

RESTRICTED  
FM PARIS  
TO DESKBY 071100Z FCO  
TELNO 1049  
OF 071025Z SEPTEMBER 90  
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, BONN, UKDEL NATO

IRAQ/KUWAIT : MITTERRAND PRESS CONFERENCE

SUMMARY

1. MITTERRAND FIRM ON HOSTAGES AND IRAQI WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT. SAYS THAT FRENCH WILL ONLY ENGAGE MILITARY ON THE CONTEXT OF A UN MANDATE. MAKES CLEAR MILITARY DECISIONS ARE TAKEN BY HIM PERSONALLY.

DETAIL

2. MITTERRAND CALLED A PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE ELYSEE YESTERDAY EVENING. IT WAS DEVOTED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO IRAQ/KUWAIT. HE MADE A SHORT OPENING STATEMENT WITHOUT NOTES AND THEN TOOK QUESTIONS. IT LASTED IN ALL ABOUT ONE HOUR. THE MAIN POINTS WERE THE FOLLOWING :

(A) FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN ANY MILITARY OPERATIONS. MITTERRAND SAID THAT FRANCE WOULD INTERVENE IN THE EVENT OF ANY FURTHER IRAQI AGGRESSION. ASKED WHETHER HE WOULD SUPPORT US MILITARY ACTION AGAINST IRAQ HE SAID 'I CANNOT ANSWER THAT HYPOTHESIS WHICH HAS NOT BEEN ANTICIPATED. I HAVE NOT BEEN INFORMED, AND I WILL ONLY COMMIT FRANCE TO WHAT I AM AWARE OF. BUT I WILL SAY STRAIGHT AWAY THAT I WILL ONLY COMMIT FRANCE TO CARRY OUT THE RULES OF THE UN ... FOR THE MOMENT FRANCE HAS NOT RECEIVED A MANDATE'. IF A NEW SITUATION AROSE, HIS REPLY MIGHT CHANGE. FOR INSTANCE A SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED INTERVENTION OF WHICH FRANCE HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED WOULD BE DIFFERENT FROM A CHAIN REACTION STARTING FROM THE INTERCEPTION OF A SHIP ON THE CONTEXT OF THE EMBARGO WHICH MIGHT PROVOKE A SERIES OF MILITARY CONFLICTS BLOSSOMING INTO GENERAL WAR. HE IMPLIED THAT BECAUSE OF ITS ORIGIN THIS WOULD IN HIS VIEW COME UNDER THE UN MANDATE. 'FRANCE WILL CARRY OUT THE SECURITY COUNCIL'S DECISIONS. SHE WILL FULFIL MANDATE BUT HAS NO INTENTION OF EXCEEDING THAT MANDATE''

(B) THE LOGIC OF WAR. HE SAID 'WE ARE STILL UNFORTUNATELY IN A LOGIC OF WAR. AND WE WILL DO ALL WE CAN TO GET OUT OF IT, WHILE RESPECTING (INTERNATIONAL) LAW''. HE ADDED 'IT WOULD NOT SERVE (INTERNATIONAL) LAW TO TRY TO MOVE TOWARDS PEACE ON THE WRONG ROAD''.

(C) HOSTAGES. FRANCE WOULD NOT ABANDON THEM, BUT WOULD NOT GIVE WAY TO PRESSURE. THEY WERE 'THE VICTIMS OF AN ACT OF BARBARISM'.

(D) FRANCE WAS MAKING THE SECOND LARGEST CONTRIBUTION TO THE MILITARY FORCES IN THE GULF AFTER THE UNITED STATES 'CLEARLY IN FRONT OF ANY OTHER'. HE MENTIONED ABOUT 6-7,000 MEN DIRECTLY ENGAGED IN THE OPERATION.

(E) INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE MIDDLE EAST. THIS 'COULD NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR THE EXECUTION OF UN RESOLUTIONS. IT COULD ONLY MAKE A USEFUL CONTRIBUTION AFTER THE OBJECTIVES OF THE UN HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED'.

(F) STRENGTHENING THE EMBARGO. HE SAID THAT COUNTRIES WISHING TO CARRY OUT THE WISHES OF THE UN WERE PREVENTING OVERFLIGHTS OF THEIR TERRITORY. HE SAID THERE WERE DIFFICULTIES IN GETTING A UN RESOLUTION ON THIS SUBJECT, AND THAT THE FRENCH HAD SPOKEN TO OTHERS 'PARTICULARLY THE UK' WHO DID NOT HAVE RESERVATIONS IN PRINCIPLE, BUT ABOUT HOW IT WOULD BE CARRIED OUT.

(G) INTERNAL POLITICS. THERE WAS ONLY ONE MILITARY POLICY FOR FRANCE. CHEVENEMENT AGREED WITH THIS. 'DECISIONS OF A MILITARY ORDER ARE MINE. BUT OF COURSE I DO NOT ACT ON MY OWN WITHOUT CONSULTING AND HAVING THE OPINION OF THE GOVERNMENT.

(H) BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS. HE SAID THAT THE DRAFT BUDGET WOULD BE 'CORRECTED' BY 10-12 BN FRANCS, MAINLY BECAUSE OF THE RISE IN OIL PRICES.

(I) AID TO THIRD COUNTRIES. HE SAID 'THIS HAS TO BE DONE' BUT ONLY COMMITTED HIMSELF SPECIFICALLY TO POLAND (THE SUBJECT OF THE QUESTION).

#### COMMENT

3. SINCE THERE WAS NO SUBSTANTIVE ADVANCE IN WHAT THE PRESIDENT SAYS OVER THE LONG INTERVIEW BY DUMAS ON 4 SEPTEMBER, WHY DID THE PRESIDENT GIVE THIS FURTHER PRESS CONFERENCE? I THINK THERE WERE TWO REASONS. THE FIRST AND MORE IMPORTANT IS THAT THE NEEDS TO CONTINUE TO ASSERT HIS PERSONAL AUTHORITY OVER POLICY IN THE GULF CRISIS, IN VIEW OF THE CONTINUING STORIES ABOUT THE DOUBTS OF THE FACTION IN THE GOVERNMENT AND PARTY LED BY CHEVENEMENT. MITTERRAND'S FORMULATION OF ACTING WITHIN A U N MANDATE PROBABLY REFLECTS A DESIRE TO REASSURE THE PUBLIC AND HOLD TOGETHER THE

ELEMENTS OF THE PS AND GOVERNMENT. THE STATEMENT WAS HOWEVER FULL OF AMBIGUITIES ON THIS POINT, AND MY OWN READING IS THAT MITTERRAND IS NOT (NOT) CLOSING THE DOOR TO ENGAGING FRANCE MILITARILY IF THIS - WITHOUT A NEW MANDATE - IS EVENTUALLY THE ONLY WAY OF GETTING IRAQ OUT OF KUWAIT. THE SECOND REASON FOR MITTERRAND'S APPEARANCE WAS I BELIEVE TO GET HIMSELF INTO THE HEADLINES BEFORE THE BUSH/GORBACHEV MEETING (HE HAD BEEN AT PAINS TO TELEPHONE BOTH BEFOREHAND) IN ORDER TO SHOW THAT FRANCE IS PLAYING A MAJOR ROLE. THIS TOGETHER WITH THE SLIGHTLY EXAGGERATED ACCOUNT OF THE EXTENT OF FRANCE'S COMMITMENT OF MEN UNDER ARMS ALSO RESPONDS TO A BASICALLY INTERNAL FRENCH POLITICAL REQUIREMENT, AS THE PRESIDENT SEES IT, NOT LEAST TO MAKE UP FOR THE GROUND LOST IN ORIGINAL FRENCH HESITATIONS. THE POLLS SHOW THAT THE FRENCH PUBLIC APPROVE OF MITTERRAND'S HIGHLY VISIBLE DIRECTION OF FRANCE'S RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS. HIS APPROVAL RATING HAS RISEN SIGNIFICANTLY TO 61 PER CENT, UP 7 POINTS OVER JULY.

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