

~~SECRET~~

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Presidential Phone Call to King Hussein of Jordan

PARTICIPANTS: The President
King Hussein
Richard Haass, NSC
Ralph Sigler, WHSS

DATE, TIME: August 5, 1990 - 6:37pm-6:57pm
AND PLACE: Situation Room

The President: Hello, this is George Bush.

King Hussein: Good evening sir, how are you?

The President: I'm fine.

King Hussein: Thank you very much for returning my call.

The President: I'm sorry I wasn't available when you called earlier. We just concluded another meeting on this depressing problem of Iraq and Kuwait. That's why I wasn't able to take your call earlier.

King Hussein: Thank you for returning my call. We are doing everything possible here. Tomorrow I am receiving Saudi Foreign Minister to see how we proceed from here. I understand you have been expressing displeasure with me and wanted to know if there is anything I can do.

The President: Very candidly, I'm very concerned. We've been friends for a long time so I'll be direct. I am disappointed in what I am hearing. You mentioned to me the need for 48 hours for an Arab solution. The papers today are reporting on your visit and your views, which seem to me to be leaning far more to Saddam Husayn, rather than along with world opinion, which is one of outrage. Maybe I misinterpreted but westerners and others in the area, including the Soviets, are very concerned. Saddam Hussein

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 12958,
AS AMENDED

~~SECRET~~

Declassify on: OADR

98-0099-P/3
12 Oct 04 LT

~~SECRET~~

2

said he was pulling out but he is going the other way, we are very worried about it. We will do all we can with our allies and friends to bring full sanctions against Saddam Husayn; we are very serious, this is not just a passing matter, we cannot have a puppet government in Kuwaiti. This is the feeling of everyone I have talked to, and I've had the phone glued to my ear.

King Hussein: I've always been frank with you and I don't want you to be disappointed with me. We are old friends. I respect and treasure our friendship, and I'm afraid you've gotten the wrong impression. I'm concerned you're not getting a clear picture. I have always been against violence, the use of force to gain territory in this case and others, and continue to feel this way, but the problem is, I know these people. They are not easily intimidated, and things may end up going the other way. I was surprised by Saddam's move. I have been trying my best. We almost had agreement to a Arab Summit but it was scuttled. I am in touch with the Saudis and Saddam and will try to change the situation and restore calm. However, if I take a clear position, I cannot continue this role. I see a buildup on both sides and this could have disastrous effects for the whole area. I have been trying it my way, but if you disagree I will stop.

The President: I understand the difficult position you are in. We understand the complexities, but I'm concerned about the appearance that a puppet government will be accepted or that Iraq will continue to control Kuwait. The invasion must be reversed. I'm trying to get total solidarity on this. I'll try again tomorrow when I meet with the NATO Secretary General and Prime Minister Thatcher. Our view is that Saddam Hussayn will only understand solidarity. I'm pleased the Soviets agree. I'm worried that he's looking for a solution that will allow him to stay in Kuwait. That would be bad for a lot of countries in the Gulf and for economic order in the world. This is not just some exercise; we view this problem with ultimate seriousness. We don't want to see chinks in our unified armor. I salute your efforts, but what is coming out in the papers is that Jordan is on the other side. This will hurt our relationship.

King Hussein: I understand, but the articles in the newspaper have taken me out of context. The Washington Post ran only segments of a very long television interview broadcast in London.

The President: I accept and respect your word. But, I have to tell you that China is citing Jordan as the reason they will not go as far as everyone else in actions against Iraq. China may still join our effort, but they cite Jordan's position as showing

~~SECRET~~

division in the Arab world. That kind of problem is what's on our policymakers minds. We must convince Saddam Hussayn that the status quo is not acceptable. We cannot accept that. Because of your unique position, maybe there is some way you can convince Saddam Husayn. I am pleasantly amazed by the global solidarity. Some leaders have equated this man with Hitler. Two leaders, one from a small country, one from a large one, told me we've had a Hitler before and can't accept another. Sir, I just hate to see this come between us.

King Hussein: I have spent all my life working with the Gulf states. But I'm aware there is a window, and I'm trying my best to keep it open. But if you think this is wrong, I will stop.

The President: No, I won't ask you to do that, but I would be less than a friend if I told you your position hasn't hurt. Now, let me tell you that we have firm intelligence that Saddam Hussayn is moving tanks toward Saudi Arabia. Trust me, I'm not making this up. This is why I'm so concerned. Saddam Husayn told everyone he was not going to go into Kuwait. He told the Saudis this and then within 24 hours he went in. He lied to everyone, but on the positive side, this is what mobilized world opinion against him. What I've told you is sensitive, but it will eventually get out with the press. I don't know how Saddam Hussayn will explain his armament moving south.

King Hussein: This also worries me. If this is the case, I will do everything to make him keep his commitment. But if he feels threatened, encircled, I know his psyche.

The President: But he didn't feel threatened before going into Kuwait?

King Hussein: I will keep trying to get him to keep his assurances.

The President: I understand. Many agree this is not acceptable. The sand is moving through the glass fast.

King Hussein: I know your information is serious. I will do everything to check on it. We have been in the past and remain against the use of force. I am doing my best. I am seeking no interest for myself. I am at the end of my political life and want to leave something as my legacy. I am working every minute to solve this.

~~SECRET~~

4

The President: I don't doubt that for one second. As a friend, I fully accept your word. But, the only solution is a total withdrawal and the restoration of the Kuwaiti leadership. We're determined in our action. I'm delighted we had this chance to talk and anything you can do would be much appreciated.

King Hussein: Thank you very much Mr. President.

The President: Goodbye.

King Hussein: Goodbye.

~~SECRET~~