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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

**DECLASSIFIED
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7/31/2018 KBH

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl
(U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Chancellor Helmut Kohl

Interpreter: Brigitte Richman
Notetaker: Katherine O'Loughlin, Karen
Dragone, Larry Wright, Mary Ann Peters and
Dan Fried

DATE, TIME September 4, 1996, 1503 - 1532
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello? Helmut? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes. (U)

The President: Are you already on the phone? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes. (U)

The President: Helmut, how are you? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I am good, excellent. It's late in the evening. I hope you are fighting a good campaign. I put money on you, so don't disappoint me. (U)

The President: So far your money is good. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I don't think I will lose it. So, you are working full steam ahead. (U)

The President: Yes, we had a good convention. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, I watched you on TV. (U)

The President: I have to work on it for 60 more days. I wanted to talk to you before you went to Russia; I appreciate your taking my call. First, I want to thank you for Germany's support

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for our actions in Iraq. I had a very difficult conversation with Chirac. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, he told me about that. (C)

The President: He told me they would participate in the no fly zone until the election, but today they said they would fly only up to the 32nd parallel, not the 33rd. We had a difference of opinion. Chirac thought it was just election year politics. (interpreter interrupts) He thought it made no sense except for election year politics. I disagreed. We didn't know what else Saddam had planned. It was a measured response. But Chirac did say that for the next couple of months France would continue to fly with us in the no-fly zone, but today France said they would stop at the 32nd parallel. So we are starting a new round of conversations here. I don't know if you have spoken with him, but if you could, maybe we can cool things down a bit. It could help. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: I am going to call him next week when I get back from visiting Yeltsin in Moscow and I think we can talk about that too. I have the impression he felt steamrolled by the U.S. I am being frank, that was my impression. Right now, domestically speaking, he is not in an easy position. Next week the prime minister submits his budget and on the basis of the figures, they will have to make enormous cuts and you know from your own experience what an unpleasant experience it will be. If I could be so bold, I'd like to give you a piece of advice. Be nice, you have to be particularly nice to them and cozy up to them, if you understand what I mean. Also, there are a lot of rumors going around Paris that they will have difficulty with the European currency, although I don't believe it. So, I am going out of my way to allay his fears on this and I shall raise the issue with them against this background when I come back. I will call you next week when I get back from Moscow, maybe Tuesday or Wednesday, if that is okay. I will tell you what I find out. (C)

The President: I admire him and I don't want to cause him any domestic problems. From what I understand, I support the things he is trying to do domestically. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: There is also another point I would like to go to, the question of NATO enlargement. I think it is very important for all of us to get an agreement on when we start negotiations proper. I will see Secretary Christopher on Friday. I am going to address this issue with the Secretary on Friday and tell him it will not serve our cause to address NATO expansion this year, but to commence the process at the beginning of the new year in a quiet and determined way, on a case-by-case

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basis, without delaying the process but without undue haste. We will get no positive results if we push now. (Ø)

The President: I believe we have to develop a special relationship between Russia and NATO. IFOR sets a good example. I also believe we can address Russian concerns on nuclear deployments and related issues without sacrificing NATO's flexibility. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: That's exactly my point, I fully support what you say. Obviously, we have to try to reach agreement with the Russians on substance. I am willing to address this issue with Yeltsin on Sunday. I will give you his response. I hope you have not misunderstood me. I am not talking about procrastinating on the issue, but I think we should be psychologically clever about it, we should avoid any undue haste. I agree we need to start right away, at the beginning of the new year and try to complete the overall process by the middle of next year. (Ø)

The President: We cannot let the Russians think they can keep the process from advancing, that all the details have to be worked out with them in advance; otherwise they will hold out and the talks will not advance. I think talks with the first group of potential new members should begin next spring and we should intensely work on an agreement with the Russians between now and then in hopes of getting agreement. But, if they believe by not agreeing they can delay accession talks, we will never get them to agree. We cannot let them think they have a veto. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: I said today very clearly in my press conference as I finished my Ukraine visit that we would not allow anyone to get veto power over this issue. I do not know what shape Boris is in. I'll see for myself Saturday. I'll let you know; then we will have to see if he can actively pursue this course. If so, I think we should try to get in touch with him personally and that officials we send to him will work in a discreet way. And, it will be you and I, I predict, that will have to have the first round of talks with him and then bring in Major and Chirac. But it will be you and me in the first round of talks and then they can continue in official channels. I think we must make sure that he does not believe that he or the Russian government can have veto power over this. (Ø)

The President: Good, I look forward to that. A word about his health. I have to say I am very concerned about Yeltsin's health. We believe he is at risk of having a serious heart attack. I have offered him American medical assistance, but so far he has not taken us up on this. Has Germany offered help or

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medical advice to him? Do you have any advice or ideas of what I can say to him? (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, I will say something on his health shortly, but I just want to clarify on NATO in regards to the timetable and general concept. I wanted to ascertain that that is what you were thinking? (Ø)

The President: I think we need to announce at the December NAC that accession talks with the first group of potential new members will begin in spring. It is very important that they start next year and it would be strange not to say so in December. We need to work out an agreement with Russia but if we do not say that the talks begin in the spring, we will have a lot of disillusioned people in Central Europe. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, according to what you say we are in complete agreement. I think too we should say in December that we will announce in the spring. I raise this issue because I do think there is a misunderstanding in Europe --NATO is a gossip organization anyway. There is an impression that we want to settle the "who" business in December. It is good we see eye-to-eye on this. If this is agreeable to you Bill, I will support you formally. We will announce in December that we will begin this process in the spring. Is that agreeable? We will have discussions with the Russians in the meantime. (Ø)

The President: I think we have to coordinate an announcement. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Okay, no problem. What I am looking for is that we have an exact idea about a time frame, a schedule. Now on Boris, I hear a lot of rumors, as you do. I do not think anyone has reliable information. There have been lengthy intelligence reports. What is really true is not known. I had a long telephone conversation with him on Wednesday last week and he suggested a meeting. I asked him and his wife how the operation went and it apparently went well. I asked him very frankly if he needed any help or medical assistance. I told him we are all prepared to help and he mentioned that you had offered, and he clearly said he needed no help. Then I said is it better to discuss this when we have our meeting and he was very friendly, calm and collected in his reaction and said of course, we can discuss this. And you know it is very difficult to read someone's mind over the phone. You know I greatly distrust the people surrounding him and the truth is there are people around him who have already sorted out their positions for the future. And quite a few have done so not because they are interested in the power, but the money. (Ø)

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I had a long, frank discussion on this with President Kuchma this morning. He is greatly concerned for obvious reasons which is why it is important that you in America and we in the European Union try everything to stabilize the situation in Ukraine. I will urge my colleagues in the EU to become aware that it is very important for Central Europe, the structural stability in Ukraine and that Ukraine is stable and is able to pursue stable economic policy. My impression is, and was confirmed in conversations with Kuchma, that there are large business interests that have a say in the overall process. There are still traces of these so called military-industrial complexes that used to exist, and Lebed seems to be in close connection with these groups. It is reasonable what he has done in Chechnya, but still you have to bear this in mind. Once again, I will discuss these issues with Boris in a frank and open way and will call you when I get back.
(Ø)

The President: I wish I could see him in person too. I want to help him. I do not want to cause him any embarrassment. The world needs a healthy Yeltsin. We need a healthy Yeltsin. (Ø)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, you're absolutely right. Thank you. Please tell Hillary I said hello and fight. You're a young guy; you have to fight. (U)

The President: Thank you very much. I look forward to hearing from you. Tell Hannelore hello. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Fight! (U)

The President: I will. I couldn't bear it if you lost your money. Auf wiedersehn. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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