

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Mitterrand
Interpreter: Alec Toumayan
Notetaker: Adrian Basora, NSC

DATE, TIME August 26, 1989, 10:33 - 10:45 a.m. EDT
AND PLACE: Kennebunkport, Maine

The President opened by saying he was in Kennebunkport and had thought about President Mitterrand. (U)

President Mitterrand said Kennebunkport brought back pleasant memories. (U)

The President said he wanted President Mitterrand to know that he understood what Mitterrand was doing on Lebanon and that Mitterrand had the President's strong support. (S)

President Mitterrand said he had taken good note of the President's statement and appreciated it very much; it contributed to the French position. President Mitterrand stressed that the French position was not an aggressive one. France was prepared for the very worst while hoping for the very best. President Mitterrand asked if the President had any suggestions. (S)

The President said he was very concerned about what more could be done. He agreed a ceasefire was needed and that the pressure should be kept on Assad and Aoun. Obviously there also had to be internal reforms and the withdrawal of foreign forces. (S)

President Mitterrand said that, as simple as it may sound, the first step is to extend the ceasefire. That is a must before the indispensable diplomatic approaches can be effectively made. These should be carried out through the exercise of pressure by the United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab countries on Syria. (S)

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The President agreed and said that France had influence with the Tripartite Group. Their efforts had hit a stumbling block and they should be gotten back into the game. (S)

President Mitterrand agreed and added that it was also necessary to push the Christians behind Aoun toward institutional reforms; these are the key to more peaceful relations with the Muslims. (S)

The President asked whether Mitterrand had much influence with Aoun; he did not think the United States had much. (S)

President Mitterrand said that France was pushing institutional reform with Aoun as much as it could. There could be no solution unless this was achieved first. It was absolutely basic to buy time and that meant to extend the ceasefire. (S)

The President agreed and added that some Muslims had been critical of recent French moves. But the US agreed and understood what France had to do. (S)

President Mitterrand said that the Muslims had a very complex mind set and were skilled at using language and playing with words; they have made up a French thesis that is not the French position, it is their own propaganda. (S)

The President expressed frustration with the hostage situation and the lack of progress on returning the body of Colonel Higgins. The US did not seem to be making headway with Iran. (S)

President Mitterrand said he fully understood, but felt that France and the US should stay the course as long as possible and work to keep the guns silent. (S)

The President agreed and said the frustration would continue. (S)

The President then turned the subject to Poland, saying he was reminded of their earlier discussions in Maine and Paris. Things were moving faster than they had anticipated. (S)

President Mitterrand agreed and added that things had been going in the direction they had hoped. It was important to determine what Mazowiecki's position was. (S)

The President said that the only thing he wanted to suggest was that he and Mitterrand stay in contact with each other and with the Germans and the British on what to do next in Poland. Many US Congressmen would be coming back from trips to Warsaw and urging more money for Poland. He did not want the money to go down the drain. It was thus important to stay in touch among the Allies on how to treat Poland. He did not know whether France

was considering more aid for Poland, but he wanted to be able to say that the US was in close touch with its Allies. France and the US were working toward solutions for Poland and it was important to stay in close touch. (S)

President Mitterrand replied that the President could count on him in that respect. He was speaking both as President of France and President of the European Community. He would make the President aware of any new initiatives. (S)

The President said he expected the new Polish Prime Minister might want to come to Washington and other capitals in the near future. It would be important to coordinate on this subject. (S)

President Mitterrand fully agreed that it would be necessary to consult and coordinate to the fullest. (S)

The President referred to their decision in Paris to put together the Concerted Action group. Perhaps Mazowiecki should be encouraged to meet first with the Concerted Action group before visiting capitals. (S)

President Mitterrand replied that this was the thing to do. (S)

The President commented that it had been nice to talk, and reiterated his respect for what Mitterrand was doing in Lebanon. (S)

President Mitterrand said he was touched that the President had called and very pleased to speak with him. He had fond memories of his stay in the house from which the President was calling, as well as of the people who lived in that house. He had received the President's letter about Panama and had prepared his reply. He was fully ready to state what needed to be stated, on record: that one can't tolerate drug traffickers and threats to democracy. The President should be receiving his reply very soon, and Mitterrand would avail himself of the first opportunity that arose to address the matter publicly himself. He would also call the President soon; this was a very good procedure between the two of them. (S)

The President hoped he had not interrupted an important meeting, and hoped Mitterrand was getting a vacation. (U)

President Mitterrand said he had gotten a little vacation, but not too much. He was making a speech in an hour and a half, but the President had not interrupted anything; on the contrary, it was good to talk to him. (U)

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