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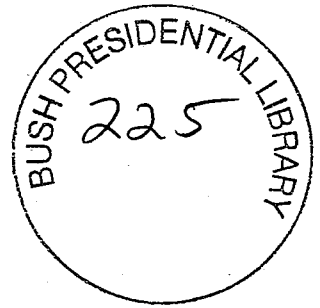
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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON



MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: The President's Meeting with Foreign Minister
Yusuf bin Alawi of Oman (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
Brent Scowcroft
Robert Gates
DAS Jock Covey, State
Sandra Charles, NSC

Not H.S.

Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi
Ambassador Shanfari

DATE, TIME: August 28, 1990, 4:45 - 5:15 p.m. EST
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President and Foreign Minister Alawi began their discussion after a brief press interview. (U)

The President: Well, she asked a very good question. And your statement was excellent. Is there any chance of his complying? Thus far negotiations aren't leading to anything. Unless there is a total Iraqi withdrawal on the basis of the UN resolutions, it will otherwise be for naught. I would like to hear your views however. (S)

Minister Alawi: First, His Majesty sends you his greetings. He wants to express his appreciation for the U.S. stand in the crisis. It not only is a threat to Kuwait but to the whole area. There has been stability in the region for the last century or more. It will be dramatic if the policy of Saddam Hussein are allowed to go through and spoil this. If he succeeds, then four years from now there will be another move in another area. We all of us, His Majesty, appreciate your and the United States' stand taken to make clear to all that it is not the time to play politics. It is over. We think Saddam, based on experience, while he feels the pressure, is not at his limits. When it is at a maximum, he will retreat. (S)

The President: You mean economic? (U)

Minister Alawi: All kinds. He is not much concerned economically but about others more. Economically, Iraq can absorb this over time. It won't make him feel serious enough to reverse his course. (S)

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The President: What about military action? (S)

Minister Alawi: This is the only way to see him get out. (S)

The President: Then the question is, with the United States there, and recognizing that there is lots of fire power, does it give others in the Arab world pause? Because they can't be with the United States so they must be with Saddam Hussein. Then that makes it Arabs versus the US, not the world against him which is what it is. If we use military force, even if we were provoked -- but I must tell you if he took Saudi Arabia, we would win. (S)

Minister Alawi: But you won't use force if not provoked. But if he is allowed to take Kuwait, then 5 or 10 years from now he will take something else. (S)

The President: You're right. How do you get military action going? If sanctions don't work, then what? Where do you go? We have been discussing this at length. (S)

Minister Alawi: | (b) (1)

(b) (1) Those two
add no credibility to the status of Iraq in public or in private. No one is suggesting war should be declared. There are other ways to make use of the military. You discussed this in your conversation with His Majesty. You heard His Majesty's views. He also conveyed President Rafsanjani's views. After your conversation with His Majesty, I went to Tehran and had two sessions with Rafsanjani. He does not support Saddam. Some have asked them to join the pressure against Saddam to corner him. He talked about the possibility then of joining the military blockade. He said he might be willing but... (S)

The President: On sea or land? (S)

Minister Alawi: On the sea, but requested that they need to prepare for such a move. When he got the news that Saddam had accepted the 1975 accord, it did not make him change his view. He said that Arab and Iran relations are different from Iran/Iraq relations. His confidence and position were reflected in his speech on Friday. He again agreed that it was necessary for foreign troops to push Iraq out of Kuwait. I told him that the real issue was US-Iran relations. I informed him of the themes of His Majesty and your conversation. He was very interested. The President is openminded to any ideas and proposals. He would like to put the past behind and work out the future. He had nothing to ask from the United States except that you look at Iranian affairs differently now. There was a reference to assets as well as arms in the United States which they own. (S)

The President: They paid for some but they were not released. (S)

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Minister Alawi: They are still in warehouses. (C)

The President: Yes, but that is clearly tied with the hostages. Can they do something there? (C)

Minister Alawi: I told him that it was all tied up in the hostage issue. He is committed to do his best to free the hostages but wants Israel to release five from Lebanon so he can work the release of the hostages with the Lebanese groups. I said Israel will then ask for their two or three soldiers. I asked him whether he was prepared to help with these Israeli soldiers and he said he was. But they don't know if they are there or not. But without these Lebanese released by Israel he said it would be hard for him to go about this. He needs to make a quick move. He said to tell President Bush now is the right time to finalize this. (C)

The President: Is it? We had a message from the other side that said it was not as good. They didn't think this was the right time. It was Ozal. The Turks got the feeling that first in particular they were not going to sell out to Iraq. There was a deal working and the prince was not Iran joining Iraq. He wants to see Saddam out of Kuwait. But he was not sure this was the time for improved relations with us. Apparently, he is under fire from Montashemi. He's a wild man. He makes a moderate statement and then he gets condemned for it. But I am very interested in your remarks. (C)

Minister Alawi: I asked him about that. He said he knows there is a feeling here that he does not have a free hand because of the radicals. He thinks we know this from information from Iranians from the outside who are anti-regime. He told me if we decide as a government, then we go. We have these people in the Majlis, we pay them lipservice. When it serves us, we do it. I was one of the few who talked to Rafsanjani in the Khomeini period. He is strong enough then to form a foreign policy. They are ruling by troika. The President, Khomeini and the Speaker of the Parliament. There is political coordination between them. The other two were appointed by Rafsanjani. He appointed Khomeini after the death of Khomeini. (C)

The President: Can Rafsanjani put him out? like if they were to fight? (C)

Minister Alawi: Yes. There is no doubt in my mind he will keep the three powers in hand. (C)

The President: Did he mention that we were making progress on the claims because we have? (C)

Minister Alawi: Yes. (U)

General Scowcroft: We have settled most of them, but not the military ones. (C)

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The President: We have a problem with sending arms to Iran whether they are paid for or not. It would be a contradiction. They were sold to different folks who were friendly. (S)

Minister Alawi: But today things are different. (S)

The President: Right. We will look at it. They have changed. And there has been an intervening event. (S)

Minister Alawi: This will need to be finalized one day. There should be consideration to build a power balance between Iraq and Iran. People believe that Kuwait happened because of the power imbalance. You gave Iraq access to arms and intelligence for a time and kept Iran away. Now, whatever happens in the crisis, we must rebuild the balance. There are two choices. We can't form a power balance to Iran and Iraq. It is impossible for the GCC even together. And we can't rely on Egypt because of its economic problems. So there are two choices: to keep the west in the Arabian Peninsula for an indefinite time or find ways to balance these two nations, not in a superpower way, but as in the past by keeping them watching each other. His Majesty feels we must find ways to take Iran on board and get them involved. How is the question. We don't know. Now Rafsanjani has offered military assistance to small countries like Bahrain. (b) (1)

(b) (1)

The President: What about a deal with Iraq? Is there no quid if they stay out? (S)

Minister Alawi: No. Iraq demanded that they forget in the resolution on compensation and the investigation and banishment of the aggressor. There was no deal. Negotiations are going on but nothing was expressed by Iraq to Iran. Iranians don't trust Saddam Hussein. Whatever he proposes, they won't take seriously. But Iran will see how the crisis goes; if they think Saddam might make it, then maybe they will work with him. Now they are not interested in anything with him. (S)

The President: I appreciate this message very much. It has given us food for thought. Some day we will have improved relations. It was right for you to raise the hostages with him. That is the sine qua non, it is essential. Given the changes in their belligerent status, maybe there is an opening. (S)

Minister Alawi: What is the status of the airbus compensation? (S)

Mr. Gates: We are waiting for some information from them. (U)

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Minister Alawi: They said you have more spares and other items in warehouses. They would like to purchase some things. The figure they mentioned was \$1 billion for parts procurement. He is willing to buy these things and to pay cash for them. (S)

The President: You are seeing Secretary Baker. I would like you to spend time with him on His Majesty's and your views on the concept of how united we can get Saddam out of Kuwait. We have different views on it. We worry about lingering. If there is no decision, if nothing happens, there may be an opportunity for him to gain mob support. We don't want him to get the chance. Some people mention having elections in Kuwait. That is a nonstarter. It falls short of the UN resolution. The status quo unfortunately creates ideas like this. We need to stay together on our objectives to achieve them. Please convey my respects and thanks to His Majesty. I know he felt there was a chance to have Iran back in the happy family of nations. Maybe that time is at hand. (S)

Minister Alawi: There is a lobbyist for Saddam in Tehran. He is riding on Islamic tradition. He is trying to make himself into another Khomeini. But they won't listen because the wind in Iran is not to forgive. (S)

The President: They lost a lot of lives, a lot of children on both sides. I have not forgotten my memorable visit to your country. (S)

Minister Alawi: His Majesty hopes you will come again at an appropriate time. (S)

-- End of Conversation --

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