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THE WHITE HOUSE

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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany
(U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Chancellor Helmut Kohl
Present: Alexander Vershbow; Dan Poneman
Notetaker: Anthony Gardner

DATE, TIME May 26, 1995, 4:35-4:55 p.m.
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello, Helmut. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Hello, Bill. Guten Abend. (U)

The President: Guten Abend to you. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: How are you? (U)

The President: Well, and you? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Very well. Stay the course, Bill. I see you are fighting hard and doing well. (U)

The President: Yes, I think things are going pretty well. There's a movement among the isolationists in Congress to handcuff the President's authority in foreign affairs and destroy the foreign aid budget, but we managed to postpone a vote on the bill. We have a chance of defeating it and maintaining our present course. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Very good. (U)

The President: I wanted to talk to you about my trip to Moscow and my meeting with Yeltsin. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Good. I have plenty of time, Bill. (U)

The President: I think we did the right thing to go to Moscow to express our respect for the Russian people and the magnitude of their loss during the war. The day after the commemorations I met with Yeltsin. He seemed alert and was well prepared for our

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meeting. We met one-on-one for three hours. We spent about an hour on NATO issues. He is clearly concerned about NATO enlargement and its impact on the elections in Russia in 1996. He clearly hopes to run and thinks he has a chance to win. (C)

First, Boris asked me to postpone expansion until 2000. Then he stepped back and asked us to wait until a year or two after 1996. I said that I understood his problem and would be as supportive as possible, but that I can't abandon the timetable we have set forward or postpone expansion indefinitely. I then went through the timeline on the 1995 study which will focus on the "why" and the "how" of expansion rather than the "who" and the "when." (C)

Chancellor Kohl: You did not discuss a specific date, did you?
(C)

The President: No, but I said that in the first months of 1996 the NATO ministers would work on processing all they had heard in response to the study on the "why" and the "how." I said that there wouldn't be any announcement of the "who" and the "when" before the 1996 elections. That would occur later in 1996. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes. (U)

The President: Only one more comment. I also told him it was important that neither of us be seen as giving in to the other. We need to avoid discussion on speeding up or slowing down expansion. I made clear to him that he would be all right, but that he should stop putting so much pressure on us in public because this has a counterproductive reaction...I said we could control the timing in a way that he wouldn't be hurt by it.

Chancellor Kohl: Yes... (U)

President Clinton: Let me finish and then you can comment. At the end of our conversation, he said that he would drop Russian opposition to participation in the partnership agreements with NATO and that he would give approval just before the NAC meeting on May 30. This would enable us to move ahead with PFP and a NATO dialogue with Russia. I said that at the NAC Ministerial, we would urge that Ministers would do three things in return: first, it would reaffirm that enlargement will occur in a gradual, transparent and open way; second, it would reinvigorate PFP and enhance its importance; third, it would will launch a dialogue with Russia on an expanded NATO-Russia relationship. I think we can meet his political needs and still pursue our approach without anyone being seen to have given way. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: So, Bill. With respect to your report, I think it is excellent that you discussed this with Boris directly. Let

me tell you openly how I assess the situation. I'm very unhappy with the fact that NATO expansion has been tied to a timetable. My position is unchanged. I think that Russia and Yeltsin have no right to a veto on anyone's acceptance by NATO. But it's also a question of simple prudence that we deal with Russian concerns over their own security. To be frank, we are facing two hurdles. First, the Russian domestic political situation: there are parliamentary elections in December and terrible fights over their election law. We don't know what the outcome will be. Second, there will be presidential elections next year. It would be prudent for us not to do anything that would make things worse there. What I mean by worse is that the radicals could cause a great upheaval. At this point the question of whether Yeltsin will run is open. He asked me for my opinion about what he should do. I couldn't give him an answer because the earliest one could assess the situation would be early next year. But I told him that if he moves toward one of the extremes from the center, his chances will decrease and, in particular, his international support would decline dramatically. (X)

Bill, to be frank, I see another hurdle: the U.S. primaries. I hear with concern what Dole is saying about you. The subject [of NATO expansion] is being used to harm you. I assume that Polish groups are going to play on this even more. You know a lot more about this than I do; it is a complex group we are dealing with. In four weeks I'll be in Warsaw. My intention is to tell those in charge that it won't help to light a NATO fire and that this would only cause problems for their friends in the U.S. They need our help in the EU and, of course, they want to get into NATO. But NATO entry is not a question of months; we must be reasonable. (X)

