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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Presidential Telephone Call with French
President Jacques Chirac, July 20, 1995

PARTICIPANTS: The President
French President Jacques Chirac

Notetakers: Kenneth Baldwin, Katherine
O'Loughlin, Kyle Bakke, Matt Miller, Alexander
Vershbow

DATE, TIME July 20, 1995, 3:15 p.m. - 4:13 p.m. EDT
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello? (U)

President Chirac: Hello Bill, I'm in Morocco now. (U)

The President: Yes, hello. How is the King? (U)

President Chirac: I heard you wanted me to call. I am with His
Majesty and will give him your best. (U)

The President: Tell him that I am using the golf clubs he gave
me. But I still want to come and play on his course. He has got
a night golf course. I understand our military planners are
coming closer together on an agreement. I understand you propose
to open a road between Sarajevo and Gorazde. (S)

President Chirac: Yes, but nothing is certain yet. (S)

The President: I got my last report, about 30 minutes ago, that
our people and yours are closer together and we now have to
persuade the British. If we can, we will have one proposal going
into the meeting. (S)

President Chirac: And the Dutch? (S)

The President: Yes, of course. (S)

President Chirac: First let me tell you Bill, I am still against airstrikes, but I will not oppose them. What is essential is to draw a red line around Goradze and then make sure it is respected in order to enforce it. You propose airstrikes whereas I propose sending troops on the ground simply because I think airstrikes will lead to a very strong reaction on the Serbs' part against the Muslims in other areas, and against the blue helmets. So I think it is a very dangerous solution and that is why I prefer my solution. But if everyone else agrees with your solution and they all agree to reject my solution, then obviously I won't oppose it because I don't want to take the responsibility of having tomorrow's conference fail. But I could be wrong. I hope I am wrong, but I am convinced the Serbs are in the situation now where they will react in a very strong and brutal way to the airstrikes. (C)

You know, I've been asking for a month now for Bildt to contact Karadzic. There has not been any contact and I think that has been a major strategic error. You can't say that it wasn't possible to go talk to Karadzic since it was possible to talk to Milosevic. (C)

If we agree on the red line and are to be sure it won't be crossed, I prefer my solution, as I said, but I won't oppose the American solution. I am not certain the others will accept it -- first the British, and then the Dutch, and perhaps the others. (C)

The President: First, I think that if we decide to draw a line around Gorazde, we might be able to do both what you suggest and what I suggest. If we issue an ultimatum, we might not have to do it -- that is what happened in 1994. We might be able to open a ground corridor from Gorazde to Sarajevo and then warn the Serbs that we will protect both, and if they attack Gorazde or interfere with the corridor, then there would be airstrikes. Let me say, we received some good intelligence last night that the Serbs believe the UN will not do anything and they are thinking of taking not just Gorazde, but Sarajevo as well. (C)

President Chirac: Absolutely. (C)

The President: They also told the source of this intelligence that they did not want to pay the price of heavy airstrikes. So what I think we should look at doing is to open the ground corridor with the warning of heavy airstrikes, and with the understanding that this time we will do it. They will be large, not proportional, strikes so that whatever they do to our people, they will suffer more. (C)

President Chirac: Yes. I want to repeat, I won't prevent an agreement. If we agree on your proposal then I will accept it, even though I prefer my solution. I would like to tell you one more thing, Mr. President. I was talking to the King of Morocco about this issue. He is currently the President, or Chairman, of the Organization of Islamic Conference and he told me that the OIC Contact Group is meeting in Geneva tomorrow at 4:00 pm, just at the end of the meeting in London. He told me many of the members are very nervous, and if we fail tomorrow, the King is very worried about initiatives that could be taken by some Islamic countries in favor of the Bosnians -- by Iran, Turkey and maybe some others. So we need to succeed at the meeting tomorrow; even though I am very worried about your proposal and think others might not agree to it, I will accept, but I tell you it is very dangerous. (C)

The President: I think all of our options are somewhat dangerous, Jacques. The consequences of a Serb military victory, under the watchful eye of the UN, are very dangerous. There are no risk-free courses. We need to find a balanced one. If air power is used in the form of an ultimatum instead of using it in advance to clear out the air defenses, that way there will be no dual-key empty threats. We may not have to use it. But they have to know we will do it. That is my hope. (C)

President Chirac: We shall see. But I agreed it is time to stop the Serbs. It is also time to speak with Karadzic. I don't understand why our friend Holbrooke is stopping it. It is a very grave mistake. (C)

The President: I will take that up here today and be prepared to say something to you and your folks tomorrow. (C)

President Chirac: Thank you Bill. Good night. (U)

The President: Good night. Say hello to His Majesty for me.
(U)

-- End of Conversation --