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TEXT_BODY

POTUS spoke to French President Chirac from 1252-1335 EST.

Notetakers
included the Sit Room plus Nancy McEldowney, Don Bandler, and
Rexon
Ryu.

The EUROPEAN Directorate is responsible for preparing the
final memcon package and forwarding it to the Executive Secretary
within 48 hours.

TRANSLATED_ATTACHMENT

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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

**PARTICIPANTS: THE PRESIDENT
FRENCH PRESIDENT CHIRAC**

LOCATION: OVAL OFFICE

**NOTE TAKERS: JAMES SMITH, PAT O'SHAUGHNESSY, TOM
CROWELL, BONNIE GLICK, JEFF
RATHKE, DON BANDLER, NANCY MCELDOWNEY, REXON
RYU**

INTERPRETER: MARCEL BOUQUET

DATE/TIME: 23 FEBRUARY 1998/1252-1335 EST

THE PRESIDENT: Hi, Jacques.

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Hello, Bill. How are you?

THE PRESIDENT: I'm fine, how are you?

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: I'm fine. Congratulations, because frankly you proved right to take a very firm position on the Iraq affair. Because I think we can say, speaking publicly, that what we were all trying to achieve has been achieved. But of course, we are looking into the details. In particular, the question of the inspection of all the presidential sites and as often as we wish and as long as we wish. I recognize that exerting pressure has proved fruitful.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Let me say, I think the combined efforts of the threat of force and the diplomatic efforts you and Boris Yeltsin made, where you were firm in private, but opposed force publicly, the two things worked together. I'd like to talk to you a little bit about the proposed agreement, if you have the time.

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Very good, I'm listening.

THE PRESIDENT: I have now had a chance to review this agreement and I think it is potentially adequate and quite faithful to the Perm Five position that Kofi Annan took to Baghdad.

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Yes, that is also my impression

THE PRESIDENT: Do you have a copy of the memorandum of understanding before you?

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: No, I have not yet gotten a copy of the agreement. The French Ambassador to the UN in New York just telephoned me and told me of its contents, but I expect a copy very soon.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me just tell you what my concerns are, very briefly. In paragraph 4 of the agreement, the memorandum of understanding, it deals with the inspection of presidential sites. It says there will be a special group to inspect them, established by the Secretary General in consultation with Mr.

Butler and the Director General of IAEA and that the group will be headed by a commissioner appointed by the Secretary General. It says the group will operate under the established procedures of UNSCOM and the IAEA and specific detailed procedures developed, given the special nature of the presidential sites, but they will be consistent with the relevant UNSC resolutions.

Now, my observation is, the commissioner should be a person with recognized technical expertise so we don't raise a question of this becoming a political rather than a technical inquiry, and also whatever detailed procedures are adopted must still allow genuine inspections.

Now, paragraph 5 of the memorandum is very good from my point of view. It says that the UN and the Government of Iraq agree that all other facilities, equipment, records and means of transportation are subject to existing UNSCOM procedures.

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Yes, on our part, we had insisted strongly on that particular point.

THE PRESIDENT: And that's very good, because some of these sites UNSCOM had been denied access to are not presidential sites. The most important is the Ministry of Defense, probably, but there are several sites that UNSCOM has been denied access to that were not presidential sites, so that is very important. Now, here's why I mentioned that. The introductory part of this memo says the Government of Iraq undertakes to accord to UNSCOM immediate, unconditional and unrestricted access, but in the performance of its mandate, UNSCOM will respect Iraq's national security, sovereignty and dignity. Now, my concern is simply this: I don't believe that language should lead to another round of negotiations with Iraq over the status of nonpresidential sites and I don't believe that Kofi working on procedures should lead to another round of negotiations.

We don't
need further delay here, and I hope you could support that.

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Yes, I entirely agree with you.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay. Two other issues I wanted to raise with
you. I strongly
believe -- we have done this twice in the last year and the U.S. cannot
afford --
and I don't believe the international community can afford -- another
incident
where we have to move a carrier group into the Gulf. It is expensive,
economically expensive and politically expensive. It would be very
helpful if we
could get a Security Council resolution that says that if this agreement
is
violated it is a material breach and serious consequences will follow.
That way,
we don't have to do this all over again.

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Was that your last point, Bill?

THE PRESIDENT: No, my last point is simply this. I believe we need
to have an
early test of this. We shouldn't have a lengthy delay. All of us should
encourage Kofi and Butler to move quickly and start to activate the
agreement as
quickly as possible. I understand Butler has problems, he can't just
send people
to Iraq overnight, but I think we need to test this agreement quickly.

