

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON



MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Francois Mitterrand of France on  
February 22, 1991

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Francois Mitterrand, President of France  
Adrian Basora, NSC Staff (Notetaker)  
Christopher Thierry (Interpreter)

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: February 22, 1991, 9:11 - 9:35 a.m.  
The Oval Office

The President: How are you, sir?

President Mitterrand: I have seen your draft declaration and I'd like to make just one or two remarks. (S)

The President: Please do. (U)

President Mitterrand: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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The President: I think that that can all be worked out. General Scowcroft told me of Admiral Lanxade's understandable concern, and he believes that it can be resolved by our commanders on the ground. They are both good points and I think we can accommodate your concerns. (§)

President Mitterrand: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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The President: Yes. (U)

President Mitterrand: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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The President: Very good point, and easily accommodated. On the other one, we'll work that out.

[REDACTED] (§)

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President Mitterrand: [REDACTED]


[REDACTED]

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The President: We could say "full compliance with Resolution 676." That's a good point. (§)

President Mitterrand: I have no other comment. (U)

The President: Francois, there's one other point if you have another minute. (§)

President Mitterrand: 

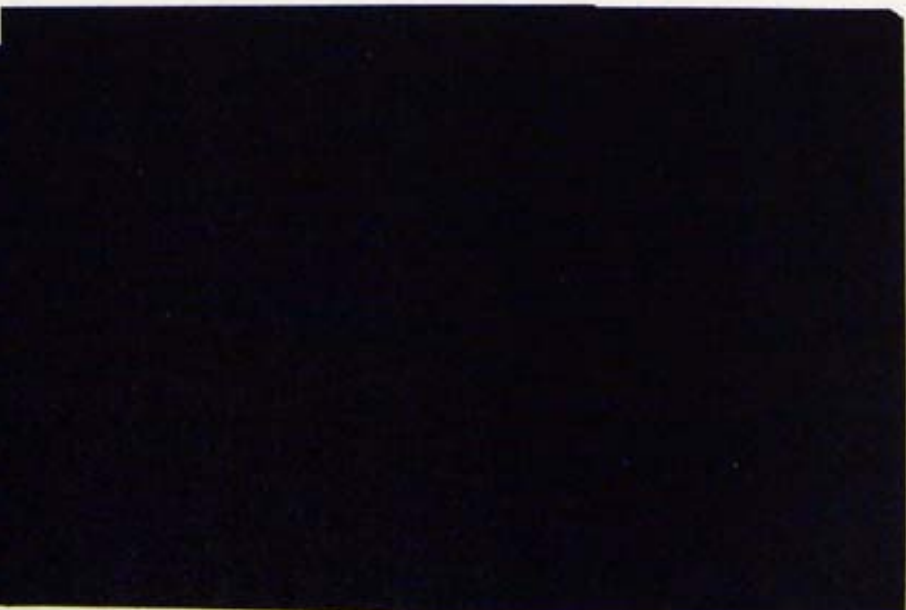
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The President: Absolutely. (U)

President Mitterrand: Thank you very much. 

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The President: That's fine. The other point is that we need to talk again if this goes forward and there is no withdrawal. I would like to say again that we need to be in close contact. I recognize your constitutional responsibilities and I certainly have a responsibility to let the American people know what we are doing. I've asked the Defense Department for recommendations because I don't want to prematurely say anything that would endanger the lives of French, American and British soldiers. We need to consult closely tomorrow as this deadline comes and goes as to who says what when. You have an obligation to your people and I to mine. Let's ask that General Scowcroft and Admiral Lanxade get together and coordinate that. (§)

President Mitterrand: 

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The President: That's good. That is the way to do it. We have no constitutional problems now. I simply have a problem of disclosure to the American people, the same as you do, but Lanxade and Scowcroft can resolve that question. The only thing I would add is that Jim Baker has just gotten off the phone with Bessmertnykh, and he is walking into the Oval Office right now. Maybe he should just tell you what it is -- I haven't even heard it from him myself -- what it is he's heard from Bessmertnykh. (\$)

President Mitterrand: I think that conversation is extremely important. (\$)

The President: Here is Jim Baker, and I haven't yet heard what he's about to say. (\$)

Secretary Baker: Good morning, Mr. President. Bessmertnykh called and said that he immediately returned yesterday from Madrid, and entered talks with Gorbachev and Aziz. They have just concluded several hours of negotiations, he reports. (\$)

I'm just reading from my notes now, Mr. President. He says we have moved ahead and we have verified the positions. He says you will see soon President Gorbachev is putting out a statement through Ignatenko. President Gorbachev is also getting in touch by written message with the heads of Security Council governments. You should have that message in a couple of hours. It will show what we have gotten from the Iraqis. We have kept in mind what President Bush said last night to President Gorbachev. We believe now that we should have a Security Council session and we would like to see the U.S. and the Soviet Union act together on it. (\$)

I then asked, "What action do you expect the Security Council to take?" He said, "We think the Security Council should take note of what the Iraqis tell us they are now willing to do." He characterized that as full implementation of Resolution 660 and an agreement to immediately withdraw all troops to their positions as of August 1, 1990. (\$)

I then said, "What time frame are you talking about" and he said, "With respect to POWs, three days." And I said, "No, I mean what time frame are you talking about for withdrawal?" and he said, "4 days from Kuwait City and 21 days altogether." I said, "Well, what about the conditions that were on the proposals as outlined to President Bush by President Gorbachev -- that is the condition of dropping the economic sanctions and the condition requiring the abolition or rescission of the remaining Security Council resolutions?" He said, "We have removed that requirement, the Iraqis have agreed to remove the requirement that economic sanctions be eliminated." He said, "I would encourage you to look at the message. It is much better now. There are no linkages. There are no references to other problems in the region. There are no conditions. It is a very big move." (\$)

I said, "Well, what is the timing with respect to a cease fire as it relates to withdrawal?" and he said the cease fire would go into force one evening and the next day the withdrawal would begin. I said, "What are you saying publicly about this?" and he said the only thing will be that "the talks with the Iraqis have continued, clarifications have been made in the proposal and President Gorbachev is getting in touch with the heads of Security Council states." (§)

President Mitterrand: Thank you very much. I think that all that is consistent. When we have read the text, and if there are any comments, Admiral Lanxade will talk to General Scowcroft. And if it is a political problem, I'll talk to you. (§)

The President: [REDACTED] the fires in Kuwait now are not just the oil fields. It is much worse than that, and the Iraqis are destroying the oil production system. They are now in the process of blowing up oil tanks, export terminals where the ships come to take oil, and all sources of oil export. They are blowing up every oil facility. If there ever was a reason not to have a delay or wonder if they are acting in good faith, this report is one. It has been presented to me as authoritative and it is very disturbing. I don't know how this man can continue to talk peace through the Soviets, and still be taking these kinds of actions. It is a matter of grave concern. (§)

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President Mitterrand: [REDACTED]

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The President: Yes, it's important that we do so. This man has literally gone mad at this point. (§)

President Mitterrand: [REDACTED]

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The President: That's good. That's very important, and with your permission I would like to tell our press that you and I have had this phone call. (§)

President Mitterrand: Certainly. [REDACTED]

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The President: We'll be in close touch. (§)

President Mitterrand: We will remain in touch at all times. (§)