

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Presidential Telephone Call to President Assad of Syria (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Assad
Interpreter: Shukran Kamal
Notetaker: Sandra Charles

DATE, TIME September 6, 1990, 8:29 - 8:44 a.m. EDT
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Hello, Mr. President, how are you? (U)

President Assad: Welcome, how are you? (U)

The President: It's good to hear your voice again. Good morning. Let me say at the beginning that I am greatly impressed by your resolute response to Iraqi aggression, and the fact that Syrian soldiers now stand on Saudi soil sends a powerful signal to Saddam Hussein that he has alienated much of the world and simply cannot benefit from his aggressive action. I've recently been talking with some optimism that, from the outcome of the Gulf crisis, will emerge some new world order. And part of it would be better and improved relations between the United States and Syria that I know you want and that I want. And let me add, Mr. President that I am very sincere in my desire to visit Syria and to speak to you directly. As you know from my recent letter, I'm not making a trip to the area within the next few weeks although I had some discussions on it. But in the meantime, and only if it is convenient for you, I have asked Secretary of State Baker to be prepared to stop in Damascus to meet with you on his current trip, but again only if it is convenient. I would like you to see him, but don't want to impose it on you. But if it is convenient, it would send a good signal. That was the purpose of my phone call. (S)

President Assad: Thank you very much Mr. President. As we spoke previously, Mr. President, on the situation about the invasion, Syria's position on the invasion remains unchanged. As I said before, no country can or should be allowed to wipe out of existence another country that is a member of the UN and the Arab League, or a country that is an independent and sovereign state. When our fellow Arabs in Saudi Arabia and the UAE became concerned and worried and requested our help, we responded and

complied and gave them assistance. We also emphasized that at the Arab Summit meeting. I share your wishes for improved relations between the United States and Syria and it would only be natural that matters would improve. During this lengthy period, there have been several discussions -- direct, indirect and numerous -- and I informed your Ambassador here a few days ago when I gave him my reply to your letter, Mr. President, I told him we welcome your visit to Syria. I also said the same to our other fellow Arabs with whom we were talking about the same subject. I said the same to them. I understand all these circumstances because I had discussions with my fellow Arabs not long ago about them. With regard to Secretary Baker's visit, I would welcome seeing him. (S)

The President: Thank you, that gracious of you. I know there will be a fruitful discussion. I'll ask our embassy there to coordinate the timing most agreeable to you. (S)

President Assad: Thank you. I was just thinking that our Minister of Foreign Affairs was going to Italy, but I'm not sure if it was on the 13th or 14th. But that should be no problem anyway, we should see him. (S)

The President: It's very nice of you. I appreciate your taking this call, and I will look forward to a personal debrief from Secretary Baker when he gets back. (S)

President Assad: Thank you Mr President. I look forward to seeing Secretary Baker and hearing the results of the Summit from him. (S)

The President: That's right. He will be able to debrief you on what transpires with Gorbachev. We look forward to a solid Summit where we all stand together -- Syria, the United States and Soviet Union -- on the Middle East. That's what I hope comes out of my Summit with Gorbachev. And let me guarantee you and our other Arab friends who have stood behind the UN resolutions that there will be no secret deals or back room dealings with the Soviet Union that would undermine the solid front that Syria joined with so many other countries. (S)

President Assad: Thank you Mr. President, I wish you success and good health. (U)

The President: Thank you, sir, and good bye. (U)

President Assad: Good bye. Thank you. (U)

-- End of Conversation --