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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Mitterrand of France on
March 17, 1993

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Mitterrand
Interpreter: Marcel Couquet
Notetaker: Tony Wayne

DATE, TIME: March 17, 1993, 3:31-3:52 pm, EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

President Mitterrand: Hello. (U)

The President: Hello Mr. President, how are you? (U)

President Mitterrand: Very well thank you. I called you as we agreed in Washington. This gives me the opportunity to thank you for your welcome, but I also wanted to talk to you about what I saw in Russia and about my meeting with Vance, Owen, and Milosevic. May I start with Russia? I had a long meeting with Yeltsin, and I found the situation in great disorder and a situation of conflict between the President and the Congress. This conflict between the two parts of the government must come to a resolution. I think this will happen in April. The assets that Yeltsin has, are, of course, in jeopardy. And he displayed anxiety when he said that I should insist on a meeting of the seven (G-7). When we talked before, we agreed that the Japanese would oppose such a meeting, and you agreed that if not the seven, then the powers which would aid Russia: Germany, France, the United States, and some other countries should meet. President Yeltsin and I would like this meeting to take place in April or as soon as possible. If not, it will be too late and the events we can't control will take place -- not that we are in control now. You will meet with the Russian President in Vancouver. The proposal that President Yeltsin made is that after the meeting in Canada, say two days after, or within the following week, we meet in Vancouver or some other city in Canada, either the sixth or seventh of April. The only objective would be to establish what kind of assistance we could make available to Russia. I know that Japan is opposed to this, and the English aren't enthusiastic. But Chancellor Kohl was insistent that we act. If we don't do so urgently, the world will place on our shoulders the responsibility for the events that happen. I know your government wants a meeting of ministers of foreign affairs and finance. I would be against this because it would not be useful. In terms of political will, these type

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of meetings often fail. I have just repeated the anguish of President Yeltsin, and what he thinks should be done. The minds there are not very relaxed. (Ø)

The President: Mr. President, let me say first of all, thank you for the first-hand report from Russia. Like you, I am very interested in doing something. What concerns me about a meeting of heads of state is whether we can have specific and concrete responses to the problems of Russia. I have been working hard to develop a broad and specific package of assistance ready for my meeting with President Yeltsin. I strongly feel that if we are all going to meet with President Yeltsin, we should have a specific idea of what we are going to propose. This is important with Japan -- if we go ahead without preparing, it will reduce the likelihood of Japan providing help even though it has the resources and is in the best position to help. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: I know that the Japanese will not do anything on their own until they have an answer on the islands, and, if they do not have that, then we must force them to follow us and do it. We must take the initiative and go ahead. (Ø)

The President: Well, have you talked to anyone else? Is Chancellor Kohl willing to do this? (Ø)

President Mitterrand: I talked to Chancellor Kohl four days ago, and he insisted we do all we can to help Yeltsin. He didn't say exactly how. He will talk with me tomorrow. I think we have a period of fifteen days to pull a package together, and I have given you some food for thought. We can talk again after you have thought about it. (Ø)

The President: Yes, I would like to think about it. I will be back in touch. (U)

President Mitterrand: On to the second item, Yugoslavia. I feel the Vance-Owen plan is making progress. Milosevic has now insisted that Bosnian-Serbs contribute to the solution. We met for five hours with him, and this is what Vance and Owen also thought after our talks. Since then, Bosnian President Izetbegovic has accepted to negotiate, and Karadzic is getting ready to come to New York. I think there is only one possibility: do everything we can to bring success to the Vance-Owen effort. It costs us the least and is the only guarantee of peace. If it fails there is nothing else. If the plan works, we must make sure there are enough UN forces present to make sure combat does not start again. I had the feeling in Russia that the Russians will not do much. Today, UN commander Morrillon is still in besieged Srebrenica. I will share with you something that is not yet publicized. France will put at the disposal of the UN, helicopters to distribute food and goods to the city and to help guarantee safe passage of the humanitarian convoy. In order for us to believe that the Bosnian Serbs are going to help end the conflict, they are going to have to stop the siege of Srebrenica. If you and the United States will do what is necessary to push for the success of the Vance-Owen plan, then it

will be successful. That is what I wanted to tell you as we had agreed in Washington. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: Thank you very much. I will be back in touch with you about Russia. But about Bosnia, I appreciate very much the effort you made with Milosevic. We have encouraged Izetbegovic to negotiate with flexibility and reach agreement. I know Karadzic is coming to New York, but I am skeptical that he will negotiate in good faith. We will continue to push Izetbegovic, but if the Bosnians agree to Vance-Owen and if the Serbs continue to resist, we must think about what our reaction should be. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: Of course I agree with you on the reaction, but I also don't trust Milosevic's good faith. I think we will have to place him in a circumstance in which he will feel he has to agree. (Ø)

The President: I agree. Meanwhile, I thank you for your helicopters and what you will be doing there. I will discuss what you have said about Russia and will be back in touch with you. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: Very well. Have a nice day, Mr. President and see you soon. (U)

The President: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --