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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED IN PART

PER E.O. 12958

JGR 8/5/99
Case No. 98-0099-F/4

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with President Mitterrand of France (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Francois Mitterrand
Notetaker: Richard Haass

DATE, TIME: September 25, 1991, 14:55 - 13:05 p.m. EST
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President initiated the call. (U)

President: Hello Francois. May I go through a few points. I'm calling on the Iraq situation. I believe we both agree that Iraq's interference with the inspection teams is a challenge to the entire cease-fire regime and to the UN. We have concluded that we must act despite Iraq's apparent acceptance of UNSCR 707 and free movement of helicopters. Our point is that it is not enough to get to sites; inspectors must be free to obtain the evidence once there. (S)

What we plan is this: We would like to give Saddam a few more days to allow the inspectors to leave with their documents. This time will allow us to complete some military preparations. We will tell the Iraqis to resolve the situation quickly and satisfactorily. If they do not, we would instruct the inspection team to leave the site and then remove all inspectors from Iraq. (S)

We believe that the appropriate response under these circumstances would be carefully-targeted air strikes. Obviously, we'll leave the targeting to the military experts, but we would probably combine sites of suspected weapons of mass destruction capability and perhaps another target. My inclination is to have close consultations and to have the military work this out. We are talking about a limited objective: we want Saddam to comply with all the UNSC resolutions. The objective would not go beyond that, for example, targeting Saddam. It is my view, and I'll be interested in yours, but we think this action on our part would convince Saddam to modify his behavior. If not, we would then have to be prepared to take further steps. (TS)

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National Security Council

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I believe that this is a reasonable and relatively restrained approach and that this would meet with international understanding and support. The reason I feel this way is because it's wholly consistent, both legally and politically, with existing Security Council resolutions. Moreover, all this comes after months of Iraqi non-compliance and trying to frustrate the world community. (S)

Baker has not yet talked to Roland Dumas but will do later today. I hope you find this satisfactory and that you could support this. (C)

Of course, we would very much want to have your participation. If you agree, our two militaries could continue to consult on the details of the mission. (S)

President Mitterrand: I agree with this way of handling things. (C)

President: Good. That's wonderful. I suggest I have Jim Baker speak to Roland Dumas. I will call John Major and start consultations and we'll proceed from there in close consultation with your representatives. (C)

President Mitterrand: Yes. I will contact Dumas. When do you think it will be possible to act? How much delay will there be? (S)

President: The earliest would be around Monday. [REDACTED] (TS)

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President Mitterrand: Yes. (U)

President: I think it is important to have full consultations at the UN, although we feel we have proper legal authority with the existing UN resolutions. (C)

President Mitterrand: Yes. It is very logical and in line with the resolutions adopted. (C)

President: I am glad we agree. If you have time to call Dumas it would be useful. (C)

President Mitterrand: Yes. This is what I'll do. I think our representatives will meet now or the next day. (C)

President: At 4:00?

President Mitterrand: I think you're right about what must be done. It is difficult but I think we must meet our responsibility. (C)

President: Thanks. I appreciate your counsel. Obviously, anything we'll do will minimize the chance of loss of innocent lives. (S)

President Mitterrand: Dear friend, I hope to see you soon. We will follow this closely. (U)

The President: Thank you. We'll be in touch, I'm sure. (U)

President Mitterrand: Goodbye. (U)

The President: Goodbye. (U)