

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

3535

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 13526
2015-0548-m (1.07)
KBH 9/9/2019

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: President's Meeting with NATO Secretary General Solana

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
Strobe Talbott, Deputy Secretary of State
Samuel Berger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Robert Hunter, U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO
James Steinberg, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
John Kornblum, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs
Alexander Vershbow, Senior Director for European Affairs, NSC Staff (Notetaker)

Javier Solana, NATO Secretary General
Hoyt Yee, Private Office Deputy Director
Jamie Shea, NATO Press Secretary

DATE, TIME May 19, 1997, 1:20 p.m.-1:45 p.m.
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: *(Commenting on the questions from the press during the pool spray)* That was very good. The American press has not been giving serious coverage to foreign policy. The fact that they asked six questions on foreign policy is a good sign, even if the questions were hostile. (U)

Secretary General Solana: That is one way to look at it. (U)

Samuel Berger: The President can find a silver lining in anything. (U)

The President: I was speaking with Brzezinski, and he said NATO expansion is as important for the long-term stability of Europe as the Marshall Plan was in its time. (U)

Strobe Talbott: Brzezinski was also very high on the NATO-Russia agreement. (U)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Reason: 1.5 (b,d)
Declassify On: 5/21/07

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

2

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Secretary General Solana: Let me say that everyone in this room on the American side who contributed to the NATO-Russia agreement has been fantastic. (U)

The President: You did a terrific job in negotiating the agreement. (U)

Secretary General Solana: Without your meeting in Helsinki, nothing would have happened. (U)

The President: I have one or two things I want to discuss with you today. We just had Ukrainian President Kuchma here. Not without reason, he was obsessed with getting his own agreement with NATO. He wants to come to Madrid to sign a NATO-Ukraine agreement in the immediate aftermath of the Summit. As a practical matter, this means that you and the Ukrainian Foreign Minister need to initial the agreement at Sintra. I hope that can be done. (U)

Secretary General Solana: I believe it can be done. I was in Kiev on May 8 just after the call from the Vice President about signing the CFE Flank Agreement. I gave a draft of the Ukraine-NATO agreement to Kuchma and I believe we can finalize it at Sintra. He wants it signed at the highest level, in your presence. (U)

The President: There has been some discussion about whether the new Partnership Council should be convened at Sintra or Madrid. My only concern is what is most practical. Will we be giving the Partners a better sense of a foothold if we hold the first meeting at Sintra? The second day of Madrid, we could meet with the Partners for an informal discussion. We would not need to put as much emphasis on the level of representation since the Partnership Council would already have met at Sintra. This is a serious issue because we do not know what the Russians will do. Strobe does not believe that Yeltsin or even Primakov will come to Madrid. (U)

Secretary General Solana: Yeltsin told me that he would be in Madrid, but that he could not say when. This was because King Juan Carlos had invited him to pay a State visit. (U)

The President: One reason why we think Sintra would be best is that it would take the sting out of the fact that the Russians would not be at Madrid at a high level. It might also reassure the Baltic states and others while rubbing less salt in the wounds of the Russians. (U)

Secretary General Solana: My only reservations are that this will be the last NACC meeting. We want to show that we are not

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

3

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

just changing the name, and that the EAPC is more than a continuation of the NACC. There will also be a Bosnia ministerial meeting that afternoon. Naturally, ministers may want to talk about Bosnia, and this could diffuse attention from the EAPC. We need to consider this question seriously, and be sure that the new EAPC will be fully understood as an important event. (S)

The President: What are your current thoughts about Bosnia? (S)

Secretary General Solana: I know that you have been working on the problem. We need to revisit Bosnia. I have the impression that NATO ministers have been away from the problem for a while. Therefore, the ministerial meeting at Sintra is very important. My second great concern relates to war criminals. If we do not face up to this problem clearly, we will not find a solution in Bosnia. I want to be emphatic in bringing this to your attention because we need to do something. (S)

The President: Do you think that if we do not remove Karadzic, we won't solve Bosnia? (S)

Secretary General Solana: No. It is very difficult. We will need to deal with the Bosnian Serbs after dealing with war criminals, so we should act before the municipal elections. If we don't do it, there will be serious problems. I am sorry to be so blunt, but that is my view. (S)

The President: The thing that bothers me is that the military balance is shifting to the point that the Muslims may not support Dayton as much. Civilian assistance is not moving as quickly as possible. We have to get European leaders to focus on that. (S)

Secretary General Solana: The meetings in Paris and after will be important to refocus everyone's attention on Bosnia. If people get used to the situation, our generals and the NAC will forget what is going on. I must also share my concern about what will happen in the middle of 1998 when we have to take important decisions on the future of SFOR at the very same time we will be in the midst of ratification of NATO enlargement. Because these two things will be happening simultaneously, we need to plan intelligently so that there is no tension among the Allies at the same time that a complicated debate is underway on NATO enlargement. I am afraid that at the end of June 1998, there will be problems among allies in deciding whether or not we have to leave Bosnia. It could be a bad sign to be debating internally at the same time that we are expanding NATO. I spoke with Ambassador Gelbard this morning and I am enthusiastic about the way he is taking charge. He will have my support. I agree that it is important to refocus implementation efforts. (S)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

4

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

The President: I agree. We have got Bosnia out of the headlines, but there are still problems. I still hope that we can work out our differences with the French on internal adaptation. We are very flexible, and have offered a lot, but we cannot cave on AFSOUTH. We have too many forces involved. We have offered a lot of things and have tried to avoid putting you in the middle. (S)

Secretary General Solana: With Chirac hosting the Paris NATO-Russia meeting, the momentum for a solution could not be better. (S)

Samuel Berger: I do not think the French want to resolve the problem before the parliamentary elections. The Paris summit will take place between the two rounds of the French elections. Unless we totally capitulated, a solution is not likely until after the elections. (S)

The President: We just hope that the problem can be resolved before Madrid. (S)

Secretary General Solana: It would be a good thing if they do it, but reintegration is a difficult question for the French. There will be an important meeting in Bonn tomorrow between President Chirac and Chancellor Kohl. Kohl told me that he is going to confront this issue with Chirac. Kohl also wants to clarify the situation, but he is aware that nothing can be made public until after the French elections. (S)

Samuel Berger: We have to deal with the issue of a successor to Carl Bildt. What do you think of the Spanish candidate, Westendorp? (S)

Secretary General Solana: I know him very well, since he was my deputy and successor as foreign minister. (S)

The President: It's very interesting, he is a Spaniard with a Dutch name. (U)

Secretary General Solana: That is true. If you have decided on a high representative, and believe that the deputy should be American, you should consider somebody like Jacques Klein. You could be sure that he and Westendorp would work as a team. Klein has a personality like a tank. We would need to watch out that the couple (High Representative and deputy) works in the short time that we have left. (S)

Strobe Talbott: Do you think that that team would work? (S)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
5

Secretary General Solana: They need to know clearly what the deal is, and not waste any time. Some of the other candidates do not seem too impressive. (S)

Samuel Berger: What can you tell us about Westendorp's capabilities? (S)

Secretary General Solana: He was my collaborator, he knows everybody, and was in charge of European issues for many years. He is a fine diplomat. Unlike Jacques Klein, he is more of a diplomat. Westendorp will understand the game. You should ask Peter Tarnoff, since the two worked together on the U.S.-EU New Transatlantic Agenda. Another possibility would be to try and find a German for the top job, but the Germans do not have a candidate. (S)

John Kornblum: The Germans do not want to put forward a candidate. (S)

Secretary General Solana: The choice of a new High Representative is very important. (S)

Samuel Berger: And it needs to be made sooner rather than later. (S)

Strobe Talbott: So you think that of all the combinations, Westendorp and Klein would work? (S)

Secretary General Solana: I don't know the other candidates with the exception of Michael Portillo. I am not familiar with the Italian, Finnish or Portuguese candidates. (S)

The other thing that we need to do with Russia is put the meat on the bones of the NATO-Russia Joint Council. We cannot let the Russians drag their feet; we must work to get things done. I spoke with Primakov last Friday and he told me that he saw more domestic support than expected for the NATO-Russia agreement. He is never positive about things. (S)

Samuel Berger: That is where the question came up about states of the former Soviet Union being admissible to NATO. We need to be clear that this is not acceptable. (S)

Secretary General Solana: We are now translating the text of the NATO-Russia Founding Act from English into French and Russian. Some differences have surfaced. (S)

Strobe Talbott: Such as adding "not" in the document? (U)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

The President: I want to thank you again for your work. It has been a pleasure to work with you. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~