

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Call to the UN Secretary General (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar
Notetaker: Sandra Charles

DATE, TIME September 5, 1990; 2:05 - 2:12 p.m. EDT
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Javier, how are you? (U)

Secretary General: Hello, George. How are you? (U)

The President: Welcome back, world traveler. (U)

Secretary General: You know by the press about my trip -- disappointing but as expected. But I wanted to expose them. (S)

The President: You did a wonderful job. As we discussed before you left, it was a difficult job. But the fact that you went communicates interest in diplomacy while keeping our principles. On the surface, we agreed you were not going to get any progress. But the fact you went shows that we were willing to follow the diplomatic route. I think you had it right. Iraq is just locked into to its position. But actually, Javier, I called to get your insights and views. (S)

Secretary General: I had two objectives: not to concede a word, not even to save time. They didn't want to break the talks, but I didn't want to be used either. I didn't want to cede political points to them. I repeated to them international public opinion. I was not prepared to conceal the truth. I told him I would give him a change to go check with his leader to see if he could get something positive. I proposed that we go to Geneva in the next 2-3 days once he had a reaction from his leader. I was persuaded that he wanted to maintain his position, but not to break the channel of communication. I told him I was at their disposal provided they did something positive. (S)

The President: I don't know where we go from here. He makes that I should talk to him. But I make that the United Nations should be the conferee and the Secretary General should keep his hands on this. I will help him to keep communications open with you. No one has been killed yet. And I think we need to continue to enforce sanctions. He gave a terrible speech today, Javier. (S)

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Secretary General: The day before yesterday I had a long discussion with King Hussein. This is for you only. I was not authorized to say anything to anyone. I listened and he said they had decided it was time to accept a withdrawal. But by who this is being said, I don't know. He is supposed to be in Baghdad today. I told him he should tell Saddam how his international position is. He is the only person who tells him the truth. (S)

The President: Do you think he will tell him? (S)

Secretary General: He is an honest man. (S)

The President: I feel sorry for him. He is caught in a difficult place. I have liked and respected him for a long time. In this case, he has lost a lot of friends in America. But I think it can be remedied. (S)

Secretary General: I know he has been hurt with you. The rest of the Arabs also have been tough on him. (S)

The President: I know. Mubarak told a group of congressmen about his disappointment in him, that it was very personal. He said he was hurt, yet he knew it was tough for Hussein. (S)

Secretary General: I told Tariq Aziz that he was doing a major disservice. You can't speak of an Arab solution when the Arabs are divided. They never were united. There is no longer an Arab solution because there is no consensus. I told him I think an Arab solution is nonsense. The international community is involved and there are principles that will not be conceded. (S)

The President: I want to thank you on the part of everyone for your leadership. If you ever want to talk to me about what we should do or shouldn't do, I would appreciate a call. Are you in New York? (S)

Secretary General: Yes, I just got back this morning. I had a difficult time with the flu. (S)

The President: One last thing, what about their guests, or the hostages, as we call them? What he is doing is a crime against humanity. (S)

Secretary General: I told him it was not sufficient to keep women and children and hinder freedom of movement. They are all human beings. I told him I can't accept this human shield concept; it is against human rights. He said they were reconsidering on the question of the embassies in Kuwait. But it is not true. There has been no give at all. I think they are starting to feel the sanctions. (S)

The President: That's encouraging. (U)

Secretary General: They asked me to convey to the Security Council -- and I will do this tomorrow -- their need. They want the paragraph in the resolution discussed so they can receive medicine. They asked me to do this. They also asked me to tell the President of the United States that they are not going to ignite a war. They asked that you withdraw immediately, and I said in the case of what. Why should they leave when they have no reason to unless you give them something in exchange? You must make the first step. (S)

Mr. President: Well done. Thank you again for your mission. Good-bye. (U)

Secretary General: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --