

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Chirac of France of
May 27, 1995

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Jacques Chirac
Notetaker: Nelson Drew and Deuce Martinez

DATE, TIME May 27, 1995: 1521-1547
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello. (U)

The President: It's a great pleasure to hear you. Thanks for
calling. (U)

The President: It has been a difficult couple of days. I want
to extend my condolences to you for the loss of the French
soldiers in Bosnia. (U)

President Chirac: We are not the only ones to have some problems
here. Let me tell you how we feel. I understand that you and
Warren Christopher agree to the Contact Group meeting on Monday.
I had a long call with Yeltsin. He is willing to come as well.
It is very important for those with troops in UNPROFOR to have
this meeting. (*Switching to French*) I understand the situation
is becoming seriously worse in Bosnia. At the present time they
have taken over 200 hostages, 100 of which are French. Secondly,
bombing of the safe areas, especially Tuzla, continues, mainly on
civilians. This is a result of airstrikes decided, I must say, a
bit hastily, without sufficient thought to strategy. If this
situation continues we cannot stay. Naturally, we don't want to
withdraw, but in order for us to remain, a number of decisions
need to be made: ~~(C)~~

First, there needs to be a means for strengthening UNPROFOR.
This is what we will present to the Contact Group. I take it we
agree on that orientation. Second, we need a very strong
diplomatic initiative, in particular mutual recognition between
Bosnia and Serbia. This is the most urgent thing to establish a
peaceful climate. And on that point, our hope is that the U.S.
negotiator who has been acting in the name of the Contact Group
can reach agreement as soon as possible. There is also the
question of designating a mediator. We are in agreement on that.
But to conclude, our wish is for the situation to change in the

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following way: reinforce UNPROFOR by increasing the number and strength of its troops; acceleration in diplomatic efforts; and no further airstrikes that have not been concerted in advance. What do you think? ~~(C)~~

The President: I'm sympathetic to the very difficult situation all the troops are in. UNPROFOR is now in a dilemma. The Serbs believe they have the best of all worlds. They think they can attack safe areas and, if we respond with airstrikes, they can take hostages. I understand why the UN requested airstrikes, yet they have made UNPROFOR more vulnerable. Maybe if UNPROFOR was more clustered in Sarajevo. I understand you have some views on this. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: True, they are very vulnerable, in little groups of 10 or 20. ~~(C)~~

The President: This is something to be discussed quickly by Ministers in the Contact Group. We have to be sure we have a theory on what to do with eastern enclaves. The Bosnians say they can defend them, but our people don't think they can. I also agree it's difficult if you call in airstrikes without a strategy. Still, it is better for the Bosnian Serbs to be worried about escalation. They seem to be, because they haven't killed any of the hostages. I believe there should be no more airstrikes for now, but we shouldn't take them off the table. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: I agree, we should not say anything publicly. But you must understand that airstrikes are not efficient. Airstrikes might kill civilians or they don't do anything. If they hit civilians, they say we are barbarians. In either case, they give the Serbs the possibility to take hostages or bomb civilians as in Tuzla. Airstrikes have to be done with this in mind, and with real thinking. ~~(C)~~

The President: I agree. The real problem is on the ground. When we conducted airstrikes before, we were able to get the Serbs to put weapons into collection areas. It worked for a while. But we took no steps to decommission the weapons, so they took them back. UNPROFOR is in a difficult situation if they can't defend themselves and if the weapons can be taken from their control at will. We could consider some understanding on the temporary cessation of airstrikes in return for real control over the heavy weapons by the UN. The Bosnians could defend their areas if it were not for the heavy weapons. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: It is impossible to control heavy weapons. There are not enough people in UNPROFOR, and they are peacekeepers, not ready for war when the Bosnian Serbs take them hostage. We now have horrific images in France from Serb

television showing Canadian and Ukrainian soldiers without their helmets, chained to gates. It's terrible. We cannot accept this. If we want to stay, we need to reinforce UNPROFOR capabilities. We need to change its mission, give it more weapons, consolidate the forces in less vulnerable positions, and let them defend themselves. We also need to accelerate talks calling for mutual recognition of Bosnia and Serbia. That deal is nearly done. ~~(C)~~

The President: Do you think Milosevic will do this? ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: Yes, but you are a little too worried about the embargo. The Serbs in Belgrade want to kill the embargo. I think the U.S. diplomat could easily find a solution to mutual recognition. This would be the first step toward peace. This would finish the embargo. Without this, we can't reach peace. I think Milosevic is so worried about his economy he is ready to recognize Bosnia. ~~(C)~~

The President: If you think he will deliver, then we want to work with you on this. The problem is that he comes up to the edge and then backs off. I will talk to Christopher before the Contact Group meeting. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: The meeting is Monday afternoon in the Netherlands, at the Ministerial level. They will meet first just at four, then with all five. Maybe they will agree. Yeltsin is very worried. If agreement is reached, maybe we can have a Contact Group heads of state meeting. This would send a strong message to the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians. ~~(C)~~

The President: I am generally in agreement with what you say, if you think Milosevic will deliver. I also may call Yeltsin, since he can help in stopping Serb shelling. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: I asked him to send Kozyrev and Grachev to Belgrade. I believe they are arriving right now. They may talk to Milosevic and Mladic. We will see where things stand after Monday. We cannot keep the situation as it is. It's very dangerous. Today, for the first time, I gave our troops the order to counterattack. We had to take back a bridge. I gave orders to counterattack this morning. The Serbs took French UN uniforms and attacked a French post. We had to withdraw for a while, and then I ordered the counterattack. Two people were killed. We have three Serb prisoners, and we have been having discussions to exchange them for the 200 UN peacekeepers. Everybody understands we are close to a real fire. I think we are close to a solution if we have the will. But everyone is worried. Yeltsin is close to getting involved with a common policy along with us four. ~~(C)~~

The President: We need to understand one thing: if the troops stay, they need to be better armed, and better able to defend themselves. If so, then we won't have to worry so much about the bombing and the exposure of the UN peacekeepers. The Serbs will know that the rules of engagement have changed, and that they can't just run over them. This is very important. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: Yes, we are asking for that. But we all will still have people deployed in small lots, like the observers, so we will see what happens. UNPROFOR must have weapons with which to counterattack. This is not now the case. ~~(C)~~

The President: I agree fully. I will talk to Major and possibly Yeltsin. If you want to talk with me this weekend, I will be here, so you can call. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: Thanks, though I don't want to bother you. Regards to Hillary. (U)

The President: Good-bye (U)

President Chirac: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --