

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

**MEMCON**

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with State President  
De Klerk of South Africa

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
State President De Klerk  
Notetaker: John Ordway

DATE, TIME February 10, 1990, 12:35 P.M. - 12:45 P.M.  
AND PLACE: Camp David

The President telephoned State President De Klerk concerning the release of Nelson Mandela.

The President: This is George Bush.

SP De Klerk: Good evening Mr. President. It is an honor to speak with you -- even on the phone.

The President: I want to have the honor of visiting with you in person some day. I sat and watched that historic announcement with profound interest. I am at Camp David but they had live coverage of your press conference. I want to congratulate you for the steps you have taken the last few weeks. I know it has been difficult. We have watched your leadership with great respect.

SP De Klerk: Thank you. I am hopeful about the steps I have taken today. There must really be some reciprocity that will create a climate for real negotiations in South Africa.

The President: I can sympathize with that and I understand that. I hope tomorrow things go peacefully. I am sure there will be some rejoicing in South Africa. Of course we hope that your steps will result in peaceful rejoicing.

SP De Klerk: We will handle the situation with kid gloves. There is a risk of mass mobilization which can be dangerous. I hope the atmosphere is positive and we look forward to the future with hope.

The President: The atmosphere seems good.

SP De Klerk: I realize this is difficult. I hope we can steer away from violent solutions. If the positive atmosphere can be bolstered by real international support toward the progress we are making -- and you are the leader of the free world, Mr. President -- this can and will have a profound and positive effect in South Africa. Also, I hope we can avoid having check

lists that make it look like we in South Africa are being forced by the outside world. This is a process that we are pressing.

The President: I am delighted to hear that. We will not be making any check lists. Obviously, there are further steps that must be taken, and we hope will be taken. But we salute what you have done. I hope you can come to the U.S. I stated already that you will be most welcome and so would Mr. Mandela. But you are the head of government, and your visit would stand on its own feet. I would hope for a very productive visit, in which we could have good, private discussions.

SP De Klerk: Thank you very much. In principle I would be very glad to be there and meet you and look forward to it. We would take a look at the practicalities involved. I will tell the Foreign Minister to do this and talk to your ambassador.

The President: I will instruct State Department to be in contact. But I don't want to push it. I want you to feel comfortable.

SP De Klerk: Something that is natural.

The President: Exactly. There will be some criticism here on the left and there's going to be talk about check lists. But I can assure you that this President and this Administration will not do that. We will have an opportunity in a good private environment to discuss your initiatives and your hopes and aspirations for your great country. There is no rush -- some time that suits your schedule.

SP De Klerk: Thank you very much. I am encouraged by your very positive reaction, which encourages us to continue along the road. We can move toward agreement, with your support.

The President: You have problems, like we all do in elective governments. Yours are on your right. My question is, do you think Mandela will come out in a positive mood? Will he recognize that you have made changes?

SP De Klerk: I think it will be relatively positive. There is great cohesion in the ANC, strong party discipline. He will be positive, but within the framework of the National Executive Committee [of the ANC] which will meet in Lusaka on Tuesday. I think that we should not expect too much. But it won't be negative and it won't be aggressive. He wants a little bit of distance initially so as to establish his independence.

The President: In any event, you have our respect for what you have done. I hope to hear more from you. I will instruct our ambassador to be flexible about when we can get together.

SP De Klerk: Please give my good regards to your wife.

The President: How sweet of you. The best to you and your wonderful country.