of nations is in inverse proportion to the issues over which they are arguing. It is hard to believe that we almost had a war over the little rock, Imia. (X)

Secretary General Solana: Nationalism is a difficult thing to understand. (X)

The President: It would be better to fight over 12 computers than 12 goats. (X)

Leon Panetta: We shouldn't give them any ideas. (X)

Secretary General Solana: I see that Tony Lake is looking at his watch. If I could ask you one question about the domestic scene. Since I have no doubt that you will be the next President, I would like to know how you plan to deal with Congress. (X)

The President: That all depends on how much I win by. If I win by 5 points, we could win the House back and hold even in the Senate or pick up one seat. It all depends on whether I wage a strong enough campaign. The truth is that no one knows what will happen. (X)

There are common currents flowing through all the democracies and this is why we have so many 50-50 elections or 3-way splits within parliaments. Look at the headlines in this week's news magazines: "Middle Class Workers Losing Jobs, Malfunctioning of Public Institutions; Republicans Don't Know What They Are For." These are problems common to the whole advanced world. In the U.S., we have done well in creating jobs, but 60% of the workforce is living on incomes that are the same or lower than 10 years ago after adjusting for inflation. We are not well situated to deal with the global economy; many workers lack the skills needed to rise. This is a common problem for all western societies. The information revolution has changed the nature of work, the workplace, the marketplace and the means of information transmission. (X)

Take France as an example. They now have a higher per capita income among industrial wage earners than the United States, but in trying to protect the workforce against the global economy, they are running high unemployment. In the U.S. we have stagnant wages but more jobs. Germany now has manufacturing wages that are 20% higher than in the United States. They have lots of

protection and a good social safety net, but higher unemployment as well. Every European state is trying to create a new social compact. There is no perfect answer in this period of transition and that is why we are seeing lots of close elections. (C)

Even the Republicans, despite their triumphant election in 1994, found in 1995 that the voters didn't really support the Republican agenda. What happened in 1994 was that many workers with modest incomes stayed home. They did not see any improvement in their situations and didn't vote. Now these people want to vote for me because I am fighting against the other guys. (C)

If I win the election, I think we will win back the House or will come very close -- close enough to fashion a moderate majority. We will also hold even in the Senate and, without the House pulling the Senate to the right, I think we will be able to function. If Dole were not running for President and the House were not pulling the Senate to the right, we could do business right now. The Senate was better than the House on Bosnia, although both houses were bad on providing money for foreign relations. The Republicans want a big military but don't want to do anything with it. If we just had another billion dollars for foreign relations, we could do a lot. Leaving aside NATO, if we had such money for South Asia, we could get India and Pakistan to throw all their nuclear weapons into the sea. The Republicans throw lots of money at the military, but give no money for our diplomacy. This is part of their inchoate America-alone world view. The Senate is better than the House, but went along with the House on the budget. (C)

Of course there are many wild cards. Ross Perot could join the campaign in August and spend twice as much money as me or the Republican nominee. He could not be elected, but he could help reelect me if he enters the race. We are living in strange times. On balance, I am optimistic, but you need to imagine how the world looks to the people who vote. (C)

I am not surprised how the Turks voted in their last election. Look at the fundamentalists: when they were elected mayor of the big cities, they cleaned up the streets, collected the garbage, and fixed many of the problems. In advanced countries, people are losing faith in their institutions as those institutions undergo transformations. Every European country, Japan and the United States are struggling with these problems and there is no perfect strategy. As I said, we are doing pretty well on jobs, but the times are disorienting for our people. I am trying to figure out how to convince people that they have more influence over their own destiny, in order to raise the confidence levels. If I can do this, then their better selves will vote in November.

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8

The Republicans are trying to win by scaring the hell out of people about what the Democrats will do. (C)

-- End of Conversation --

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