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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Chirac of France (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Chirac

Interpreter: Carol Wolters
Notetaker: George Chastain, Larry Wright,
Marianna Papadimitriou, James Smith, Nancy
McEldowney

DATE, TIME December 19, 1997, 8:55 - 9:36 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Hello, Jacques. (U)

President Chirac: Hello, Bill. How are you? (U)

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

President Chirac: It is a great pleasure to hear you before
Christmas day. Give my best to Hillary. How is she? (U)

The President: She's great, doing well. Our daughter's here.
(U)

President Chirac: Are you going away for the holidays? (U)

The President: Yes, after Christmas, for about a week. (U)

President Chirac: Where are you going? (U)

The President: The Virgin Islands. (U)

President Chirac: That is a beautiful place. I'm sure you'll
have nice weather, and I hope you have a good time. (U)

The President: Are you going anywhere? (U)

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President Chirac: Yes, for a week, but I don't know where exactly. (U)

The President: I'd like to talk to you about Bosnia. (C)

President Chirac: If you don't mind, I'd like to put the interpreter on line, because as you know my English is not very good. (U)

The President: Your English is just fine, but put the interpreter on line. (U)

As you have probably heard, I have committed the United States to participate in a military mission following the completion of the SFOR mission in January. I'm having pretty good results in building Congressional support, and in a couple of days, I'm going to Bosnia to visit the troops, and I'm taking a number of members of Congress with me. But there is still a lot of opposition in Congress. I hope we can all work together through NATO to come up with a plan that will allow us to have at least some modest reduction in our troop strength and will show strong support from the Europeans for the police retraining program, because that is the key in the long run in allowing NATO to withdraw its military forces. It will be especially important to develop a paramilitary force, a gendarmerie, that can back up the civil police in case of serious unrest. (C)

The second point I wanted to raise is Turkey. (C)

President Chirac: Let me respond to your first point. (C)

The President: Very good. (U)

President Chirac: I agree we should remain in Bosnia after the month of June. Of course, I agree that this should be done according to needs expressed by NATO. That's no problem at all for France. Regarding the police mission, I'm obliged to express an idea of mine. When I was elected, I found myself facing a most unpleasant situation; what was called at that time UNPROFOR, but which in reality carried out police operations with people spread in small groups everywhere throughout the territory. The results were that the soldiers were constantly taken hostage, they were disarmed, their clothes removed, and they were humiliated. At that time, I proposed we set up a rapid response force. There were still people wounded, killed, but not humiliated, and the situation in which we had hostages

ended. If we resume a police mission, we will find ourselves in exactly the same situation. (C)

Since the cessation of hostilities, all the parties have acquired arms again. The Bosnians have been rearmed by the Americans and Malaysians, and the Serbs have been rearmed by the Russians. What I mean is that they bought weapons. The end result is that they've all got weapons. If we want a police policy, this means we will again have to have people spread almost everywhere. So we will have hostages again, with all the same problems. I have a lot of reservations about the police mission. While I don't mind keeping on the number of soldiers necessary, I'm very much reserved regarding police operations. (C)

The President: I'm not sure we have as big a difference as it seems. What we want is to beef up the Bosnian police forces. We want to enhance their ability to provide for their own security and law enforcement. (C)

President Chirac: Of course, I agree; but this shouldn't mean troops would be spread in small groups all over the place. (C)

The President: I want to talk a minute about Turkey, because I'm seeing Yilmaz later today. First, I want to thank you for the constructive role you played with the EU on this. I will do what I can to encourage Yilmaz to take a long-term approach and not reject a way forward on eventual EU membership. I think it's very important to keep Turkey anchored in the West, and I wondered if you have any further thoughts about it before I see Yilmaz. (C)

President Chirac: Yes, I do have ideas. Turkey is an important power, which must be anchored to Europe. If we allow Turkey to drift away, the risk of there being an evolution toward fundamentalism does exist. The fundamentalists in Turkey got quite a lot of votes in the last election. They have a single campaign argument, which is simple and effective: "They [that is the Europeans] don't want us with them because we are Muslims." This is a very strong argument. So I am in favor of anything that could anchor Turkey to Europe. (C)

There are two problems. First of all is the German position, that one can understand. They say "We can't accept the freedom of movement of people." They already have 2 to 3 million Turks, and German public opinion is against a membership of Turkey that

would lead to the freedom of movement of people. So we have to take account of that argument. (C)

For a long time, I've said to the Turks, who are my friends, that we have to find a solution that allows them to be in Europe but does not have the immediate consequence in terms of the freedom of movement of people. After long and difficult talks, I managed to persuade Helmut Kohl two weeks ago to support a position of being open to Turkey, provided there was no talk of the freedom of movement of people. In this context, I proposed an annual conference to include the 10 candidates, along with Cyprus and Turkey, where there would be a discussion of all European problems. This would be apart from technical issues regarding membership, which would be handled in a different way. I had almost convinced Yilmaz to accept this as an important first step, and he had virtually given me his agreement. (C)

The second problem is Greece. The Greeks are really unbearable; they don't want to accept anything at all. They have been blocking all positive decisions of the EU regarding Turkey, using their right of veto. The EU considered regular meetings with Turkey in the framework of a cooperation agreement. Fourteen countries wanted to do so, and the Greeks used their veto. We had the association agreement, which would reduce considerably their customs tariffs and as a counterpart, there was to be financial assistance from the EU to Turkey. Well, 14 wanted to give this financial aid, which is already programmed in our finances, and the Greeks imposed a veto. (C)

Now, Greece is a country that needs the money that is sent to it from the EU. Subsidies to Greece account for 5 percent of its GDP, which is unbelievable, but that is the way it is. They are opposed to everything, and put their veto to everything, and in particular, the participation of Turkey in the European Conference. (C)

This didn't go down very well with Yilmaz, who said, "If this is the case, then I'm not interested in your Conference." At the Luxembourg summit, knowing that it was impossible to obtain anything from Greece, I was in a very bad mood. I made a counteroffensive against the Greeks and refused to start negotiations on the membership of Cyprus, (even though we had already decided to do so) until Cyprus is a unified country. I was supported only by Holland in my right of veto regarding the entry of Cyprus. All others were opposed, though without saying so. Of course, the Greeks were angry. (C)

What to do now? Yilmaz should be told that I understand his reaction, but it's excessive. He should not slam the door. His interest is that Turkey be anchored to Europe, and that is ours, as well. The first step must be made. In January, the EU Presidency will be British. Yilmaz must agree to go to the Conference; going will mark this as an important first step, and testify that he is a member of the European family. Even though he is not treated as he would have wished -- like Poland and Hungary, which are official candidates -- it is still an important step. I am ready to develop with him, if you agree, arguments along those lines, because I think he trusts me. The arm of the Greeks should be broken. (C)

Regarding the British, the Presidency must be extremely firm, and must impose our solution on the Greeks. But we won't be able to achieve this if you don't help us. I believe that American diplomacy must associate itself with European diplomacy. We must tell the Greeks that enough is enough. It is necessary for them to accept at least a first step, to lift their veto regarding the implementation of the association agreement with Turkey and to lift their veto regarding the participation of Turkey in the European Conference. (C)

I think Yilmaz's reaction has a lot to do with facesaving. If we exert enough pressure on the Greeks, assuming that the Americans also intervene -- I think we can embark on the right path. (C)

The President: Jacques, I agree with much of what you've said. But I also think that to find a solution to the Cyprus problem, we will have to have movement from the Turkish military. I want to share your comments with my people here and with Dick Holbrooke, who is working Cyprus, and get back to you. I'm glad that you have such determination to find an agreement. Dealing with Cyprus is key to dealing with the larger issue of Turkey's ties to Europe, and I'll follow up. (C)

I'd like to talk for a minute about Iraq. I have very much appreciated our close cooperation and coordinated actions on Iraq over the past month. Our solidarity on this issue is essential. The return of UNSCOM inspectors last month was a positive outcome, but we both knew that the issue of full access to sites was still left unresolved. It's clear from Butler's report that the so-called "Presidential sites" are off limits. In order for UNSCOM to do its job, there must be access to sites that might have prohibited items. If we should face Iraqi obstructionism at such a site, it's important that we work in

unison and get a strong, unequivocal message from the Security Council. I believe that if he won't allow UNSCOM access, at a minimum we have to consider the indefinite suspension of sanctions reviews. I know you are opposed to the use of force, but I don't think we should rule it out, because that would send the wrong signal regarding "Presidential sites," which are so broadly defined that they could include virtually anything. They're so large that if they have reason to believe there may be weapons of mass destruction there, they should be allowed to go in and check. (G)

President Chirac: I fully agree on the need for Iraq to accept opening up all the sites, including the Presidential sites, to UNSCOM inspectors. In this respect, there is no divergence. It is the application of the decisions of the UN Security Council. This morning, the French Foreign Minister met with Mr. Primakov, and they decided to exert again joint pressure on Baghdad for the opening of all sites to experts. (G)

I have an idea. It is never good to humiliate someone when there's no need to do so. Together with UNSCOM we could send a personal representative of each of the five permanent member countries of the Security Council. I think this would be a gesture that would facilitate things for UNSCOM. If UNSCOM has access to all sites it wants to visit, then it could declare officially there is no problem anymore: no nuclear, no biological, no chemical weapons. Then, it would be necessary to say that the embargo will be lifted. In other words, we can have a policy of having a stick, but a carrot is also necessary. If Saddam Hussein has no hope of seeing the embargo lifted, then there is no interest, no reason, for him to open up those sites. (G)

Now, regarding the humanitarian situation, it is absolutely dramatic. Last week, I went to the United Arab Emirates, to Abu Dhabi. I had a long talk with a wise man, Sheikh Zayed, the President of the UAE. I found him to be very shocked at the current situation of the Iraqi people. I think, in any case, we must increase the humanitarian exchanges of oil for medicinal drugs and milk. You can't really have an idea of the impact on Arab public opinion of the suffering of the Iraqi people. (G)

I have a second hypothesis: if Saddam Hussein were to refuse access to Presidential sites, even with the presence of representatives of the permanent members of the Security Council, then of course reprisal measures would have to be taken. In particular, we could implement the resolution that

prevents travel of Iraqi personalities -- apart from Tariq Aziz, of course, because we should keep the possibility of taking to someone. But regarding the possibility of a military strike, I am absolutely against it. That would be the best way actually to strengthen the position of Saddam Hussein. The Iraqis are in a miserable situation and are fed up with the regime of Saddam Hussein. But every time we attack them, national pride causes them to close ranks. When they thought there would be a strike two weeks ago, they spontaneously went to Presidential sites as a human shield. The diplomacy of resorting to cannons worked well in the last century, but it does not work very well in this century. (C)

The President: You have made a couple of good suggestions, and I want to follow up. But if we agree that we must have access to the sites, we must be extremely careful not to take options off the table. I also fully agree that we need to alleviate the humanitarian situation, and I want to follow up. I know you have things to do, and I need to get off the phone. Let me take your suggestions and I'll follow up with my advisers, and I'll also give you a report back after I see Yilmaz today. (C)

President Chirac: I have one word I would like to add. We shouldn't do anything before Butler goes to Baghdad on January 19. We should avoid any provocation if we want access, which I think is still possible. (C)

The President: Thanks. (U)

President Chirac: Thank you very much. I hope you have a good time in the Virgin Islands. (U)

The President: We will, good-bye. (U)

President Chirac: Have a good Christmas and happy New Year! (U)

The President: You too, Jacques. Bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --