

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMCON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: The President's Meeting with Sheikh Sabah al-Sabah of Kuwait

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Secretary Baker
Governor Sununu
Brent Scowcroft
Marlin Fitzwater
Richard Haass
Edward Gnehm, Jr.
Sandra Charles

Not H.S.

Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Sabah
Sheikh Abdul Wahhab Al-Fawzan, Minister of Health
Ambassador Saud Nasser al-Sabah

DATE, TIME August 14, 1990, 5:00 - 5:20 p.m. EST
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

Sheikh Sabah: The Amir sent you a message that he is ready to help in any way. He thanks you and all the people of the United States for standing with us. (Ø)

The President: You have strong support from us to assist in getting Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait and the rightful rulers restored. I don't know if one way is better than another frankly. That was what her hypothetical question was about. The answer is he goes back and takes his forces out, and the rightful government takes its place. The proposal that Saddam made is to shift the emphasis from his aggression and is not really a proposal at all. It can't be linked, it's a crazy proposal. If we saw any basis we would be willing to make a proposal, but we didn't see anything positive in it. He was clearly trying to divert attention away from his aggression and stir up people against Kuwait and the United States. (Ø)

Sheikh Sabah: Everyone in Kuwait is looking to U.S. help to be free. They will be happy to hear this from you again. I will take this message to the people of Kuwait. (Ø)

The President: They have had to put up with some bad stuff. Your Ambassador was here the other day telling us. (U)

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Sheikh Sabah: They have stolen gold from the market, and cars. Homes are being destroyed. The Crown Prince's home was burned. They attacked the palace. The Amir had five minutes to escape. (Ø)

The President: It's good fortune that he got away. Were you there? (Ø)

Sheikh Sabah: I was at the Ministry. The Kuwaitis came and forced me to leave in a helicopter. (Ø)

The President: Did they catch any ranking Kuwaiti officials? (Ø)

Sheikh Sabah: No. (U)

The President: Can I ask you a hypothetical question? What would he have done if Iraqi forces had captured a high official? Like the Amir or someone from the Foreign Ministry? Would they take him back to Baghdad or kill him? (Ø)

Sheikh Sabah: They almost caught me. Thank God, I got out. Still for your information all the soldiers are tired. They are trading their weapons for dishdashas and staying in Kuwait. They don't want to go back. (Ø)

Secretary Baker: The number of desertions is growing. (Ø)

Sheikh Sabah: They are thirsty and are not allowed to drink cokes. There is no national feeling. They are not allowed in the presidential area. They use a tank to patrol it. (Ø)

The President: Do the people back Saddam or do they have to because he is so ruthless? (Ø)

Sheikh Sabah: They can't say no. And it's become sad. You could see us helping Saddam for the last eight years. He is changing because he does not want to pay money. We didn't ask him to pay. He says we were stealing his oil. The Rumayllah oilfield is ninety percent inside Iraq. The territory we have is only ten percent. Our daily output is only 12,000 barrels. We used the field in 1976 even before the war. (Ø)

The President: He claims you are taking his oil? (Ø)

Sheikh Sabah: Stealing. (U)

The President: Well, I wish you well. There are lots of anxious families with sons and daughters over there. But it is the principle. We have to work with others to focus on the principle. Aggression of this nature can't go unpunished or rewarded. Kuwait needs to be free, Saddam needs to get out. There is no other answer. Frankly, I'd like to see the Iraqi people rise up against Saddam. But I don't see it happening. That would be the best way to get rid of him and get his troops out. But it's wishful thinking. (Ø)

Sheikh Sabah: The Amir sends you his respects. He thanks you for your interest. One thing I wanted to mention is that we would like to have weapons for our resistance. (S)

The President: We should be able to help on that. Let me get with our defense people. Will you see Secretary Cheney while you are here? (S)

Sheikh Sabah: Tomorrow. This would be part of our common defense effort. We need to go forward. We are looking for help for the Mirage and Skyhawks. (S)

Governor Sununu: You also need to continue radio communications into Iraq and Kuwait to keep the pressure on. (S)

Sheikh Sabah: They are jamming. We have broadcasts from Monte Carlo, London, Bahrain. It is easy to contact them now. We are trying to coordinate this. (S)

The President: Well, good luck to you and thanks. My respects to His Highness and the rest who are in Saudi Arabia. We are determined to continue to assist in every way we can. I am glad others have pitched in strongly. I know this has been a hard time for your family. (S)

Sheikh Sabah: Yes. I now will go to London, Paris, Moscow, China and Tokyo. (S)

The President: That's a big trip. My best to you, sir. (U)