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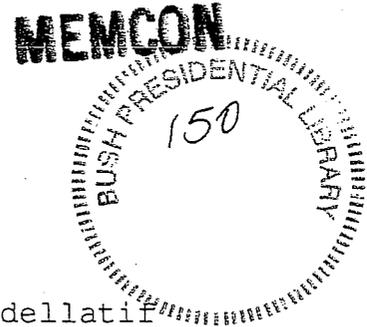
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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Foreign Minister Abdellatif Filali of Morocco (U)

PARTICIPANTS: Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
C. David Welch, NSC Staff, Notetaker
Abdellatif Filali, Moroccan Foreign Minister
Ali Bengelloun, Moroccan Ambassador to the United States

DATE, TIME: February 20, 1990; 5:10 - 5:35 p.m. EST
AND PLACE: General Scowcroft's Office

General Scowcroft met with Moroccan Foreign Minister Filali in the General's office at 5:10 p.m. (U)

General Scowcroft: I am very delighted to have this opportunity to meet you. Allow me to express, on behalf of the President, his warm feelings for His Majesty King Hassan. The President asked that his respects be expressed to you, with thanks to His Majesty for all his help over the years. As a testament of the President's warm regard, he has asked his daughter to join the delegation to the Throne Day. (U)

Foreign Minister Filali: I am grateful for your words. His Majesty also conveys his best wishes to the President. This is an important opportunity to meet you today. I hope that His Majesty and the President will also have the opportunity to meet together again -- it is normal and necessary to have such a dialogue as soon as possible. (U)

General Scowcroft: The President feels that way, too. He looks for opportunities in his travels that would make that possible. The President would also be pleased to welcome the King here. There have been several phone calls, but phone calls are not enough. There is much to talk about, with the world changing so rapidly. There is also the peace process and Lebanon, issues in which Morocco has been an intimate participant. There is also what is going on in the south of Morocco. (C)

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Foreign Minister Filali: In the Middle East, you are more informed than we are because you are involved in the initiative between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We know our information from our Embassies and the press. However, as the chair of the Arab Summit, His Majesty has the duty, in conformity with Arab League Summit resolutions, to do something regarding the Palestinian issue. We did not move because we were looking at what you were doing. But last month the Palestinians asked for the Arab League committee to activate its efforts; we in turn asked our Arab League partners for a reaction. What is your feeling about the situation now that the Sharon crisis (in Israel) has happened. (C)

General Scowcroft: We thought that before the latest Israeli government crisis, that we were on the verge of a tripartite meeting of foreign ministers as the final step before a dialogue between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Sharon's resignation may strengthen Shamir's hand, rather than weaken it. We hope that before alternative courses are examined, we should let this process work itself out. If we can get to the tripartite meeting, we can begin to see useful steps. But, a diversion now would be harmful. In any case, we should know shortly, and I hope that you can hold off long enough to see the prospects from the current course. (C)

Foreign Minister Filali: In the Middle East dispute, Morocco has always tried to play a positive role. Frankly, we are disturbed about what is going on and we feel that we need more coordination. As the chair of the Arab League Summit, His Majesty is submitted to pressure. We do not know the real objective to this initiative, and we need concrete information from time to time to help us with our other partners, especially the Palestinians. (C)

General Scowcroft: I agree. We will try to do that. We do need your help with the Palestinians. Every step in this process has been very, very fragile. (C)

Foreign Minister Filali: Are you optimistic? (U)

General Scowcroft: I am fairly confident regarding the tripartite meeting. Then, that will be a good indication for the dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians. (C)

Foreign Minister Filali: What will the tripartite meeting do? (U)

General Scowcroft: It will address some of the necessary details for the dialogue. Each side has preconditions that must be built around in some way. It would occur within the next two weeks or so? (C)

David Welch: The tripartite meeting could address questions for the dialogue such as who comes, what do they talk about, where will it happen, and when. (C)

Filali: On another subject, Lebanon still frustrates us. (C)

Scowcroft: It is endlessly frustrating. We supported the Taif process and (President) Hrawi. We have called upon (General) Aoun to step down. I don't know what more we can do with the leverage we have. The recent fighting between Christian factions is deplorable. Yet, Hrawi seems ambivalent about engaging himself. What is your view? (C)

Filali: Taif was the best agreement for the circumstances. There is now a point of view among the Arabs. Foreign interventions -- Syrian, Israeli, Iranian, and Iraqi -- have complicated the situation. We can't do anything more. We are ready to help implement the Taif accord, but the issue is also between the Lebanese, and that is the main problem. They are fighting for leadership and it is impossible to help in that situation. We had an important dispute in July with the Syrians -- but we decided it was not realistic to ask Syria to leave in 48 hours. But if Syria fights now, it will be genocide. The six-month term of the tripartite committee is over now, and we have reported to the Arab League. If the Arab states have something else in mind, we will see. (C)

General Scowcroft: What do you think are Syria's intentions? (C)

Foreign Minister Filali: There are many contradictions in Syrian policy toward Lebanon. [REDACTED] (b)(1)

[REDACTED] But one must have the possibility to achieve it, and Syria does not have that. The dreams of a greater Syria are 50 years old. The contradiction is that Syria's response to the events in Lebanon has been to involve Iran and strengthen Hizballah. That is very dangerous for the Eastern Mediterranean and the equilibrium of the area -- and Syria is responsible. That is the contradiction: they would like to absorb Lebanon yet they emplace foreign elements there. (C)

General Scowcroft: That is not an encouraging analysis. (C)

Foreign Minister Filali: Syria is working within the Taif accord. I don't know until when they will do so, but they have agreed to work within the accord and to help Hrawi. They are doing so. There may also be some problems now with Iran in Lebanon. (C)

General Scowcroft: We would like to be helpful but we don't know what more we can do. (C)

Foreign Minister Filali: Regarding the Western Sahara issue, the United Nations Secretary General's personal representative will be in Morocco tomorrow. The Secretary General is coming on March 22. In November 1989, I told him it was the best time to move the Western Sahara plan ahead. He said then that Namibia had priority; plus, he had financial problems in the UN. Now, the priority is on this problem. I hope that during his visit he will offer practical proposals. I hope for a referendum before the end of the year.

There are two reasons: One, to end this bloody war; and, two, we have started positive relations with Algeria. There are embassies, confidence between the heads of state, economic and political cooperation, and the Arab Maghreb Union. To stabilize the area, we need to finish this dispute. We are worried that if Europe dominates attention, then our area will lose priority. That is one reason why we seek to stabilize our area. We hope for U.S. support with the Secretary General. (C)

Foreign Minister Filali: Morocco and the United States have always had contact. We are on a strategic point along the straits of Gibraltar. Our relations are good and improving with Spain and Portugal. It has always been our spirit to discuss between our four nations what is going on in this area. Even though Eastern Europe is changing, geography remains constant. I hope that the meeting between the President and the King takes place as soon as possible, so we can discuss all of these things. (C)

General Scowcroft: That would be useful. It is true that while the overall threat may be reduced, geography is still there. (C)

Ambassador Benjelloun: History is still there too -- Morocco was the first to recognize the United States. (C)