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10. Memcon	Re: Plenary Meeting with President Saleh of Yemen (5 pp.)	1/24/90	(b)(1)	S

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RESTRICTION CODES

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(b)(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
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(b)(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Plenary Meeting with President Saleh of Yemen

PARTICIPANTS: The President

James A. Baker, III, Secretary of State

Richard B. Cheney, Secretary of Defense

Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs

Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President
and Deputy for National Security Affairs

Charles Dunbar, U.S. Ambassador to Yemen

Mark Edelman, Acting AID Administrator

John Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State,

Near East Affairs

Sandra Charles, NSC (Notetaker)

Shukran Kamal (Int.)

Siddharan Ramai (Interpreter)

President Ali Abdallah Saleh
Abd al-Karim al-Iryani, Deputy Prime Minister

and Foreign Minister
Muhammad Said al-Attar, Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister of Development, and Chairman of
Central Planning Organization

Central Planning Organization
Yahya Muhammad al-Mutawakkil, Member of
Consultative Council

Ahmad Ali al-Muhanni, Minister of Petroleum and
Mineral Resources

Yahya Hussein al-Arashi, Minister of State for the Affairs of Yemen Unity

Ali al-Anisi, Director of President's Office

Mohsin Alaini, Ambassador to the United States
Mohammad Sodam, Interpreter

DATE, TIME January 24, 1990, 11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
AND PLACE: The Cabinet Room

The President: As I look across the table, I feel I am truly among friends. With your permission, I would like to make a few comments and then turn to you for any subjects you would like to discuss. You will have meetings with my top officials; lunch with Secretary Baker, a meeting with Secretary Cheney. Tonight before dinner we will have a chance to discuss the unfinished agenda privately in the residence. (U)

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In the Oval Office, we had a chance to discuss your unity proposal with South Yemen and the sensitivities in the area on this subject. Our side would be interested in hearing your views. We've had problems with South Yemen. There are restrictions on U.S. support to PDRY. I'm anxious to know your views on how South Yemen will behave in the world, both as part of the unity arrangement and separately. (U)

We agree there is a declining Soviet role in the region. I think this is good. And it takes the pressure off your bigger neighbors. I am interested in your development of your petroleum resources. You have a wonderful reputation for your credibility and reliability. That is still very much intact. (U)

On the Soviet Union, we have important relations with Gorbachev and approve of what he is doing. Countries both large and small have a stake in seeing perestroika succeed and glasnost continue. We are at an historic period; and if we continue moving ourselves in the right direction, we might have a safe world for our children. We are working with Gorbachev on regional and global questions. I wanted you to hear this from me. We still have some differences on the Middle East and Afghanistan. We welcome your thoughts on this. The input of those who understand the complexities of Afghanistan is always helpful. I am proud of our relationship. And now I'll turn the floor over to you. (U)

President Saleh: Thank you, Mr. President. From our meeting in Sanaa, you know I speak frankly. I spoke here even more frankly because I know America is a country based on freedom and democracy. And because I know Americans like frankness. (U)

The President: That's right. (U)

President Saleh: When we talked before it was of the first, second and third world. Now there is only one world. I hope the third world will be remembered and not forgotten. Mainly we are from underdeveloped countries. (U)

I would like to respond by thanking you and expressing our gratitude for the reception from you and members of your Administration. I would like to reconfirm what I said that Yemeni unity will be a factor for stability and security in the whole region. As we spoke before, I want to reconfirm that our friends should help in the interest of unity. We will be responsible for resolving any issues with neighboring countries. All Yemenis are grateful to and respect the Saudis, especially King Fahd. I want to reconfirm this. (S)

Our bilateral relations between our two countries are strong, but we would like the United States to help us in meeting our security and economic needs since our imports are little, money from our workers abroad is small, and we have a growing population. (S)

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We want to be treated in the field of wheat and agricultural commodities in the same way you treat Algeria and Egypt. Also on poultry feed. We hope the U.S. Administration will mediate with the World Bank to give us loans and facilities, mainly for important strategic projects. ~~(S)~~

I would like to confirm that there is no problem between us and our brothers in the South. We will be responsible to solve any problems that occur. We bear the responsibility for practicing freedom, democracy and democratic means. We have done everything to get South Yemen to stop acting contrary to its interest in relations with us, including terrorism. They are not in the same mode as five years ago. Then there were distinct issues between us and our brothers in the South. I think they understood and such practices have stopped. ~~(S)~~

