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WITHDRAWAL ID 018003

REASON FOR WITHDRAWAL National security restriction

TYPE OF MATERIAL Memorandum of Conversation

TITLE Ford, Kissinger, Greek Prime Minister
Caramanlis

CREATION DATE 05/29/1975

VOLUME 21 pages

COLLECTION/SERIES/FOLDER ID . 031400527

COLLECTION TITLE National Security Adviser. Memoranda of
Conversations

BOX NUMBER 12

FOLDER TITLE May 29, 1975 - Ford, Kissinger, Greek
Prime Minister Karamlis

DATE WITHDRAWN 05/28/2004

WITHDRAWING ARCHIVIST GG

REDACTED

4/28/10

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Time: May 29, 1975,
9:30-10:45 a.m.

Place: Ambassador Firestone's
residence, Brussels,
Belgium

SUBJECT:

PARTICIPANTS: Greek:

Prime Minister Caramanlis
Foreign Minister Bitsios
Ambassador John Tzounis
Ambassador Molyviatis, Office of
the Presidency

U.S.:

The President
Secretary of State Kissinger
Lieutenant General Scowcroft
Assistant Secretary for European Affairs
Hartman

DISTRIBUTION:

President: (The first few remarks were made during the
picture taking and I did not hear them all.)
We want very much to be helpful on the Middle
East. I am looking forward to my meeting
with Sadat.

Caramanlis: That is very important.

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President: There is a great interest in Greek affairs in the United States and I am very pleased to have this meeting. We have many good citizens who came from Greece. You know they have a large organization called AHEPA.

Secretary: Yes and they are very passionate too.

President: They are all good American citizens and traditionally they have been leaders in their community.

Caramanlis: Yes, there is a new generation now and I understand you have as many as two million.

President: No, I think there are three million. One of them had a great influence on my life when I worked in a restaurant in my hometown.

Secretary: I was saying to your Foreign Minister that he is the toughest negotiator.

President: Mr. Prime Minister, we have been greatly impressed and we are favorably inclined toward you and what you are trying to do in Greece. We think that you have had a major success in your elections and, indeed, I am envious of your majority. It is our strongly held

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belief and feeling that there should be a democratic development in Greece. This is what Americans wanted and we were very pleased by the return of democracy to Greece. We hope and trust that we will be able to work together both in our bilateral relations and in your region and the world.

Caramanlis: Mr. President, I would like to thank you too for meeting me at this critical time. I would also like to thank you for the trouble and time which you have taken and the offers of help which you have made. In times when we have to face such large problems the help of friends such as the United States is very much valued. We are establishing a democracy but it needs consolidation. To do so we must solve the current problems. The dictatorship left many unpleasant situations but I can assure you that in a year or so Greece will be a healthy democracy. We have solved the problem of the return of parliamentary democracy, we have solved the problem of the Monarchy and this next week we will have a constitution.

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There will be no abnormality remaining. I must tell you in all frankness that I have been able to do much of this because the people have put their trust in me. Beyond these successes we have also been able to re-establish discipline in the Army but for all of this trust to be justified there must be success in dealing with our many problems. If not, the confidence in me will erode in time. And this is particularly true of the Greek-Turkish problems, the Cyprus situation and the economy. Now, Mr. President, how do you wish to proceed?

President: We greatly admire all that you have accomplished in restoring democracy to Greece and in restoring order and authority. It is a tribute to your great leadership. We too recognize that if the moment is not seized when problems can be solved then the solution is impossible. I would like to discuss Cyprus and Greek-Turkish relations and how we can be helpful to you.

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Caramanlis: Let me begin by discussing recent history. Before my return to power there was a coup in Cyprus caused by the Greek Junta and they got rid of Makarios. The Turks claimed to act as a guarantor power which they said gave them the right to restore the legitimate regime and protect the Turkish population. The guarantee as written into the London and Zurich Agreements provides that it is for the restoration of legitimacy and the protection of territorial integrity. Legitimacy was restored in three days after the invasion. I came back and took over the government of Greece and Clerides took over in Nicosia. After that there was no reason to remain on Cyprus. The purpose of the guarantee was achieved. But they are still there. Several weeks later they occupied 40 percent of the island. I remember those days very well because your Foreign Minister woke me up at four o'clock in the morning. There was no shred of excuse for the second Turkish move. You don't just create strategic

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plans overnight. The military operation must have been planned for some time. The occupation of 40 percent of the island follows very closely a military plan known as ATTLA. This proves premeditation. Two hundred thousand refugees were created by this move. You can say it is not huge but the total population of the island is only half a million. They also took in the 40 percent the largest area in resources. On August 14 I faced an explosion in my Army and among the population. I went to the General Staff Headquarters and they demanded that I act. There was pressure for a declaration of war. Naturally everyone felt humiliated but I took the unpopular decision to tell the people to be quiet and trust me. I said that we would get help from our friends to find the solution. In that dramatic moment I had three choices: first, go to war; second, withdraw from politics once again or, third, withdraw from the military side of NATO. I

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chose the third alternative as the least painful. That is the story of Cyprus. It is very difficult to prove something that is self-evident but the Turks are in the wrong. The Greeks have shown moderation in spite of everything that has happened. We still show moderation. For a long time the Turks have asked for a geographic federal solution. In our view there should have been a return to the London and Zurich Agreements but we have accepted a geographic federation on two conditions: first, that the territory controlled by the Turks be in relation to the percent of their population and, second, that the solution allow for a return of refugees. This would be an honorable and reasonable solution but the Turks continually want to present us with fait accompli. What should we do?

President: We think we should proceed from the assumption of the facts as they are.

Caramanlis: Before you comment, let me finish my explanation.

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Beyond Cyprus we have the problems in the Aegean. We are in favor of the status quo which has existed since 1913. But the Turks are continually creating problems about the continental shelf, about air corridors and, in fact, they want to split the Aegean Sea which would mean that many of our islands would be in a Turkish sea. We have proposed taking the matter to the ICJ but the Turks, while accepting this in principle, refused in Rome to draw up the documents which would refer the case to the ICJ. I must tell you that if all of these matters are not solved and they are prolonged they could lead to war and that should not be excluded. In both countries tempers are running very high and it would be a shame if war were to break out under the noses of our Allies. I have done and will do all that I can to avoid war but we need to return to a comprehensive approach which will contribute to averting this danger. Again I cannot and will not indicate how you can help. That is something you must decide for yourselves.

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President: The two most important questions are Cyprus and the Aegean. We would like to contribute to a solution of these problems. We feel certain developments in that area are unfortunate for NATO and they have created tremendous problems in the United States. Something must be done. We have a reflection of this in our Congress where aid to Turkey has been cut off. We feel that that action has been harmful to our influence with the Turks and our ability to get concessions from the Turks. We were able to reverse the action in the Senate and it is possible we will be able to change views in the House. It is my feeling that if Congress retains the limitation our influence will be lessened. Therefore, we have held many consultations with Congressmen. We have told them that we need additional time to clear up this festering unhealthy situation in NATO. We have told them how harmful it is if something is not done and that we are approaching the time when the Turkish authorities may close U.S. military bases which will be harmful in terms of our

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overall defense. We have said that it is time for Congress to act and the sooner the better. We are encouraged by the talks going on in Vienna between the two communities and we hope that progress will be achieved. But I must say that our leverage is lessened as long as the embargo on Turkish aid remains.

Secretary: May I add a word, Mr. President, on the Turkish political situation. This is my assessment of the domestic problem. Caglayangil wants a settlement. Demirel basically wants a settlement but he is very fearful that Erbakan will break up his coalition if he moves toward a settlement. I have told the President, Mr. Prime Minister, that I am ready to form a government in Turkey because I have talked to all the politicians. I have seen the heads of all the parties and I have told them all that now is the time to settle this matter. The key is Ecevit. If you and he were the Prime Ministers dealing with this problem I am convinced it will be settled. In opposition, however, Ecevit will use this issue to try and break up

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the coalition. I had a long talk with him in Ankara. I know him well. He used to be a student of mine.

Caramanlis: That's why we Greeks suspected you were pro Turk.

Secretary: Demirel is afraid to lose his majority. If he had your majority he would probably favor a quick settlement but Demirel needs the restoration of American aid so that he can show that he has achieved something. To help him we are prepared to take a public position against what Ecevit is saying in the right circumstances. I have told Ecevit directly that he should not wish to take responsibility for leaving this problem unsolved and causing a dangerous situation to develop. There are two issues: There is a growing nationalism against the United States and there is an historical antipathy against the Greeks. But let me give you my assessment. Now is the time for a rapid move toward a settlement. We have already convinced

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the Turks first that they are going to have to give up some territory and, second, that the central government has to have some power. We do not believe that you can get the territory back down to 18 percent even though what you say is just. But there has to be a contraction of what the Turks now hold. We have never explored the question of percentages but it must be considerably less than 40 percent. The trouble is that the Turks now have an alibi to do nothing because of the aid embargo. Demirel is scared of Ecevit.

Caramanlis: I understand all this but what you seem to be saying is that because of these ridiculous internal problems we, the Greeks, must pay. This is crazy and unreasonable that we should have to pay blackmail. Now let me talk about aid. I know that you have discussed this with the Foreign Minister indirectly. Aid can be used in two ways in this situation: first, as a threat ...

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Secretary: Yes, that would have been the best way.

Caramanlis: Or you can cut off the aid and say that you will resume it when reasonable progress has been made. We tried the first for months and no result was achieved. Now we are trying the second and we still have no result. The Turks are not acting in good faith. They are unreasonable. I have not taken a position. If I were to say something in public I would have to disapprove restoring aid to fit public opinion in my country. We cannot shout from the housetops that we want aid restored to Turkey. Despite these pressures I have made no public statement.

President: I understand your position completely but we must have a change in this action. There is little or no chance to make progress in the negotiations while the embargo lasts. Historically, as you know, I have always given full support to close U.S.-Greek ties. I have a personal feeling about the history and future of Greece and I support you. But if we don't get a solution to this problem it will

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make all of our tasks more difficult. I have done my utmost to get American Greeks to change their minds. Once the cut-off is lifted then I can judiciously handle the timing and the amount of aid given to Turkey. But the Turks will not move until we have removed the embargo. It will complicate our bases and Western security. I hope negotiations can be seen to be making progress in order to get the Congress to move but I appreciate your public position.

Caramanlis: I understand. I do not wish to become involved in U.S. internal politics. Even if the aid ban is lifted, I do not believe the Turks will be more reasonable. Their internal difficulties will continue. Therefore, the problem will not be any different.

Secretary: I agree with you that if aid is resumed it will still be difficult to get a settlement but if it is not, it will be impossible. Also let me emphasize what the President just said to you that if aid is restored the Administration can restrict its flow (Bitsios explains in Greek). Even with aid restored it is going to be very

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very difficult to get a solution but now the Turks have the alibi and they do not fear pressure. We wish to assure you of our desire to be helpful and we recognize that the only solution is to get the Turks to make solutions.

President: If the Congressional aid ban is removed, then it will be up to me. I have the flexibility. It will be up to the Executive Branch to decide.

Secretary: This fellow Erbakan
..... He will do something to try and prevent a negotiation. That is why it is very important to neutralize Evecit. Without Ecevit no settlement is possible.

Caramanlis: Your conclusion is disappointing. Instead of asking concessions from the Turks you seem to be asking why the Greeks won't pay.

Secretary: The Turks must give up three things: first, territory; second, a federal government with real powers; and, third, some refugee return. There are no concessions from the Greeks on those items.

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Caramanlis: I don't see much light here. In any case, I will see Demirel myself on Saturday. I have a solution soon on the way and if it is not an honorable and just solution, there can be no viable peace on Cyprus. We are just buying future trouble.

Secretary: It is not in our interest to do anything to weaken the Prime Minister.

Caramanlis: Nor do I wish to weaken myself. If the solution is unjust, it is not viable. You should know that from history.

Secretary: What should we say to the Turks?

Caramanlis: It is difficult to say. I told you how I see the situation and perhaps you and the Foreign Minister can discuss this further tomorrow.

President: We would certainly not advocate an unjust solution but a continuation of this problem is worse. We are in favor of an honorable solution but we would very much appreciate it if you could indicate to us how we can be helpful. A suggestion of what we might say and we would be happy to do it. This is in our mutual Western interest.

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Caramanlis: This is a case of the two sides having difficulty and the third party giving a suggestion to the wrong one. The Turks are at fault. Therefore, it is up to the Turks for moral and political reasons to come forward with a proposal. They are the ones that should be pressured. We are ready to defend our interests and we will fight if we have to. This is a question of national pride but I am trying to block it. How long can we go on feeling humiliated? There is great pressure to react. I have tried to be moderate in order to facilitate a solution. Ask the Turks what their intentions are. If there is a war Turkey will be the first victim because they will open the way to the Soviets. We will not fall to the blackmail of Turkey. When people feel humiliated the Army is very pro-Caramanlis although there is beginning to be some criticism. I may be forced to reconsider the policies of my country. The most helpful thing you can do is to say to the Turks what you have already said to us but say it publicly that the United States will not tolerate military action.

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Secretary: We have already said this privately. If there is any move in the Aegean, there will be total American opposition.

Caramanlis: The Turks moved on to Cyprus as a guarantor. We too are guarantors and I have the right to send troops there. You should say publicly that you will not allow any action that could lead to war. You should say publicly that you will help avoid war. This will make the Turks more reasonable.

President: We oppose any military operation and we will make a maximum effort to avert a war. We will work to avoid such a situation from arising, but if I'm to be able to put pressure on Turkey then I must get the aid restored. I am confident that if the limitation is removed it will help in the negotiations. We oppose military action in the Aegean. That is our position. There is some question as to whether we should say that publicly but the policy is clear and we would oppose military action whether by Turkey or any other party. This is the same position we have taken in the Middle East where we have opposed military action. We believe that a stalemate leads to the temptation to use force.

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Caramanlis: What should we do. My experience I have used to give you my advice on what you could do to create hope but you must make the final judgment. If you say something in public it will not provoke a reaction but instead create a better climate. It will urge moderation and it will also state that the United States will not allow any side to take military action.

Secretary: I am going to be briefing the press perhaps we can plant a question and I can respond along the lines the Prime Minister has suggested.

Caramanlis: In order to avoid any misunderstanding let me speak in total and sincere frankness. I do not believe in hiding my thoughts and avoiding substance. What I am recommending is not to protect Greece when I ask you to make this statement. If it comes to a question of protecting Greece I will protect Greece through our own actions. But I am asking for a statement like this only to make the Turks more reasonable.

Secretary: If there is a danger of war, we would totally oppose military action.

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Caramanlis: This will relieve the Turks of their threats. If the Turks act in any way that is provocative this will help.

President: I think we can handle this in answering a press question and the Secretary will do this.

Secretary: What I would say is that we would strongly oppose military action by either side in this conflict.

Caramanlis: Or any action that could lead to a deterioration.

President: We can respond in this way. This hopefully will be helpful. We can make this clear just as we did in the Middle East.

Caramanlis: Let me explain our attitude toward NATO. We were forced to withdraw from the military part of the Alliance. It gave us no pleasure to do so. There was no other way. We can only change this when the reasons for this action have been removed. The causes must be lifted. If I return to the military part of the Alliance before the problem is solved and we later get into a conflict what will happen to the Alliance then. First we must restore

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normality. I have explained the problems. I have not told you how they can be settled but we hope that you will do your best to help.

President: We want Greece back in the Alliance.

Caramanlis: I am for the Alliance. I am the most pro-Western politician in my country.

Secretary: We've always admired your great statesmanship.

Caramanlis: This has even been detrimental to my political fortunes.

President: If we can help we will do what we can. We will do all that we can. We want the Cyprus problem solved and we want the Greeks back in NATO.

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TYPE OF MATERIAL Note

DESCRIPTION Brent Scowcroft's handwritten notes for
memcon

CREATION DATE 05/29/1975

VOLUME 7 pages

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