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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Mitterrand of France

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Interpreter: Carol Wolter
Notetaker: E. Anthony Wayne, NSC StaffPresident Mitterrand
InterpreterDATE, TIME April 20, 1993; 10:15 am - 10:38 am
AND PLACE: Oval OfficePresident Mitterrand: Hello? (U)The President: Hello, Francois. (U)President Mitterrand: Hello, I am happy to hear from you. (U)The President: It's nice to hear your voice too. (U)

President Mitterrand: I called yesterday because I wanted to raise a special issue regarding Bosnia. I am very disturbed by NATO's decision to ask Turkish planes to participate in the Bosnia No-Fly Zone. It is not a problem of Turkish-French relations. They are good. But I feel -- and the Prime Minister agrees -- that it would be a psychological and historical mistake to ask the Turks to help oversee Bosnian air space. I realize that since the decision is taken it is hard to change, but I feel that between the decision to put the Turkish planes in reserve and to actually use them, there is a need for reflection. Because of four centuries of history in the Balkans, it is an extraordinary decision to ask the Turks to oversee Serbs. This decision was taken by officials and not by government leaders, which is, what is needed. If we were to move to implementation, that is if we were to move beyond just holding those planes in reserve and if we actually employed them, then we would need to review whether we can continue to use French aircraft in that operation. That is the difficulty we face. As for the broader situation, we're close to you. We have requested new sanctions. Obviously, we are not ready to intervene militarily on the ground, but in the coming days we need to reach a common appreciation of what to do. The situation could become even more complex as we can see from the current fighting between the Croats and Bosnians. As I told you when we met, Bosnia is an artificial creation and now we are facing the consequences of our imprudent decision to recognize it. So, I just wanted to give

you my thoughts on this important subject. Let me add how happy I was to meet you in Washington last month and that we agreed to talk from time to time on important topics like this one. I want to add that I know that this issue about the Turkish planes is not a U.S. decision, but one that must be taken in NATO. But given the important role which you play in NATO, I wanted to raise it with you. (Ø)

The President: Thank you for calling. First, I agree that we should implement new sanctions and do so as rapidly as possible. I intend to send a representative to Europe to speak with the nations involved to make sure we are doing the best job possible with sanctions. But I don't see any realistic possibility that sanctions alone will induce the Serbs to sign or negotiate any version of Vance-Owen that we all could live with. In the last several days, there have been basically three ideas passed around about what we should do next, all of which have been debated in Europe also. We are reconsidering the question of if the Serbs continue to fight after the Muslims and Croats stop fighting, whether we should lift the arms embargo. You know the arguments for and against that. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: Yes, Yes. (Ø)

The President: The leaders of both the Republican and Democratic parties in the U.S. Senate and others have suggested that we employ air strikes against various targets in Bosnia to deter Serb gains, and to freeze the Serbs where they are. There is now much more debate on the use of air strikes than just a week ago. Finally, there has been a lot of discussion about a suggestion Prime Minister Major made to me, although I'm not sure if the British would support it, that there should be a multilateral force to freeze the situation as it now is. That would be in a sense -- though not formally -- abandoning Vance-Owen and going in to preserve the situation on the ground as it is now. The problem is how do we get out at the end, and, if we do, the Muslims might become the aggressors because they could feel they could regain territory. All these ideas have some problems, and I want to know if you think any of these should be pursued. (Ø)

President Mitterrand: Well, I'll have to think about these options. We need to try to do all we can to preserve the Vance-Owen map or something like it. We need some map or plan for the redistribution of the ethnic groups. As for active military intervention and bombings, I'm very reserved. I haven't talked in detail to the Prime Minister. I'm not sure what France's position will be, but I am very reserved. Serbia is a very hard and courageous country, which creates a problem -- bombings wouldn't end the problem and could lead to a massive war. (Ø)

The President: To be fair to the proponents of sending the multi-lateral group of soldiers, they do not want to abandon the Vance-Owen plan or process, but would only adopt this if all other means, including Vance-Owen, failed. This would only be to preserve the possibility of peace by freezing the current military situation, while negotiations continue. But I worry

about how to get out, once committed, and if we do guarantee agreements there and we do withdraw, we might find the Muslims and not the Serbs are breaching the cease fire line in a year.
(C)

President Mitterrand: Yes, when do you think you'll send your envoy? (U)

The President: Oh, in the next couple of days. But I am not sending someone to talk at very high levels. He will want to talk through with those in charge of the sanctions effort about how we will enforce the sanctions mechanically. (C)

President Mitterrand: That will be useful. (U)

The President: Yes, I will do that soon. Have you had any new thoughts about lifting the arms embargo? Are you still against that? (C)

President Mitterrand: Well, I do think we are being unjust to the Muslims. We are not helping them militarily or in other ways. But you know that any decision of this sort has negative consequences. I need to think about it. Could I give you a response in forty-eight hours? (C)

The President: Well, thank you. We will have a meeting here within the next forty-eight hours to come up with what we think our position will be. Also, I don't think we should talk about this much in public before the Russian elections so as not to hurt Yeltsin. (C)

President Mitterrand: That will be in four days. (U)

The President: Yes, in four days. (U)

President Mitterrand: Please think about what I said on the Turkish air force, but we can talk again. Thank you very much for calling. I think we will have opportunities to discuss this again. It is not the kind of problem which will go away. So, we'll talk soon. (C)

The President: I'd like that. Let me say one brief word about Turkey. The NATO commander basically said he needed all the aircraft he could get to meet the twenty-four hour operational requirements of No-Fly Zone enforcement. And since we have been working hard with the Turks to encourage their forbearance in the Caucasus and to continue our cooperation in Northern Iraq, we thought that we shouldn't block their minimal participation in this way. I will, however, communicate your concerns to our people, and we will talk about it since you've spoken with me.
(C)

President Mitterrand: I have conveyed my concerns to Major and Kohl since I think it would be a political mistake to reintroduce the Turks into that difficult area. You know what the Croats and

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Serbs call the Bosnian Muslims -- Turks. History is alive there.
We'll talk soon. (C)

The President: Yes, in the next couple of days. We will need to coordinate our response to the Russian referendum because it is important, and we will talk on Yugoslavia. (C)

President Mitterrand: Talk to you soon. (U)

The President: Thank you and goodbye, Mr. President. (U)

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