The President: As I told the President in the Oval Office, it is not just us but other countries in the region that also need to be reassured. No country sees unity as a threat or would dispute the need to reunite a divided people. But there are some concerns as we discussed in the Oval Office. ~~(S)~~

President Saleh: The concern of our neighbors about unity and the behavior of the South is more political than a real concern about terrorism because such behavior is not going on. Ideologically our neighbors are worried about the effect on their security unity will have, and the difficulties it will create for their security. But we will never pose any threat to our neighbors. ~~(S)~~

The President: On that subject, I'd like to ask a question. [REDACTED] (b) (1)

[REDACTED] Is there any reason to believe that Oman is concerned? ~~(S)~~

President Saleh: No. They are not overly concerned nor have they expressed any concerns to us. Oman is concerned about its borders with PDRY. And whether it is the PDRY border with Saudi Arabia or Oman, that is the issue. As long as we are separate, it will be difficult to discuss border issues. With unity we can. Oman is only concerned with its border. ~~(S)~~

We hope our bilateral and technical cooperation will expand. Our neighbors expect a lot from this visit. We hope the results are as good as their expectations. It is up to you. American companies will come to Yemen and we guarantee benefits and profits for all. Our relations are excellent. We have no problems. No issue we have is a serious problem. We prefer to discuss serious problems between four walls and not outside. ~~(S)~~

If we want real peace in the Middle East, the United States is the most capable of convincing Israel to accept international resolutions and resolution of this problem in a fair and equitable way. The issue is one of human rights for people in the occupied territories. Your country advanced this principle.

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We hoped and hope your discussions with the PLO in Tunis would develop into a wider discussion. That more understanding would develop with the Palestinians, PLO and the United States to understand the problems. That is why it is important to broaden the dialogue. You must listen to all sides, not just one. You are a superpower and therefore you must listen to both big and small. That is the best way to hear everyone. It is important to accept the role of the Palestinians, and once people agree, all should talk. They are human beings after all. All should talk together. No one has the right to live and the other not. I hope your Administration will work hard to realize the roots of the problem. We also are concerned about U.S. attacks on international organizations for accepting the PLO. (S)

The President: I think we have some differences on the PLO. But we have no differences in terms of our desire to facilitate talks toward peace on the West Bank. Jim Baker will brief you in more detail on what we are trying to do with President Mubarak and sometimes with cooperation on the Israeli side on the peace plan. I listened to your remarks on the lawn. They were very frank. We hope to make improvements. The PLO has taken steps -- important steps in my view -- that permitted direct talks with us. Those talks will continue, even though there is pressure not to continue them. Jim will review at lunch the status of our effort as mediators to get talks started. We must get talks going in order to get a breakthrough. We do not intend to pull back. We want to help. We are trying to be sensitive to both sides, not just Israel. (S)

President Saleh: We will discuss this in detail with Secretary Baker. If there is anything left, we can talk tonight. On Afghanistan, we feel that if the people were left alone without interference and no support to one side or the other, that will be the only way for Afghans to sit together. So long as there are outside forces, it will be difficult to resolve. There are anti-American elements involved in the problem working behind your back. (S)

The President: We were pleased when the Soviet troops got out and thought that Najib would not last long after that, but he survived. If he leaves, there would be an instant solution. One that is not imposed. Elements can then get together, but it is hard to do that with him still in power. (S)

President Saleh: I discussed this with President Zia right before his death. At that time Zia said maybe people calculated wrong. Predictions of a Soviet pullout were right; and once the Soviets leave, the Afghans should be left alone to solve their problems. Others calculated the problems wouldn't be solved. The problem then became the issue of the head of state. While people don't necessarily see the good in him, when they see someone attempt to remove him, instinctively they gather around him. Zia's instincts were good. (S)

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The President: The Soviets find it hard to say he must go. We welcome any suggestions. They say we should stop cooperating with the Mujahedin but as long as they are supplying Najib, then the freedom fighters should not be let down and deserted. *(S)*

President Saleh: You and Gorbachev can develop a deal on Afghanistan. You need to persuade him so the Afghan people can be left alone to decide. *(S)*

The President: Jim has tried with Shevardnadze and we tried in Malta. We'll keep working on it. You meet again on the seventh? *(S)*

Secretary Baker: Right. *(S)*

President Saleh: Well, I don't want to take too long. I know you are busy. *(U)*

The President: Actually, we're right on schedule. We'll follow up on the poultry feed as we discussed here and privately. John? *(U)*

John Kelly: Sir, \$5M in additional poultry feed was released by Agriculture. *(U)*

The President: Good. We'll talk more tonight. *(U)*

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