

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Mubarak

PARTICIPANTS: The President
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Ambassador Sam Zakhem, Former U.S. Ambassador to Bahrain
Sandra Charles, NSC, Notetaker

Sheikh Mohammed bin Mubarak
Ghazi Muhammad al-Gusaybi, Ambassador to the U.S.
Karim Ibrahim al-Shakar, Representative to the UN

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: Wednesday, August 2, 1989, 1:30 p.m.
The Oval Office

The meeting began with the President thanking Sheikh Mohammed for his statement to the press on LTC Higgins that had preceded their meeting. (U)

Sheikh Mohammed replied that LTC Higgins was their man as much as ours and they shared our concerns. He then presented a message from His Highness the Amir. (U)

The President inquired about the Amir's health, and recalled his visit to Bahrain and the hospitality he had received from the Amir and the Crown Prince. He noted that it had been a short but wonderful visit. (U)

On the hostage situation, the President said he had received with interest what the Foreign Minister had told Brent Scowcroft, and that he would appreciate hearing any other thoughts the Foreign Minister had. The President continued that LTC Higgins was an international issue as the Foreign Minister had stated so eloquently. He was an American officer, and as Commander-in-Chief, the President said he was responsible for U.S. forces. He noted there were no easy answers, yet there had to be some action taken to stop hostage-taking. We were considering doing something, but what was not clear. Since we don't know enough, we were doing the prudent thing. Now there

had been threats against Waite and Cicippio. The President commented that if there was an execution every twenty-four hours that would be bad. (Ø)

The President continued that he had called for the release of all hostages held. He explained that from our independent information we had reason to believe that Obeid had ties to the Higgins' kidnapping. The President reiterated that our policy remained that we would not negotiate with hostage holders because, if we did, then there would be another American seized there or somewhere else in the world. He welcomed the Foreign Minister's comments. (Ø)

Sheikh Mohammed said that he believed we had been successful in fighting terrorism. Ten years ago it was spreading, planes were being hijacked everywhere. Now the circle was closing and one area remained where these actions started -- Lebanon. We now knew the area where terrorist actions originated. He stated we should not blame the people but the countries behind them. He believed that we should press those countries -- they were the ones who had given the people guns, brainwashed and bribed them. Working together we should be able to close off this area of threat. Sheikh Mohammed suggested that it was not just this issue, but we needed to react to the larger issue collectively. This was not just a threat to Israeli, European, or U.S. citizens, but to all. Therefore, we needed to cooperate; no country could do it alone. He mentioned the courage the Kuwaitis had shown previously in refusing to negotiate with hijackers. (Ø)

The President told Sheikh Mohammed that he had called King Hassan, Chadli Bendjedid and King Fahd earlier. He had saluted their Tripartite Initiative on Lebanon and told them he was sorry it was on the shoals. He revealed that King Hassan had told him that he had just completed a long letter saying that the group had received no cooperation from Syria. The President said he told King Hassan that we supported the initiative and if the United States could help to get it back on track, we would do that. The President also agreed that we should look at the whole situation as well as the hostage situation. (Ø)

Sheikh Mohammed stated that the first step had come from the three Heads of State committee. He felt they needed to convene another meeting and then another Summit. They had received support from other Heads of State, and needed an incentive to continue. He believed if the Committee succeeded and submitted its report, then we could take some action. And if there was one country that was not cooperating then we must say so. (Ø)

The President agreed, saying that King Hassan certainly intended to do this with this letter which would be circulated to many magazines and journals. The letter would summarize the actions taken by the Committee, the three Heads of State would sign it, and it would point a finger at Syria. The President had told King Hassan that he felt that Syria was trying to help on the

hostage matter; but King Hassan had cautioned that what Syria did with one hand, they would take away with the other. The President said we were not naive. Continuing, he noted that Iran did not want anything to do with the hostage problem, but we had seen some hopeful signs. He then asked the Foreign Minister if he thought out of the Rafsanjani era there might be improved chances for better relations. (Ø)

Sheikh Mohammed said that he believed the post-Khomeini era was a step forward, noting there were better people to deal with there, including Rafsanjani. He was not sure that Rafsanjani was in control, and he felt we needed to know that. The Foreign Minister believed that Khomeini may have some power over Rafsanjani, but it was unclear. It also was unclear what role Parliament under Ahmed Khomeini would have, or what kind of government would be formed. He was hoping for a strong government, one with which to have some "give and take" since they had to deal with Iran. In the past, he said, the Iranians had made too many promises and not delivered. (Ø)

The President then mentioned that the Interior Minister in Iran had made some terrible statements about the hostage issue. That showed that the situation in Iran was not under control. He then expressed his gratitude for the Foreign Minister's statements on Colonel Higgins. He asked that if he discussed this matter at home and thought they could be helpful in getting the body back, we would appreciate it. He recognized there probably was not very much, but he was asking everyone to do what they could on the return of the body. He agreed that on the larger question of Lebanon we should stay in touch. (Ø)

In closing the President said he was grateful for the continued close relations between our countries, noting that it was not always easy standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States as Bahrain had done with us in the Gulf. (U)

Sheikh Mohammed agreed that our relationship, particularly on the military side, had been successful. We had tested freedom of navigation in the Gulf, speeded the peace between Iran and Iraq and stopped the war from expanding. (U)