

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with German Chancellor Kohl (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Chancellor Kohl

Interpreter: Brigitta Richmond
Notetakers: Bonnie Glick, Tom Crowell,
Frank Jaraosinski, George Chastain, Robin
Rickard, Elizabeth Rogers, Sean Tarver, Jim
Smith, Nancy McEldowney

DATE, TIME: October 8, 1998, 5:42 - 5:56 p.m. EDT
AND PLACE: Oval Office

Chancellor Kohl: Hello. (U)

The President: Helmut? (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, Bill. (U)

The President: Thank you for taking my call. I wanted to
discuss two things with you. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes. (U)

The President: First the business. I wanted to talk about NATO
action on Kosovo. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes. (U)

The President: Based on Kofi Annan's report that Milosevic is
defying the international community, and Dick Holbrooke's three
difficult meetings with Milosevic in the last few days, he is
still refusing to comply and there are still clear violations.
The foreign ministers of the Contact Group are meeting in London
today, but I don't think the Russians will agree to strong

~~SECRET~~

Classified by: Glyn T. Davies

Reason: 1.5(b, d)

Declassify On: 10/9/08

action. To avoid any chance of a terrible winter conflict, we must get a consensus now on a NATO decision to authorize force. I think it is very important to get agreement at the NATO meeting on October 10 on the Activation Order. That does not require us to use force, but it authorizes it if it becomes necessary and I don't think a further UN resolution is necessary or helpful. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: The tenth is Tuesday, next Tuesday, right?
(S)

The President: Yes, that's right. I know that there is a problem in Germany. Wait, wait, no, the tenth is Saturday, I guess that's a problem for you? (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Yes, a real problem. (S)

The President: Yes, first of all a constitutional problem with the Bundestag. I was hoping Germany could join with a consensus on the ACTORD at the October 10 meeting, but make it clear German participation in the limited air option would require subsequent Bundestag approval. If you could do this it would protect German legal and political interests, but let NATO move forward on the basis of solidarity. Schroeder is coming here tomorrow, and I will discuss this with him, but I wanted to discuss it with you first. I understand he will support this approach, however. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Well, Bill, let me start. First, I thought the decision would be taken next Tuesday. Schroeder will be in the States tomorrow. He arrives in Washington tonight. Before he left today, I had a detailed discussion with him. I think when you talk with him, you should talk with him in the vein that you and I are talking right now. In this way, we will be able to solve our problems. Our problem is the following: the current parliament still has eight days, then the new legislative period starts eight days from Monday. I know it's a crazy situation, but it's a fact. I myself will continue to be Federal Chancellor for the next 8 days and I have all the rights of the position. I would like to tell you that following your talks with Schroeder at 12 your time tomorrow, that is 6:00 p.m. our time, I will try to establish contact again with Schroeder and I will try to consider your proposal here at home tomorrow morning. Of course, it is already midnight here, in Germany. Tell your people this would be sometime around 8:00 in the morning your time. Then Bitterlich can talk to your man, and I will get my people together tomorrow and I'll see what I can do

to meet that deadline of Saturday. Because our planning so far was that the meeting was to be next Tuesday, if we now move it up, I'll have to see how I can juggle it from a parliamentary point of view. Therefore, I'll have to reflect on it. I have my majority, but I don't know what the situation will be on Schroeder's side. The situation is very difficult. Therefore, it is important that you clearly tell him what your expectations are. And I, of course, want to be helpful, because what is happening there is a catastrophe and is also shameful. I will try to find a solution and let you know before you have your meeting with Schroeder. What time is it? Twelve o'clock? (S)

The President: Yes. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: That's 6:00 p.m. here isn't it? So, we will be able to get in touch before that. Will your Security Advisor be in? (S)

The President: Yes, Sandy Berger will be available. Bitterlich can call him. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Then, let's do it that way, and if necessary, I will establish contact again. (S)

The President: Now, let me mention one other thing, personally. As you know, I feel very strongly that the United States owes you an enormous debt for the leadership you've given the world over the last several years. If you are willing to accept it, I would like to give you the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which is America's highest award. It has only been given to a few non-Americans over the last several decades. But it is very appropriate to express our gratitude for what you've done. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Bill, you make me very happy with that. And it is going to be a special joy if you will award it to me. I want to underline that I would appreciate it if you personally will award it to me. (S)

The President: Yes. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I'm happy to come. Hannelore and I can work out a date. (S)

The President: I can do it later this month or early next month, whenever it is convenient for you, but I would like to have a very nice ceremony here for you. You and Hannelore can stay with us at the White House if you like. (S)

Chancellor Kohl: Thank you. I will be very glad and happy to accept. I think we should talk further about the date, because I have a lot of things I must arrange right now. I'm extremely happy about this honor and look forward to seeing you again in person. (Ø)

The President: Thank you, Helmut. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: I thank you too. If I can do anything else to assist you, please let me know. I am just leaving office, I am not leaving this world. (U)

The President: I know that. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: And you and your wife should know that you have friends. (U)

The President: Oh, we do. Goodbye, Helmut. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --