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Memorandum for Kenneth C. Brill from Andrew D. Sens, 'Memorandum of Conversation of the President's Expanded Meeting with Chancellor Kohl of Germany'

Citation:

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Summary:

Kohl and Clinton have a wide ranging discussion on NATO expansion, crises in the Balkans, Chechnya and Northern Africa, relations with Europe, and other subjects.

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NSC/RMO PROFILE

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FROM: SENS

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PERSONS: KOHL, HELMUT

SUBJECT: MEMCON OF PRES MTG W/ KOHL 9 FEB

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STAFF OFFICER: VERSHBOW LOGREF:

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White House Guidelines, September 11, 2006
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002		X	95021516	SENS SGD MEMO

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

February 15, 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KENNETH C. BRILL
Executive Secretary
Department of State

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Conversation of the President's Expanded Meeting with Chancellor Kohl of Germany (U)

The attached Memorandum of Conversation from the expanded meeting between the President and Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany is provided for the information of the Secretary of State. It must be distributed via NODIS channels and not below the Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) level. It may also be sent to our embassy in Germany for the Ambassador and/or Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) only. (S)

Andrew D. Sens
Executive Secretary

Attachment
Tab A Memcon with Chancellor Kohl

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E.O. 13526, Sec. 3.5 (b)
White House Guidelines, September 11, 2006
By KBH NARA, Date 7/31/2018
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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED IN PART
PER E.O. 13526

2015-0776-M (1.21)
7/31/2018 KBH

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Expanded Meeting with Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany

PARTICIPANTS:
The President
Vice President
Warren Christopher, Secretary of State
Robert Rubin, Secretary of Treasury
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Leon Fuerth, Special Assistant to the Vice President for National Security Affairs
Richard Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs
Charles Redman, U.S. Ambassador to Germany
Alexander Vershbow, Senior Director for European Affairs, NSC Staff, Notetaker
Gisela Marcuse, Interpreter

Helmut Kohl, Chancellor
Friedrich Bohl, Federal Minister
Dieter Vogel, State Secretary
Immo Stabreit, Ambassador
Rudolf Dolzer, Chief of Intelligence Coordination and Director General, Federal Chancellery
Joachim Bitterlich, National Security Advisor and Director General, Federal Chancellery
Andreas Fritzenkoetter, Federal Chancellery
Matei Hoffmann, Chief of Staff, Federal Chancellery
Dorothee Kaltenbach, Interpreter

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: February 9, 1995, 11:30 am - 12:30 pm
Cabinet Room

The President: First tell me about the floods. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: This year we have had very crazy weather. The first few days were very cold; then it got warmer and this caused the floods. The truth is the fact that, especially in the Rhine valley, we did a lot of things earlier in the century that we would not do today. People tried to make a crooked river

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straight. This made it run faster, and caused less water to be absorbed. After 1920, they thought this was the latest in scientific knowledge. Now it is seen as a mistake. The flooding was very bad in Germany, but even worse in the Netherlands. The problem is that a number of tributaries to the Rhine also overflowed their banks. Within 24 hours we had a huge flood. (U)

The President: When we were in the Oval Office we spoke a bit about our respective positions on NATO expansion. I think we agreed that the December decision to use 1995 to determine the "why and how" of NATO expansion, but not to set a timetable or identify countries, is the right approach. If there is agreement on that, we should move on to discuss Russia and Chechnya. Yeltsin is going to give a speech to the Duma on the 16th. It would be good if both of us could communicate to him before then, to urge that he signal to the world that he is seeking a political solution and an end to the violence. It would make it easier for us to support him if he did this. ~~(C)~~

Chancellor Kohl: I will make a few remarks later on internal developments in Germany and about the status of European integration. I will first comment on Russia and NATO expansion. (U)

First, a basic statement: for us in Germany, NATO is essential for the future. I completely adhere to Konrad Adenauer's concept that our policy should be based on two pillars: European unity and the transatlantic link. There is no priority between them because they are of equal value. The transatlantic link means our relationship with the United States. This is why it is tremendously important that U.S. soldiers be present to a meaningful degree in Europe. As we continue to build the European house, the United States should have an apartment -- no one should push you out. ~~(C)~~

Another point is that we should broaden the transatlantic bridge. We have the military dimension, which is very necessary. But we should also strengthen economic ties and especially cultural ties -- relations between scientific communities, exchanges of students, scientists, scholars and young people. We should not limit exchanges to issues that touch our minds, but also include those that touch our hearts. This is very important. ~~(C)~~

If I understand you correctly, we are in total agreement on enlargement of NATO. We need to enlarge toward Central and Eastern Europe. They have high hopes and high anxieties. If we strive for enlargement without knowing the psychological situation, if we use harsh language, it will not work. It has always been our position that enlargement only makes sense if it

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does not lead to increased hostility or enmity with the Russians. Therefore we can only do it if Russia -- and Ukraine as well -- are part of the process. ~~(C)~~

With regard to Chechnya, no one knows the background of the situation. I am surprised that people in the West hail the Chechens as democratic heroes. To put it bluntly, they are gangsters. Our experts say that a large part of the Mafia in Berlin is made up of Chechens. So this is not the nice group in white hats that the press sometimes describes. ~~(C)~~

We have differences at home with regard to Chechnya. But I would say that those who are striving for the dissolution of Russia will only bring about a catastrophe and destabilization with terrible consequences. We are very close to the Caucasus. There would be an immediate impact on all the Turkic peoples there, as well as on Muslims in neighboring countries like Iran. Turkey could be destabilized and then we would be at the Mediterranean. ~~(C)~~

I am looking with grave concern at Algeria. My predictions are very dire. Even Francois Mitterrand, who long believed that he could somehow turn the situation around in Algeria, is now very skeptical. If Algeria falls, it will only be a matter of days before Tunisia falls. Then what would happen to Morocco? If we follow the map with our finger, we will soon reach Egypt and the powderkeg of the Middle East, including Israel. What will the Saudis do? The House of Saud believes that they can buy out the radicals. The Royal House has unfortunately never read Lenin and this is a big mistake. Lenin wrote about the capitalists buying the rope by which to hang themselves, and the same can be said for the House of Saud. ~~(C)~~

If this is all true, we cannot lean back and say that Yeltsin is an autocrat, a traitor to the cause of democracy. I am not one who prays to icons in the corner. I don't know if Yeltsin will prevail. But I am sure that if we leave him in the lurch, matters will get much worse. The two of us need to do this, not because we are eminent people, but because we are people to whom Yeltsin listens. We need to talk with Yeltsin. I don't like calling him every week and spelling out for him how Russia's image is going downhill. He doesn't like it, nor does he like being portrayed as a dictator. I am not sure whether it is malice or ineptness or both on the part of the Russian military, but he has a military who cheated him. They set him up for a situation in which he could only fail. They set a trap for Yeltsin. ~~(C)~~

I urged Yeltsin on the phone to stop the bombardment. At the end of the conversation, after talking to some people, he said the

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bombing would stop that day. I urged him to publish that fact and he did. But after 24 hours, the bombing resumed. I am 100% certain that Yeltsin didn't lie. Someone else did this, perhaps to topple him. So we need to talk to Yeltsin. I told Chretien, who asked whether he should invite Yeltsin to the G-7, that if he didn't, it would create an even worse situation. We need to use every opportunity to talk with Yeltsin, so that he knows he will not get our support if he does not respect the rule of law and human rights. Now is the time in Chechnya to set a good example, to set up a civilian administration and restore a reasonable degree of order. I do not know if we can make him understand this, but I know that if we isolate him now and impose sanctions -- if we insult Yeltsin -- it might sound good to our parliaments, but it would not be the right course. Our task is to focus on the final goal, to maintain his confidence and trust and to tell him the truth as friends. We should all maintain our positions. ~~(C)~~

I don't know how things will develop, but we should pursue the expansion of NATO. The issue, of course, is Poland, not Hungary or the Czech Republic. But what sort of government will Poland have in a year? What will be the outcome of their presidential elections? I am told that in the Congress some people are talking of a fixed timetable. I wouldn't dream of interfering in your internal affairs, but if they ask me about setting a precise date, say, five years from now, I will say that the situation is vague even for the next 12 months. In saying this, let me say that we certainly don't want the Polish situation to be unstable. They are our closest neighbor. The German-Polish border is very special, it is the Oder-Neisse. You may recall that 12 million Germans were expelled from their homes on the Polish side and there are still four million of them alive with children and grandchildren. This causes lots of psychological problems. This is why we need to bring Poland forward. ~~(C)~~

We should stick to our policy line on NATO enlargement. Perhaps we are wrong -- that is a risk we always run in politics -- but the other risk would be greater. There will be elections in Russia -- to the parliament in 1995 and the presidency in 1996. I don't know how the democratic forces will fare, but I hope that the Prime Minister will steer a fairly calm course. He is certainly not a reformer in the proper sense, but he is adapting, step-by-step, in the right direction. What I am not sure about is his health. When he was in Germany, my doctor looked after him because there were certain problems. ~~(C)~~

Vice President Gore: Prime Minister Chernomyrdin's health problems are relatively minor. He had kidney stones. Our impression is that his commitment to reform has grown gradually but steadily. His negotiations with the IMF increased his

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understanding of the need to go forward. He has been impressive on privatization. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: I don't want to go into his health, but I don't think it is as simple as kidney stones. It is not so benign. (C)

The President: Where do you think we are in Bosnia and Croatia? We have spoken about the pressures of Congress on lifting the embargo. You know what I will do on that. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: I think we need to realize that in two months things could go badly wrong. We should look at the situation with no illusions. History plays a very powerful role in this. Let me say bluntly: one thing that must be prevented is for Tudjman and Milosevic to make a secret deal under the table to the detriment of the third party. Then we would have a Greater Serbia and a Greater Croatia. This remains a danger. What the Europeans are now trying to do with the United States is to make a fresh initiative before the spring. We have to do this. I am ready to throw all the weight I have against Tudjman. He is not an easy person to deal with. He is obviously a beacon of democracy [said sarcastically], but he is a fact of life. We can use our influence with him. (C)

The second point to keep at the back of our minds is the Muslims. The worst things have happened to them, not only human suffering but a catastrophe for the women and children. We now have 1.5 million Muslims living in Bosnia, with 800 million Muslims around the world watching what the U.S. and Germany do. They are also watching what Paris and London do, but they have lower expectations of those countries than of us. These problems also relate to the Middle East. So I think we should pursue our policy line, bearing all of this in mind. I am open to any proposal that promises progress. (C)

I don't believe that Washington is aware that, for Germany, the former Yugoslavia is an enormous internal problem. 700,000 guest workers came to Germany with Yugoslav passports. They were very well regarded and respected people. Yet now they are split up into three communities fighting with each other. This is a bad development. Another point not well known is that as of January of this year, we have 400,000 refugees from the war in addition to the 700,000 guest workers. So we have over one million in Germany. We have accepted two times the number of refugees than the rest of Europe. So this is not just a theoretical problem that politicians see on TV, but one our people see every day. It causes enormous internal problems, with people complaining that we are not doing enough to end the war. Incidentally, we need

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Yeltsin with us on Bosnia. Without him we can forget about all of our plans. ~~(C)~~

The President: We also need to keep the Muslim-Croat Federation strong. I agree that we do not want to see a back-door deal between Tudjman and Milosevic. I appreciate what you said. The Friends of the Federation might not make a big difference. But if you play a leadership role, it will help. It might not work, but we need to do all we can to head off a worsening of the situation. We need to limit the conflict. ~~(C)~~

Chancellor Kohl: Once again, I am open to anything you think is useful. But Europe is also the Europe of vanity. 1995 is an occasion for many to look back. They will say: "What is this? The Germans are back again?" It is difficult for our partners to accept that we are back in strength. So we need to see not Germany alone, but others joining with us in supporting the Federation. Then it will work. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: It occurs to me that it is specific steps like this that would help the others adjust to the fact that Germany is back. If you can handle this tactfully, it would be good. ~~(C)~~

Chancellor Kohl: Mr. Lake, you know that I think we are among friends. Matters in Europe will turn for the better if Germans understand that, in making their contribution, they have to be wise and take into account the psychology of others. We were never masters of psychology. We never got an A, we were never champions in that sport. Yet psychology is what is demanded of us most right now. Adenauer told me that it was very important to salute the French flag three times and to salute the German flag only once. It does not mean that Adenauer did not hold our flag in highest esteem. But I recall the gentleman from California who was Secretary of State under Reagan (George Schultz). Adenauer's principle always gave him the shivers. He did not want to salute the French flag even once. But we all remember how he paid the price at the G-7 meeting. Within ten minutes, there was a big fight with the French over a comma in some subparagraph. It is not necessary to repeat that experience. We need to tie in the French. They have a difficult situation before the elections. Economic conditions are very divergent within Europe, so we need to bring European countries closer together. You can rely on me to be helpful, but I ask for your understanding. I am not seeking personal glory. I want to bring matters forward. We don't need a lot of publicity. When you have weathered so many storms safely, you get more thick-skinned. There is a widely published journal that is also being read in the State Department, Der Spiegel. They once described me as the last dinosaur, the last of a line of politicians. But

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if I am the last dinosaur, then I need to move carefully. Dinosaurs can move things, but they need not always be at the front. (C)

With respect to Russia, Central and Eastern Europe, NATO expansion, and the status of Ukraine, these are the essential points. No matter what we do with Moscow, if we fail in Ukraine (and the former Yugoslavia) we are lost. You can count on my support. At every opportunity I will tell both sides of the Congress of this fact. I told the President earlier that for us in Germany, and in the rest of Europe, it is essential that U.S. leadership not be damaged or diminished -- and the President personifies U.S. leadership. This is essential. We cannot afford for the U.S. to take a zig-zag course, nor can you. The situation in Europe is very vague and ambiguous. That is why it is all the more important to take our next steps in the former Yugoslavia together. (C)

The President: Let me raise a couple of points briefly. First, let me thank you for moving on EU accession talks for Cyprus and the Turkish Customs Union. Second, I know we have differences on the subject but I want to speak about Iran. We believe that they are actively promoting terrorism. We need to isolate them -- not completely, but we need to be especially concerned about their military buildup and their support for terrorism. Therefore I urge you not to extend credits at less than commercial rates. The situation in the Middle East looked so hopeful a few months ago. I visited Damascus and met with Assad, but now the situation is more tenuous. Given the terrorist activities that have taken place, Rabin's coalition has been weakened. Arafat's ability to deal with the situation has been undermined. So we are at a difficult moment in the Middle East. As you said, Algeria is in trouble and it could spill over to Tunisia and perhaps Morocco. We need to be very careful how we handle that situation in the next few years. While we have our differences, we need to discuss them in an open way. I have more confidence in our relationship with Germany than with any other country. The stability of our two countries is critical. The terrorism issue will dog us for the next few years. We need to work positively on Iran and Iraq. I appreciate your support on Iraq sanctions. Therefore again I strongly recommend that you not extend government credits to Iran. Anything that increases Iran's capability to spend money on mischief should be avoided. (C)

Chancellor Kohl: I will gladly discuss this subject openly. There have been a few misunderstandings. But first, stability in Turkey is decisive factor for our foreign policy. In Germany, there are few people who still remember the old image in the history books in which the British Ambassador described Turkey as

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the "sick man of the Bosporus." But 1995 is not 1903. In the year 2000, Turkey will have 70 million inhabitants with an average age of 28. We must bear that in mind. If you compare Turkey to Europe, there are enormous problems, but it is still a land of the future. They have the Kurdish problems and Islamic Fundamentalism, which is challenging the legacy of Ataturk. They are not exactly champions of human rights, or at least they don't measure up to Harvard standards. But the Harvard men who specialize in human rights haven't been to Turkey and seen what is involved in policing Kurdish villages. There one finds a different culture, but a highly developed one. ~~(C)~~

In Germany we have three million Turks and they are excellent people. But when they go to German schools, there will be lots of turmoil when a young Turkish girl does not return after her summer holidays and her German friends find out that her grandfather has married her off. This is hard for German girls to understand and it illustrates the clash of cultures involved. In Frankfurt we have 18 mosques. When I meet my Turkish counterparts, I ask them how many Catholic churches there are in Anatolia. The answer is none. So both sides need to be careful in passing judgment. In Turkey, churches couldn't even ring their bells because of Islamic law. But we need to bind them in. I am pleased that the Customs Union has now been adopted. The Customs Union is a case in point. We couldn't achieve it during the German presidency of the EU, but believed that we needed to do it under the French presidency. This would look good for the French. As for Cyprus, what has been agreed is reasonable. ~~(C)~~

Regarding Iran, what I have said about fundamentalism applies to Iran and all the other countries. I never understood why, before the Iran-Iraq war, people in Washington hailed the Iraqis as champions of our cause. I never saw much difference between the two sides nor do I believe that Syria is a champion of democracy. We need to be careful. We will not do anything to support them as long as they sponsor terrorism. We have reduced economic contacts significantly. I read in Time magazine that the U.S. petroleum industry has more links to Iran than Germany. ~~(C)~~

EO 13526 1.4c, 1.4d

We are not trying to break out of the international coalition and adopt a go-it-alone policy. But in a free, liberal country like Germany, we have open borders and we need to be vigilant. For example, our chemical industries are selling products for civilian purposes; we have to see that they don't also serve quasi-military

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purposes. We have put in a great effort with the German business community to make them more aware of the problem. I have asked the federal government to urge them not to make transactions that would serve unintended purposes. If you have concrete cases, please notify us, but do not give us general statements.

EO 13526 1.4c, 1.4d

Secretary Christopher: Our time is almost up. I want to raise three issues just to emphasize how important they are to us. The first is North Korea. It is important to us that some contribution be made by our European allies if we are to persuade South Korea and Japan to play the main role in the denuclearization plan. ~~(C)~~

The second subject is the Middle East Development Bank. This is something on which the countries in the region are very supportive. It is important that Europe not turn its back, but give some support to the bank. ~~(C)~~

The third issue is renewal of the Nonproliferation Treaty for an indefinite period. We should not take this for granted. Some blocs are forming in favor of a shorter extension. This would have a very adverse impact. ~~(C)~~

Chancellor Kohl: Mr. Secretary, on your last point, there is no divergence of views between us on the NPT. On the other two, I would invite you to meet with my staff and discuss the details since we are short of time. But one thing is very important. For a long time I have preached the same sermon within the EU. When we review the Maastricht Treaty in 1996, we need to determine what we can do to establish closer relations between Israel and the EU. I saw completely eye-to-eye with Rabin and Peres when we met on this. Both of them are aware that in the long term for the peaceful development of Israel is not desirable to have an exclusive relationship with the United States. Israel needs a second pillar, an association with the Europeans, not only in the commercial field but in the scientific field as well. This would not only be economically advantageous for Germany, but politically and morally advantageous as well. Before Hitler, we had very close relations with the Jews. If you go to the Leo Beck Institute in New York and look at the pictures on the staircase of all the Nobel Prize winners from Germany, one can see what an intellectual loss Germany has suffered. This is why we founded the German-Israeli Technological Council. ~~(C)~~

One more point on which we have been disappointed by our American friends' reaction. This is the Climate Change Conference. We have not seen any progress there. I know Vice President Gore is already beating his chest as I speak. I don't know if the Vice

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President of the United States will be able to endure the humiliation, but my sincere request is that he meet with my Minister of the Environment. She is a lady who would like to meet in order to arrive at some sort of agreed wording regarding the Conference. I know the situation that you have here, Bill. Within eight days after the floods we've had a completely different mood with regard to the Climate Change Conference. People are asking us what we are doing to deal with natural catastrophes. Thinking of the election campaign, it is always good to hear the views of individuals. But when the subject of natural catastrophes comes up, people believe that we are not reacting at all. So let us agree on some wording. I have not suddenly become a member of the Green party overnight, but I am concerned. The Vice President and I met at the Rio Conference. We know that we need to make many small steps rather than big ones so please meet with the Minister of the Environment. ~~(C)~~

The Vice President: I would be happy to see her. We want to work closely with Germany both at and after the conference. We have a disagreement over whether the industrial countries could now undertake a commitment without the participation of fast-growing developing countries like India. I met this morning with 30 CEOs from the insurance industry of the U.S. and other countries, including the Munich Reinsurance Company. The insurance industry is almost panic-stricken about the implications for them of climate change. It is not only in the popular press in which the flooding was linked to global warming; the Economist also made this point. Many scientists have noted that changes in precipitation can result from climate change. After the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, a scientist friend of mine said that you can forget about public support for global warming for three years, because of the cooling effect of Pinatubo. He said the political situation has not reached the point at which it could support revolutionary ideas. But public support is building. We have a comprehensive climate change plan that the President approved. We are not in a position to move as aggressively as Germany has suggested, but we admire your leadership and we will do the most that we can. I will certainly meet with the minister. ~~(C)~~

To raise another subject, I am going to the Brussels G-7 Telecommunications Conference. I want to thank Germany for its quiet and effective support for efforts we have been making to keep the French from building new cultural barriers, such as raising quotas for television programs and films. If it helps, we can also salute the French tricolor three times. ~~(C)~~

The President: If we can defeat the French on that, I will salute their flag six times. ~~(C)~~

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Chancellor Kohl: This is a tough fight we are having with our French friends. No matter who is President in France, it is an issue on which they will be tough. They won't give an inch. My European colleagues who think as I do never say a word; they let me take the rap. But I am opposing the French because they are wrong and because the system there have proposed has not proved itself. We have to ask why there aren't better French and Italians firms, compared with the 1950s. Fellini produced marvelous films, yet he didn't have any government subsidies. ~~(C)~~

The Vice President: French films have gone downhill since Brigitte Bardot got older. ~~(C)~~

The President: Let me raise one more thing. The Mexican crisis illustrates the importance of our G-7 meeting in Halifax. I owe Germany and others an apology because there was not enough time to consult before the IMF vote on Mexico. The situation was very dire and we had to move. I am glad the IMF voted in favor of the package. Mexico illustrates the nature of the problems we face and underscores importance of the Halifax review of international economic institutions. We haven't thought through the financial problems that are created as market economies take root in more and more countries. ~~(C)~~

Chancellor Kohl: I am very grateful for your comments. Behind the scenes, there has been a lot of turmoil. I will pass along your remarks to my colleagues. Ministers of Finance are in a class by themselves. They complain that foreign ministers are always in the limelight, while they are stuck in the background. So I will give your Treasury Secretary a hint: He should send each of his colleagues a bottle of whiskey. This will be good for the next crisis. ~~(C)~~

The President: We are completely in accord on NATO, but I think we need to be sure that our public statements are in synch. The Central and East Europeans and the Russians will be reading what we say with a magnifying glass to see if there is even a millimeter of difference. ~~(C)~~

Assistant Secretary Holbrooke: I recommend that you and the Chancellor agree on three or four points. ~~(C)~~

The President: Okay. First, we are sticking with the schedule agreed for 1995, including presentations to the partners on the "why and how" this fall. Second, we have not taken any decision on what we will do in 1996, nor agreed on the list of candidates or timetable. Third, Russia-NATO discussions will continue separately and simultaneously, but there will be no Russian veto.

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Fourth, we support the expansion of the EU, which is related to NATO expansion but without an exact linkage. (U)

On Chechnya I think we have the same views, isn't that right? We are concerned about what has happened, but we still support reform and democracy. Boris Yeltsin is still President. We support the territorial integrity of Russia and its neighbors. (U)

Chancellor Kohl: That is right. (U)

-- End of Conversation --