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THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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November 10, 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: JAMES A. BAKER, III *JAB III*

SUBJECT: PARIS MEETINGS

This morning I spent over an hour with President Mitterrand and Foreign Secretary Dumas, then an additional hour with Dumas alone. Their position on next steps in the Gulf is remarkably similar, indeed almost identical, to our own. Mitterrand, who sent his warm regards and expressed his full confidence in you, said he will send you his views in a letter, but let me give you a quick summary.

As I did with Thatcher and Hurd, I began with a briefing on our troop augmentation and estimated casualties and duration. As in London, the starkness of these figures had a very strong impact and influenced the course of the subsequent discussion.

My basic message was that we and France had stood together and fought together before in defense of principles we hold dear, and we are now called upon again to stand shoulder-to-shoulder, politically, economically, and militarily.

Mitterrand began his presentation by dismissing today's Figaro headline that the U.S. doubted French resolve in the Gulf. Mitterrand said that there is no question of France's firm commitment to our common effort to force Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. He explicitly ruled out any partial solutions. He noted his earlier-stated preference for an Arab or Arab-Western committee to determine Kuwait's future government (he clearly finds the lifestyle of the Gulf Arabs distasteful), but he said "that path was not chosen" and he did not press it.

Mitterrand then proceeded to state his strong support for a UNSC resolution that would clearly authorize the use of force (stated explicitly) to "carry out the law," particularly UNSC Resolution 660 demanding unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait. He said it was entirely reasonable that we reject any form of UN command. Since language in the resolution explicitly mentioning force could well cause problems with the Soviets, Chinese, and others, I think the French will come around in the end to our more general formulation of "all necessary means," though we may want to include the term "force" in the initial draft resolution for tactical reasons.

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He also agreed completely with our assessment that these steps, plus the military buildup, are the only means to make Saddam realize he must either withdraw peacefully (a doubtful outcome in Mitterrand's view) or face disastrous defeat: "If Saddam Hussein does not feel threatened, he will not give up anything," he said.

Mitterrand said that he did not believe Article 51 was a sufficient basis on which to proceed. He said that lawyers may be able to make such a case, but 58 million Frenchmen and his National Assembly would require more explicit UN authority. When I told him, however, that we considered Article 51 a sufficient legal basis on which to proceed if we did not get a resolution, he responded "We'll see, we'll see," which I interpreted to mean (1) he thinks we will get the resolution and (2) he may rethink his Article 51 position if we do not.

Mitterrand made a very pointed reference to Lebanon, asserting that he has a defense agreement with Lebanon, but he doubted if anyone would have rushed to his side if he had decided to enforce the agreement by moving against the Syrian occupation force. He did not press the point after having laid the marker, and it did not detract from the forcefulness of his support on the Gulf.

Mitterrand was reluctant to discuss force augmentation beyond their existing 6,000 men plus air and naval forces. I passed the details of our request to Dumas (including a request for one or two fully supported French divisions since they are half the size of our own).

Mitterrand said they are and certainly will be doing more than "some of your [US] best friends" -- he mentioned Germany, Japan and Italy. My sense is that they will respond positively to some of our requests.

I told Mitterrand and Dumas as well that I knew you would be extraordinarily pleased by his response. I certainly am, and I think this is a major step toward our goal of obtaining UN authority as the best way of buttressing political support on the Hill, among our public, and internationally. I can see great utility in your being able (at the appropriate time) to answer Congressional critics by saying "You mean you can't support action or principles that are supported by at least nine countries on the UNSC?"

We are certainly not there yet, but I feel strongly that you made the right decision in letting me pursue this approach.

cc: Brent Scowcroft