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INFO SAVING HMCBS IN FRANCE

MY TELNO 21: MITTERRAND PRESS CONFERENCE

## SUMMARY

1. FRANCE REMAINS SOLID ON NEED FOR COMPLETE IRAQI WITHDRAWAL AND MAINTENANCE OF 15 JANUARY DEADLINE. BUT IT WILL ACTIVELY PURSUE EFFORTS FOR PEACE UP TO LAST MOMENT - FEW DETAILS OF THE SPECIFICS. PROPOSAL FOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE MIDDLE EAST IN 1991 (WHICH HE SUGGESTED THE TWELVE WOULD PUT FORWARD).

## DETAIL

2. PRESIDENT MITTERRAND GAVE A TELEVISED PRESS CONFERENCE THIS EVENING, HIS EIGHTH SINCE THE START OF THE GULF CRISIS. HE WAS CLEARLY CONSTRAINED BY THE UNEXPECTED EXTENSION OF THE TARIQ AZIZ/BAKER TALKS IN GENEVA (ABOUT WHICH HE CLAIMED HE HAD BEEN BRIEFED BUT REVEALED NOTHING. HE ALSO SAID THAT HE HAD JUST SPOKEN TO BUSH ON THE TELEPHONE AND WOULD DO SO AGAIN IN THE EVENING).

## 3. THE MAIN POINTS MADE BY MITTERRAND WERE:

- A) THERE CAN BE NO MODIFICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF A COMPLETE IRAQI WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT
- B) THE DEADLINE OF 15 JANUARY SET BY SCR 678 CANNOT BE EXTENDED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES
- C) IF IRAQ WITHDRAWS FROM KUWAIT, THERE CAN BE NO WAR. BUSH HAD SAID THIS.
- D) HE ASKED - WITHOUT CLEARLY ANSWERING - WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF IRAQ ANNOUNCED THE START OF A WITHDRAWAL AFTER THE DEADLINE.

E) THE UN SEC-GENERAL, RELYING ON HELP FROM THE ARAB COUNTRIES, SHOULD ORGANIZE THE DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE WITHDRAWAL (MITTERRAND DID NOT EXPLAIN PRECISELY WHAT HE MEANT BY THIS)

F) THE 12 HAD JUST PROPOSED, APPARENTLY WITH TARIQ'S AZIZ'S AGREEMENT, A MEETING IN ALGIERS.

G) FRANCE WOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE ACTIVE EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A PEACEFUL SOLUTION BEFORE 15 JANUARY. ITS APPROACH WOULD BE BASED ON THE SCRS BUT IT WOULD ALSO 'TAKE ACCOUNT OF OTHER RELEVANT QUESTIONS'.

H) FRANCE HAD ALREADY MADE CONTACT WITH ALGIERS (VIA BIANCO). THE MOROCCAN FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD VISIT FRANCE SOON. CONTACTS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, FRG, SPAIN, YUGOSLAVIA AND THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL WERE UNDERWAY. FRANCE WOULD REMAIN IN CONTACT WITH THESE AND OTHERS.

I) A VISIT BY DUMAS TO BAGHDAD WAS 'NOT EXCLUDED' BUT THE CONDITIONS FOR IT OR FOR A VISIT BY MITTERRAND HIMSELF WERE NOT MET (IE IN THE LIGHT OF THE BAKER-TARIQ AZIZ TALKS)

J) IF THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS HAD NOT BEEN MET BY 15 JANUARY THE PRESIDENT WOULD INVOKE AN EMERGENCY SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON 17 JANUARY AT WHICH THERE WOULD BE A DEBATE FOLLOWED BY A VOTE ON A TEXT. THE DEFENCE AND FOREIGN MINISTERS WOULD ALSO APPEAR BEFORE THE DEFENCE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMISSIONS OF THE ASSEMBLY AND SENATE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS.

K) IF IT CAME TO MILITARY CONFLICT, MITTERRAND MADE CLEAR THE HE WAS READY TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY BEFORE HIS COUNTRY TO ENGAGE FRENCH TROOPS AND TO SEE THROUGH THE MISSION SET UP BY THE UNSC WHICH HE SPECIFIED AS TO LIBERATE KUWAIT, NOT TO DESTROY IRAQ. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THOSE 'AROUND' (PRESUMABLY IRAQIS FORCES STATIONED IN SOUTHERN IRAQ ETC) WERE BOUND TO BE INVOLVED IN AND HIT BY THE CONFLICT. IN ANSWER TO ANOTHER QUESTION HE SAID THAT WOULD BE NO GENERAL CALL-UP: ONLY FRENCH PROFESSIONALS AND VOLUNTEERS WOULD BE INVOLVED.

L) ASKED IF THERE WOULD BE ANY FRANCO-ALGERIAN INITIATIVE BEFORE THE 15 JANUARY DEADLINE, MITTERRAND REPLIED OBLIQUELY THAT CHADLI WAS PARTICULARLY WELL QUALIFIED TO UNDERTAKE ANY SUCH INITIATIVE.

4. THE MAJOR POINT ON WHICH HE PRESENTED FRANCE AS HAVING A DIFFERENT

VIEW FROM THE US WAS THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE MIDDLE EAST. HE MADE CLEAR THAT HE HAD DISAGREED WITH BAKER ABOUT THIS. HE ARGUED THAT SUCH A CONFERENCE WAS NOT A CONCESSION TO SADDAM. FRANCE HAD LED IN ADVOCATING THIS FOR '6 OR 7 YEARS': IT COULD HARDLY GIVE UP NOW AT THE TIME WHEN THE CONFERENCE WOULD BE MOST USEFUL. HE LATER SAID THAT A CONFERENCE COULD BE HELD IN 1991 (THOUGH HE ADMITTED THAT SOME KEY PLAYERS MIGHT NOT BE READY TO ATTEND), AND HE APPEARED TO SUGGEST THAT THE 12 WERE READY TO PUT FORWARD A PROPOSAL TO THIS EFFECT.

## COMMENT

5. AFTER A RATHER UNCERTAIN START (NO DOUBT MAINLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT BAKER AND TARIQ AZIZ WERE STILL IN PLAY IN GENEVA) THE PRESIDENT GAINED IN AUTHORITY, ENDING WITH A POWERFUL ACCOUNT OF THE NECESSITY FOR FRANCE, FOR HISTORIC REASONS, TO PLAY HER FULL PART IN THE RESTORATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW - INCLUDING THROUGH ARMED FORCE. IMPLICIT IN THIS WAS THE THOUGHT THAT HER STATUS AS PERMANENT MEMBER OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL WITH A SEAT AT THE TOP TABLE, AND WITH HISTORIC RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST, DEPENDED ON HER RESPONSE TO THIS CRISIS. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING CLEARLY THE DIFFERENCE OF APPROACH WITH THE US OVER AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE MIDDLE EAST, HE DEALT SUMMARILY AND EFFECTIVELY WITH ALL QUESTIONS WHICH IMPLIED FRACTURES OR LACK OF COHERENCE IN THE COALITION OVER THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE SC RESOLUTIONS (EG THE 15 JANUARY DEADLINE). HE ALSO DEALT BOLDLY AND CLEARLY WITH THE QUESTION OF CONSULTATION WITH THE ASSEMBLY (IN CONTRAST TO PREVIOUS OBFUSCATION). HE HELD OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER DIPLOMATIC EFFORT BY FRANCE AND OTHERS BETWEEN NOW AND 15 JANUARY BUT WITHOUT BEING SPECIFIC EXCEPT ON THE LIKELIHOOD OF AN EC/TARIQ AZIZ MEETING IN ALGIERS, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ALGERIAN INITIATIVE.

FERGUSON

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