

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMCON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with General Youssef Abu Talib,
Defense Minister of Egypt (U)

PARTICIPANTS: U.S.
The President
Richard B. Cheney, Secretary of Defense
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President
and Deputy for National Security Affairs
Marlin Fitzwater, Assistant to the President
and Press Secretary
Richard N. Haass, Senior Director, Near East
and South Asian Affairs, NSC (Notetaker)

Egypt
General Youssef Abu Talib, Egyptian Defense
Minister
El Sayed Abdel El Reedy, Egyptian Ambassador
General Mahmoud Fouad, Defense Attache

DATE, TIME August 8, 1989, 10:05 a.m. - 10:20 a.m. EDT
AND PLACE Oval Office

Following a photo opportunity and an exchange of pleasantries, The President said that he viewed the U.S.-Egyptian relationship as one of enormous importance and that strong, close relations with Egypt both militarily and diplomatically were vital to us. He added that he knew the Minister's predecessor well and that he hoped to develop the same sort of friendship with the Minister.
(Ø)

Minister Abu Talib said that Egypt and the U.S. had been full partners in the political and military realms for some 15 years and would continue given their mutual interests. With modern armed forces, Egypt could contribute to its own defense and to the stability of the region. In so doing, Egypt had no intention to participate in a regional arms race. (Ø)

The President said that Secretary Cheney was determined to work with the Minister. He wanted to take this opportunity, however, to make two points. Although there was no reason to think that Egypt was in a position to help, he hoped that Egypt would do what it could to bring about the return of Col Higgins' remains. If Egypt could do this it would never be forgotten by Americans.
(Ø)

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Second, and as he had raised with President Mubarak in Paris, there was the question of Qadhafi. The position of the U.S. had not changed. We hoped Mubarak would be able to talk sense to Qadhafi. Unfortunately, we had seen no evidence that Qadhafi had changed and was prepared to live in the family of nations. (Ø)

Minister Abu Talib said he would respond to these two points by communicating President Mubarak's message to the President. The Egyptian President wanted to convey his personal grief over Col Higgins. President Mubarak admired greatly President Bush's efforts to resolve the hostage situation. President Mubarak was trying to help without drawing publicity to himself and was willing to do more if President Bush desired. (Ø)

The President said that he could not think of anything to ask right now but at some point he might call President Mubarak. (U)

Minister Abu Talib then raised the issue of dealing with Qadhafi, pointing out that as the former director of artillery in Egypt's army he had destroyed a Libyan brigade. Mubarak had agreed to accept Qadhafi's expressions of good will. Thus far Qadhafi was not interfering in the Sudan and was behaving better toward Chad. (Ø)

The President said the Egyptians deserved credit for this. (Ø)

Minister Abu Talib said it was Egypt's goal to force others to deal with Egypt on its terms. This was true for Qadhafi as it was true for the Arab League. The Minister also wanted to convey a personal message to the President and Mrs. Bush from President and Mrs. Mubarak wishing the President success in the current situation. In addition, President Mubarak recalled with appreciation his conversation with President Bush in Paris and along with that his hope that the U.S. would support Egypt in its dealings with the IMF and the World Bank. Last, the Minister noted that President Mubarak would be visiting New York on September 29 in his capacity as President of the OAU and that he looked forward to seeing President Bush at that time. (Ø)

The President said that he hoped to see President Mubarak then and that we would try to work something out. (U)

Minister Abu Talib reminded the President that the two of them had met when he had been Governor of Cairo and the President had been Vice President. (He handed over a book of photographs). (U)

The President thanked the Minister for the book of photographs. The meeting ended. (U)

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