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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Prime Minister Mitsotakis of Greece (Ø)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
Lawrence S. Eagleburger, Acting Secretary of State
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Thomas M.T. Niles, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs
Jane E. Holl, Director for European Affairs, NSC
Katherine X. Stewart, Interpreter

Constantine Mitsotakis, Prime Minister
Andreas Andrianopoulos, Minister of State
Dora Bakoyanni, Deputy Minister to the Prime Minister
Christos Zacharakis, Ambassador of Greece
Loucas Tsilas, Diplomatic Adviser to the Prime Minister
Anna Kirtsou, Interpreter

DATE, TIME November 17, 1992, 2:00-2:45pm
AND PLACE: Oval Office

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 13526

2009-0698-MR

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The President: I want to welcome my old friend Constantine Mitsotakis to the White House and say how much I admire and respect him. I have so enjoyed our dealings together. I am sorry that we were not able to progress further on Cyprus. I know how hard you have tried. We all got our hopes up. But be assured, nobody will give up. (Ø)

I had a chance to discuss some of the details of your lunchtime conversation with Secretary Eagleburger and General Scowcroft. But I am glad to have the chance to tell you Mr. Prime Minister how much I value our friendship -- even though issues have not always gone your way, but we have always had frank talks. (Ø)

We'll be here another two months. It's a long interregnum, and while this may be the last time we meet officially, I hope that in a private capacity, you will come back for a visit. The door is open at the Bush estate. (Ø)

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Prime Minister Mitsotakis: First off, I want to thank you Mr. President, for all you did for Greece and Greek-American relations. I also really appreciate our personal contact and friendship. You managed to bring relations between our two countries to a level we wanted -- this is very important. Definitely the atmosphere is much improved since you took office. (Ø)

I would also like to add our appreciation for your efforts to resolve the Cyprus dispute. In politics, not everything is feasible. No doubt that useful steps were taken on this issue. I reviewed this with Secretary Eagleburger. We agreed that our objectives to settle Cyprus is a determined and constant one. Despite present failures -- due to Denktash and the Turkish side -- all hope has not vanished. On the contrary. Even this phase contributed something positive. We'll continue this effort into next March as you, Mr. President, have traced out. As I told Secretary Eagleburger, we need a strong, fair solution. We should not allow domestic events in Cyprus or in Greek-Turkish relations to affect that. (Ø)

The President: No, I know that the meeting in New York did not go well, but all is not lost. Is there anything else you would like to see us do? (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: Continue to give your support to a positive message through the coming UN resolution -- it's working. I think Secretary Eagleburger and President Vassiliou have talked and more or less agree on its elements. You know Cyprus goes for its elections in a few weeks, in January. (Ø)

The President: How will that go? Is Vassiliou popular? (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: Vassiliou has good chances. However, much depends on the UN resolution. Not just for Vassiliou, but also for the Cypriot population as well. (Ø)

The President: Who's the main opponent? (U)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: Clerides. He is a serious and responsible man. I hope developments in Cyprus will be positive. (Ø)

The President: Well let me assure you that we will continue to stay involved. (Ø)

Acting Secretary Eagleburger: We can get a good resolution. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: You know how important Turkey is to us. But Cyprus must be settled. (Ø)

The President: We have told that to the Turks over and over again. But I think it's hard for them to stand up to Denktash. (Ø)

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Prime Minister Mitsotakis: We believe even he realizes a settlement must come, but he's not ready to pay the political price. But we cannot allow internal developments in Turkey to affect the possibility for settlement. Demirel appears pretty stable. (Ø)

The President: We have had good relations with Turkey. They have been pleasant to work with in many ways. We'll continue to try on Cyprus. I don't see any radical shift on U.S. policy after the transition. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: I also talked about Yugoslavia with Secretary Eagleburger and General Scowcroft at Lunch. (Ø)

The President: I want to hear your views. (U)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: As I told Secretary Eagleburger, the situation is critical. My country, and me personally, are ready to help find a solution to this difficult situation. We want to place our traditionally good relations with Serbia in the service of the common effort. We're ready to take up any action you would like -- influence the Serbs to open roads, etc. (Ø)

The President: We encourage you to use your influence. We have tried. We're very worried about the situation. It is really terrible, especially for the children. Many people are encouraging me to use all kinds of military force. But I'll be damned if I'll send one American kid into a situation that is unclear and where we can't win. The humanitarian situation is our greatest concern. These are historic rivalries. Greece can't solve them; the U.S. can't solve them. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: The war in Bosnia won't end soon. (Ø)