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Bill, I would like to make one or two
remarks, if I may.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes.

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: First of all, Saddam Hussein thought he could
cheat on this.
He was subjected to maximum U.S. pressure, and he had to give in.
Bill, I think
we can say that the whole of the international community and
particularly the
Arab world completely understood the sense and importance of
American pressure.
So from there on, Saddam Hussein, faced with all these pressures,
military and
political pressures, got the message that he was wrong and that he was
mistaken.
And thanks to Kofi Annan being adroit in this, I think Saddam
Hussein finally

accepted almost everything we were trying to get him to accept.

The main point being that all sites can be visited as often as UNSCOM wants. I

think this is a major victory for the U.S. and for the international community.

I agree with you we should make it known as quickly as possible that there is

agreement. I am a little worried about the upsurge of negative attitude by Arab

public opinion against the West. I think we should reach agreement on this

really very quickly.

On the various points you raised, with exception of automaticity, which I will go

back to in a moment, on all the other points I quite agree with you.

And I don't

think we could have expected to get anything better, and with this UNSCOM will be

able to go about its work as it wishes to. Especially as the people who have

been doing the measuring on behalf of the UN have realized that the actual

surface areas of these sites are not as extensive as originally thought.

So in

order to stop the negative attitude on the part of the Arab world and to prevent

that from developing, it's important that the Security Council should make up its

mind quickly.

Two problems. The first I would call the details, technicalities that would have

to be improved. So, my view is what we should say is we agree with general

agreement with Kofi Annan and, as far as the details are concerned, they can be

sorted out as they come out. And the second problem, far more important, is what

you call the material breach. Obviously, it is very difficult to talk about

something being automatic, it is something that world public opinion has trouble

accepting. But our British friends have made a proposal which I thought was very

interesting. Instead of talking about material breach, they had phraseology that

said the same thing but in more diplomatic terms. I think the British proposal

talked about the most serious consequences and I think it would be far easier to get agreement from the 15 Security Council members on that British phraseology, bearing in mind it means the same thing but is more diplomatic. Especially after the victory won over Saddam.

THE PRESIDENT: The only thing that bothers me is I simply cannot afford to do this again. Twice in the past year to get him to comply, I've had to move the U.S. Navy into the Persian Gulf. It cost a lot of money, and political and military effort, as well. He has to know in no uncertain terms we can't go through this a third time, every time he wants to jerk the world community around. The material breach is unambiguous, and I would have thought the Brits favored that. The next time, I have to act, to do something, and I am looking for something to maximize the chances there won't be a next time, to maximize deterrence, and I won't have to do anything.

I also -- let me say that I'm under the impression that Tony Blair agreed with us. I just talked to him and will talk to him again. The other point is the stronger language, the material breach language, would make it easier to be more flexible on the proposed package. It has an impact on the overall package.

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Bill, I just picked up the British proposal made a few days ago in the Security Council, and their suggestion was to have instead of the words "material breach," the words "the most serious consequences" would be used. And in the last message I sent to Saddam Hussein, making it quite clear there was nothing to negotiate and he just had to accept what he was asked to do, I indicated that whatever the wording was, "material breach" or "serious consequences," it meant exactly the same thing and it meant he would have to comply fully, otherwise a strike would take place. But my feeling is

the British
wording is more diplomatic. It changes absolutely - it doesn't change
reality at
all but, and that point must be made perfectly clear, that explanation
means
exactly the same thing, but is a politer way to say it.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, how would we go about saying it means the
same thing?

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Simply by explaining what I just said, which
is what I already
said to Saddam Hussein: whatever the wording is, the meaning is
exactly the same
and the first thing he does out of line will lead to a military strike. It is
a
question of polite diplomacy or diplomatic phrasing, but the point
must be made
that it means exactly the same thing and this must be said publicly and
we must
all say it together.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, let me make a suggestion. Would you also
discuss this with
Tony Blair, and then we can talk again perhaps in the next - excuse
me. Let me
ask you this, two things: one is to talk to Tony Blair and secondly,
would you
be willing to say what you just said publicly, what you said privately?

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Yes, no problem. I entirely agree I can say
this publicly. I
am prepared to say this alone or with the four other members of the
Security
Council under any format you would prefer.

THE PRESIDENT: I think if you say it separately it is more powerful.
People
view you as an independent voice on this.

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: I am perfectly prepared to say this, write it,
and confirm it
in writing to Saddam.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. You talk to Tony.

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Yes, I am calling Tony right now.

THE PRESIDENT: Great and we'll get back together on this.
Goodbye.

PRESIDENT CHIRAC: Goodbye.

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