

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with President Bendjedid of Algeria (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Bendjedid of Algeria
Intepreter: Shukran Kamal
Notetaker: C. David Welch

DATE, TIME August 29, 1990, 3:37 - 4:10 p.m. EST
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President initiated the call.

The President: Hello, my friend, how are you? Can you hear me?
(U)

President Bendjedid: (In English) Hello, Mr. President, I am fine. How are you? (U)

The President: Mr. President, it is good to talk to you again. I know that my Ambassador, Chris Ross, has spoken with your people about the Gulf crisis, but really I'm calling to solicit your personal views and some advice from an old friend. With your permission, a couple of points, and then I will ask your advice that you can share with me. (Ø)

President Bendjedid: Please. (U)

The President: It looks like we share the same goal, laid out in Security Council Resolution 660: get Iraq out of Kuwait. Our best instrument is strict compliance with the sanctions. We feel international support is very solid. Shortly, 22 countries are going to be on the ground and at sea, and that's a truly impressive demonstration of international, but also, we think, of Arab solidarity. What is lacking is any sincere Iraqi interest in an acceptable diplomatic solution. And, Foreign Minister Ghozali's trip was really illuminating to me. I read the report from our people with great interest. It showed that Saddam Hussein is not yet ready to listen to reason. Let me tell you, we would prefer a viable negotiation, not a military solution, but given the UN actions, any negotiation must be based on Iraq getting out and Kuwait's legitimate government coming back. Last point, sir -- the question of the hostages. Saddam Hussein calls them guests. This treatment of innocent civilians is really brutal and again the conscience of the world. We want our people free, but we will not trade our policies for them. The policies

won't be held hostage because he is holding innocent civilians. I can't look at it that way. I greatly respect Algeria's positions. I appreciate your decision to explore Iraqi thinking. Very constructive effort. Well, I've done all the talking, and I would appreciate any advice or thoughts that you have. (Ø)

President Bendjedid: I thank you for the confidence you placed in me and Algeria and I am happy to share views on the dangerous situation in the Gulf area. I do not wish to address the UN resolutions because we are committed to them. I would like to affirm Algeria's position, Mr. President, and would like to affirm that this position will not change. We continue our efforts to persuade Iraq to comply with the UN resolutions and depart Kuwait. Algeria's effort is within the framework of the UN resolutions -- Iraq should withdraw and be replaced by Arab troops who would assist in the restoration of the legitimate government. Secondary issues would be resolved in time. Most important point is for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait; all other secondary issues in the conflict would be resolved in due time. We hope the United States will show flexibility so that we can have time to deal with the parties involved and the main issue, because our preference is for a peaceful solution. We should do all we can; if we reach a dead end, the situation will become more difficult. If that should happen, the Algerian position will be clarified more at that time. (Ø)

The President: That's very interesting. What do you mean, sir, by U.S. flexibility? (Ø)

President Bendjedid: What I mean is that we do everything we can for a peaceful solution to the crisis. What I am saying is try to avoid any action leading to armed conflict. (Ø)

The President: Certainly we are trying to do that. We have a collective obligation to enforce sanctions, not just us, but all the countries that subscribe to the sanctions should do their part to see that they are enforced. I would hope Saddam Hussein will not resist the implementation of sanctions, not only on the sea but elsewhere. (Ø)

President Bendjedid: What I mean by flexibility is we avoid any military explosion in the area because it would impede all efforts for a political solution. (Ø)

The President: I see that. Will he continue to hold the Americans, Brits, Germans, Japanese, Arabs, and others? Or, will he free them, do what is civilized and decent? (Ø)

President Bendjedid: I have had contacts with numerous Arab and non-Arab officials and delegations. As a result of those contacts, I still see a glimmer of hope that Iraq will comply with international resolutions. As long as there is hope I still see a role for Algeria to persuade Saddam Hussein to abandon its

radical policies and turn to the other issues that remain unresolved in the area. (Ø)

The President: I hope that is right. Last question -- I am worried about an old friend, King Hussein. He came to see you; I saw some beautiful pictures of your meeting. I wonder how his pulse is and how you see his dilemma at this point? (Ø)

President Bendjedid: He is in fact in a difficult position. But however, I have found that he remains resolute and committed to his position, which is a just position. He is not inclined to favor the Iraqi position and there may be some personal factors involved in that. I do think Jordan's position is reasonable and constructive because it is designed to deal with the question in depth, that is the question of Kuwait. (Ø)

The President: Well, that's good to hear. For understandable reasons he has been portrayed as on Saddam Hussein's side. He has hurt himself in the west, here to some degree as well, and in the Gulf. He is a good man, and I want to see him come out of this in good shape. (Ø)

President Bendjedid: The way Jordan is pursuing finding a peaceful solution is not the only way. There are many approaches being pursued. What I would like to say is that we will continue our approach and will continue our contacts with you, particularly if something develops of an important nature. We will contact you and exchange views on these matters because it is important to do so to keep peace and avoid international catastrophes. (Ø)

The President: I was confident you would feel this way. We will try to show what you call flexibility but I am increasingly concerned about events. It is almost inconceivable what he is doing to innocent civilians. But I'll try to show what you call flexibility. (Ø)

President Bendjedid: I share your concern for the innocent civilians. I will do everything we can to resolve their plight peacefully and satisfactorily. We are not only concerned about the Arabs but about all foreign nationals. We will do all we can. (Ø)

The President: Good luck, my friend. Very nice talking to you again. (U)

President Bendjedid: I thank you too. It is good we talked. Thank you for your confidence in me. We will continue our efforts for the cause of peace. (U)

The President: Good luck, sir. Thanks. (U)

-- End of Conversation --