The President: Everybody hates each other so much. It's bad enough in American politics. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: In Kosovo, a very important effort should be displayed to prevent spillover. (Ø)

The President: It's like a boiling pot. (U)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: The most important thing in the whole affair is to have frontiers respected. External and internal frontiers. The solution in Kosovo could be an advanced state of autonomy without going as far as self-determination. We think the Albanians are beginning to understand this. A way should be found to the Serbs and Albanians to reach an understanding. (Ø)

The President: You are absolutely right. You may be in a better place to help this happen. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: An issue most close to our Greek hearts is the one of Skopje/Macedonia. We will be discussing this in Edinburgh. (Ø)

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The President: Are you optimistic? We have a lot of hope. (U)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: I'll make no forecasts. What I tried to explain to Secretary Eagleburger and General Scowcroft is that our approach is a positive one. We want this republic to exist and we have taken several initiatives in this sense. For one, there is the border guarantees. Albania, Bulgaria, and Serbia all made this declaration. What we cannot accept is their official name to include the term Macedonia. (Ø)

I'll be very frank. If something like that were to happen, there will be real destabilization. But this issue can be settled now as a starting point for a positive approach. So far with Yugoslavia we have had a lot of failures, why not success for once? The inclusion of Macedonia in their official name is desired by less than 50% of the people. A recent poll there resulted in no more than 17% of the population wanting that name. (Ø)

The President: Then why does the administration of Macedonia get so hung up on the name? (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: There is something behind it, from the period under communism. It is not easy for the present administration to release from old habits. Democracy in this area will be an exaggeration. The old line communists under Tito still hold power. But Gligorov is a serious man. A deal could be reached with him. This is why the solution like we have suggested is a good formula. (Ø)

The President: I'll make a statement, and I would like you to tell me what's wrong with it. But first, I do want to say that I value our relations. Every American knows that our relations are far, far better. (Ø)

But my statement is this: This Republic has gone about the achieving of its democracy and status in accord with Helsinki principles. It has proceeded and conducted itself in an almost exemplary way. So I'm saying two things: They've observed Helsinki Accords and their performance has been exemplary. Do you agree with those points, or do Greeks see things differently? (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: I would not agree that they are an exemplary democracy. But it is a republic we could tolerate. (Ø)

The President: No, I'm not saying an exemplary democracy, but rather that they have pursued it in an exemplary way. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: I agree. Yes. This is precisely why we have no problems with this republic and we want it to exist. But we can't accept the name. After Lisbon -- which justified us -- the reaction of Gligorov has been to provoke Greece. This republic was set up by Tito and Stalin after WWII in order to

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United States; my generation remembers it. But the people in power in Skopje are the same -- when they use this name, we become very suspicious. We want them to stop using this term and implying they have claims on us. Even in their constitution they have provision for nationals abroad, including in Greece. This is why we make the single request that they chose another name. We cannot accept this -- any Greek government could not. Otherwise we would be destabilized. (Ø)

The President: I wanted to be sure, there's nothing else that would cause you problems. (U)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: Another problem I ask for U.S. to help to prevent the admission of this country in the UN because if they are admitted, this discussion is valueless. (Ø)

The President: But if you have no problem with the name, it can go ahead. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: I ask if you can help postpone. (Ø)

Acting Secretary Eagleburger: We'll see what we can do. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: It is very important. It would be a tragedy. I can't afford it. I don't exaggerate, I try to compromise. But if this happens this would be a tragedy for Greece and for me. (Ø)

The President: Is there any division of opinion on this at home in Greece? (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: No. It is the only issue where Papandreou and my ex-Foreign Minister Samaras and I agree. (Ø)

The President: We want to try to be helpful, maybe we can help delay. (Ø)

Acting Secretary Eagleburger: It won't be coming up before Edinburgh. If a solution is found, there will be no problem. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: It is very important for us to delay during interim period. (Ø)

The President: When is the next big Greek political event? (U)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: I don't know. Normally, May 1994. But our economy is not doing well. (Ø)

The President: Not you, not us -- we all ought to be Chinese -- their economy is growing at 9% and here we are struggling. Germany, everybody is having trouble. Part of my demise was everybody thought we were worse off than everybody else. (Ø)

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Germany, everybody is having trouble. Part of my demise was everybody thought we were worse off than everybody else. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: We are going through a graceless period, we have to take very tough measures for our economy. (Ø)

The President: Well, let us see where we can help. (Ø)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: I really count on you Mr. President. (Ø)

The President: Tell me, how long is the antiquities exhibit? (U)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: Until March. (U)

The President: I hope to get to see it. (U)

Prime Minister Mitsotakis: Let me tell you again, to please come to Greece. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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