We must therefore make the issue of timing less dramatic. Perhaps our ministers need more time to evaluate and perhaps hold another conference. I am willing to be as helpful as I can. But I have forbidden my Cabinet to continue pounding on this subject. Frankly, as for the U.S. primaries, it doesn't help us to produce hot air and get excited on this topic. I spoke to Chirac about this last week and tomorrow Major will be coming here. I also spoke to Dutch Prime Minister Kok. I think we have everyone in line and we have good cards to play. You did a great job in Moscow; but we cannot let foreign policy become a blunt instrument of domestic policy. We must be very clever and wise now. That's my position. I think we are in agreement. We'll be able to discuss this again before the summit in Halifax and at the time of that meeting. (X)

The President: Well, I'm very encouraged by all you have said. Let me tell you about the political situation here. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, of course. I have plenty of time. (U)

The President: NATO enlargement may be an important issue in the primaries. But if I can keep my position over the next six months, I won't have any opposition in the primaries. (X)

Chancellor Kohl: You mean from the Democrats? (X)

The President: Correct. That means that I won't have to deal with the question in a political context until the period from August to November of next year, well after the Russian elections. (X)

My goal is for us to be seen as steady so that neither the Poles nor the Russians will make an issue out of it. We must keep the dialogue steady and deliberate so that we can get through June 1996 without any adverse consequences for Yeltsin or for us. (X)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, I totally agree with you. I will do everything so that the Europeans follow this path. (X)

The President: Great. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: So we are in agreement on the main points. If anything new comes up, we'll keep one another informed. (X)

The President: Yes, we need to keep each other informed. Both of us will be meeting with Yeltsin in Halifax. If we get through those meetings, we will be okay for a year. (X)

Chancellor Kohl: Exactly. (U)

The President: Just two more points. Yeltsin and I reached agreement on closing off Russian conventional arms sales to Iran. This enables them to become members of the post-COCOM regime and will help Yeltsin to improve his prestige. With regard to the sale of light water reactors to Iran, Yeltsin believes that they cannot be used for the construction of nuclear weapons. But he was concerned about the implications of intelligence we shared with him. So we agreed that Chernomyrdin and the Vice President would continue to discuss the issue and find a solution. I think that's a step in the right direction. (X)

Chancellor Kohl: Very good. (U)

The President: One last point we need to discuss in Halifax. I had a committee here to look at security arrangements for nuclear materials in Russia. I know this is of concern to you since there have been instances of smuggling to Germany. Yeltsin says there is no problem of security. Either he's completely unaware

of the problem or he's unwilling to admit to it. I want to follow up with him about this in Halifax. It may be too early to act, but I may need to bring you in, too. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: I don't know whether he's pretending or whether he really believes what he says. But I think he really believes there is no problem. I don't think he has any control over this issue at all. We must keep after him, but tactfully. It is an area which touches on criminality, so it is very delicate. One doesn't know who has his finger in the pie. This is very serious, and we need to work together. Although we cannot ignore others, it is really the two of us who count most. We two need to lead. (Ø)

The President: I want to share with you what we know. It is Germany that is most likely to be affected given the routes out of Russia. Of course, it is very important not to embarrass Yeltsin in any way on this. We have been spending time and money with them to improve security of their sites. We think they're doing a good job at military sites, but we are still very concerned about other sites. There's no need to say more about this now, but we do need to discuss it further at Halifax. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, this is very serious. We need to make him understand all the facts. (Ø)

The President: In Moscow he did not seem to have all the facts. We need to make him understand the importance of this issue and work with him. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, I'm without illusions on this issue. We need to talk to him directly and personally. (Ø)

The President: Yes. I'm going to have Al Gore share with Chernomyrdin the results of our work. But you and I still need to tell Yeltsin. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes. (U)

The President: The last thing I wanted to do is to follow up on the letter I sent to you regarding the North Korea nuclear issue. We are entering a critical round in the talks. We need to convince North Korea that the KEDO project is viable. I know that a lot of people in Europe have concerns about our approach, but I honestly believe that it is the best approach and that we need the participation and leadership of Germany. We are hoping for a contribution which is more than symbolic. You know that the Australians have contributed \$5 million. We hope you can manage something around that figure. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, we're going to do something. I'm going to discuss this with others in Europe. I have no problem with doing something that is more than symbolic. My problem lies in joining KEDO. We can talk about that in Halifax. (C)

The President: That's what we'll do. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes. (U)

The President: OK, friend. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: My best to your wife. Good luck. (U)

The President: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --