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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: President's Meeting with Prince Saud Al-Faisal,
Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia

DATE, TIME: October 9, 1990; 3:50 - 4:20 p.m.
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker, Secretary of State
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President and
Deputy for National Security Affairs
John Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for Near
East and South Asia
Marlin Fitzwater, Assistant to the President and
Press Secretary
Richard N. Haass, Senior Director, Near East and
South Asian Affairs, NSC
Sandra Charles, Director, Near East and South
Asian Affairs, NSC, Notetaker

Prince Saud Al-Faisal, Saudi Foreign Minister
Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Ambassador to the U.S.
Rihab Ibrahim Massoud, First Secretary

The President: Please convey my respects to His Majesty and thank him for the hospitality being given to U.S. forces and the understanding that goes with it. I know it's difficult because of the culture. I hope they maintain proper conditions so it won't strain the Kingdom and strain your kindness. Also please thank him for his support for others who are suffering. And convey my deep, heartfelt support. (S)

Prince Saud: His Majesty directed me to convey our thanks, and appreciation for your steadfast support for Saudi Arabia and for sending American boys to protect our country. This will remain in the hearts of every Saudi. In fact, the second most popular person in the Kingdom is George Bush. (S)

The President: I have no agenda or cards, I just think it's important to touch base from time to time. I know we have contacts through the Chairman and Secretary Cheney, and on the

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State side. I did have a couple things. First, I want to mention my distress with what happened in the West Bank. I know Saudi Arabia issued a good statement. At the UN it is essential we not permit Saddam Hussein to use this event with Israel to shift the focus. It was an ugly incident. We have spoken out. We need to think what we might do and how he might try to link the two. (S)

The other thing, from the Syrian general's statements, I have a sense -- that is the Egyptian and Syrian generals' statements -- that under no circumstances will their forces go on the offensive. I just wanted your feeling that it is not any different from our own position. (S)

Prince Saud: I think it was a translation problem. It is the same position we've taken; these forces are not there to attack anyone. It is not different from our position. (S)

The President: So if we take a collective decision, they won't opt out? (S)

Prince Saud: Frankly speaking the Egyptian and Syrian Presidents first believe that Iraq can't be seen to achieve any gains. A stalemate is improbable. There must be a solution that causes Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, and return to legitimacy, and removal of the threat from Saddam in the region. There is no difference in the position of Syria, Egypt and the U.S. (S)

In a telephone call with His Custodianship, he told me that after I see you to convey this position of our three countries, I should go back to Egypt and Syria -- before I see His Majesty -- on the results of our meetings. (C)

The President: I just wanted to be sure there was no slippage that I didn't know about. (C)

Prince Saud: They are solid. They have no interest not to be solid. Our, the Egyptian and Syrian positions are the same. Everyone is ready for this to end and to bring peace and stability to the region and the Arab world in general. There are no qualms, no questionings, no second thoughts. I want to convey to you His Majesty's thanks for the steadfastness from the United States, and your promise that you will see this through to the end. Both of us will cooperate to see it through. We want steadfastness in the end. I believe cooperation between our two countries has had positive effect in the Arab world. Syria will be firm in its course. (S)

The President: Is Morocco steady? I have heard rumors. (S)

Prince Saud: They did try an initiative. They worry about their North African neighbors. They need to hold with Algeria because of its position on the western Sahara. On Iraq and Kuwait they

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are steadfast. I have talked with all parties, and they are steadfast. On the Arab side, we can from Saudi Arabia work for any reaction, for any collective action taken. I want to mention one important issue: time. Sanctions are working to pressure Saddam. I want to say I am glad we are meeting today not yesterday with your budget problem. (S)

The President: We've bought some time. It's better today. (S)

Prince Saud: If you need any support, Saudi Arabia is fully behind the budget. (S)

Secretary Baker: One point we discussed in New York, it is important to pull back all the Arabs that have floated off.

Prince Saud: There is good news on one: Libya. (S)

General Scowcroft: I saw they made a statement. (U)

Prince Saud: They agreed to support us yesterday. If you get fifty percent from Qadhafi that's good. (S)

Secretary Baker: With reference to Yemen, they are on the Security Council and we need to get their support like we did the last time. Their vote on that was not expected and hit like a brick. Yemen is talking about stopping the propaganda. They appear to be coming back. (S)

Prince Saud: With Tunisia I get a feeling they might do something. (S)

Secretary Baker: We have been working carefully with Tunis. (S)

Prince Saud: They have one newspaper still, but it is not important, it has little circulation, but we are working to get their support. Whatever the future, with your cooperation we can deliver these countries. In the final analysis if action is taken, no one will react against our interests. I think -- I want to stress at this meeting -- the element of time. We agree in terms of sanctions on the side of the UN and the international community. But we worry. I see two mischief makers: Iraq and Israel. Iraq we know. Israel we don't. On the incident, you know the call Shamir made. You know their circular that was spread about their building a temple on the holy site. This fact causes us to think the quicker we resolve the Gulf situation the better. But there should not be linkages. We don't want them. Syria, Egypt and Morocco don't want any benefits to Saddam from any resolution on the Middle East. We are fully with you, however we know for sure the more time spent the more their ability to do mischief and use the crisis to their benefit. We live in the Arab world. Whatever reaction may affect the United States will affect Saudi Arabia even more. We are willing to accept even military action. We see two exceptions: first, a reoccurrence of yesterday's incident would threaten the whole situation; and second, what is happening in Kuwait. The country is being murdered. (S)

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The President: Brent had a good statement on that after the Amir's visit and Jim mentioned it at the UN. Brent, after the Amir left, expressed our views well. It was brought up at today's press conference. Our concern is enormous. With these ingredients I understand it changes everything on our thinking and timing. What distresses me is not so much their dismantling the industry but the confirmed brutality against the Kuwaiti people. (S)

Prince Saud: And there are the hostages, and their taking the babies out of incubators and shipping the incubators to Iraq. It appears to be the will of Saddam to destroy Kuwait and the Kuwaitis. It is important. It was curious to see Iraqi television coverage of his visit to Kuwait. It was unashamed exposure of his willfulness. There was no better example than his visit to Kuwait. (S)

The President: I had two other questions: first, on the French, how was Mitterrand's visit? Is there separation on French participation? I am thinking there is not but I know they are edgy. And second, the Iran equation. (S)

Prince Saud: With the French, we expect them to go separately -- as they always do. They support the withdrawal by Iraq. Another thing, they are frustrated with Iraq. There was no difference in these elements in the King's talks with Mitterrand. (S)

The President: Did he raise with His Majesty elections and some democratization? (S)

Prince Saud: He made an explanation, but said the first element is withdrawal and return to legitimacy and the Amir's return. With democracy he said they are calling for it there like they do everywhere in the world. More important was that he agreed on the future threat of Saddam if he withdraws and legitimacy returns, and he remains as a continued threat. Mitterrand was solid on this as we are. That was very gratifying. (S)

We had meetings with the Iranians in New York, with the GCC Foreign Ministers and bilaterally with Velayati. On the Gulf they gave us staunch support. There are two elements for them: first the peace treaty with Iraq; and second, the situation in Kuwait which they see as separate. They are adamant about a withdrawal and adamant that there not be geographical changes. They do not want Saddam to accrue a political solution. They don't agree with any settlement that changes the geography of Iraq or Kuwait. (S)

Governor Sununu: So they don't want Iraq to get the islands? (S)

Prince Saud: Neither of the two islands should be in the settlement. They were very firm on the boycott. Bilaterally, we need a resolution on the Hajj. We have to work that out. They

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also gave a tacit agreement not to exploit the religious element of the deployment. We explained what Iraq would have done if there had not been a quick decision by the United States and Saudi Arabia. We told them we don't want them to thank us but to appreciate King Fahd's decision, and don't damage the cause toward an Iraqi withdrawal. They gave us assurances they won't exploit this or assist Iraq. We are going to work with them and Syria to make their position more forward leaning in their talks with Islamic organizations. (S)

On the Gulf, we see in Saudi Arabia new evidence of more Arab presence. More is coming in. The only limits are technical not political. All are willing, but many have limited capability. On the Soviet position, we think they will accept military action in the future if it is under a UN umbrella. They talked about military committee. Frankly, I told Shevardnadze you can talk about it, but the Military Committee has not been operating for 40 years, so in 6 months to one year such operations would not be achievable. He agreed it will take time to structure. There was no full commitment on a UN resolution. We both need to work on them on future UN resolutions if the time comes that sanctions work, and it will come. (S)

On the Chinese, if the Soviets go along, they won't say anything. They won't take forward action but would vote for when the time comes. They agreed there would no mischief on the presence of foreign troops. The Foreign Minister didn't mention foreign powers or the superpowers problem. We continue to say and to assure them that troops are there for a certain time, and they will leave when they are through. King Fahd and President Bush have stated this. They continue to worry so much that we told them you must have other information we and the United States don't have about their wanting a presence. If you don't, your saying so creates a dangerous position for us in Saudi Arabia, then you should stop. They promised to stop. (S)

The President: What about the World Bank loan? (S)

Prince Saud: We see it as part of a range of cooperation with us on Iraq. (S)

The President: We want closer normal ties. We want to give them MFN but they don't make it easy. Certain steps are needed to view this positively but there are not enough yet with congressional opposition on world bank loans. Then there was the Voice of America and the dissidents. Whatever, we are making strides. The Administration has tried to be supportive and not the Congress, but they know that. There are ways to do better with China. And there are good reasons to do better. We need to keep them with us on future resolutions. (S)

Prince Saud: If they support UN action, this is the way for them to get our support. (S)

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Secretary Baker: There is another way; someone could go here. We had a good meeting in New York. (S)

The President: A visit would help. (S)

Prince Bandar (to Secretary Baker): I think you just got thrown into the breach. (S)

The President: Please tell His Majesty I am very grateful.....(inaudible). (S)

Prince Saud: We need the Arab countries. Everything is set. Our options are open. If Iraq agrees, there can be a peaceful solution. There are three important elements: withdrawal and return to legitimacy and remove the regional threat; reaction in the Arab world -- I can safely say reaction in the Arab world would be positive, even on the military; and the third element, the international community with the Soviets and Chinese on board, opens a way. This is as good an international position as we could want to take any action. (S)

Before we go, I would like to return to one issue: an initiative by the U.S. to condemn the Temple Mount incident. I understand the linkage issue and we don't want it. We don't want Saddam to gain from this but an initiative by the U.S. in the Security Council is very important. I am not comfortable to leave this to delegates. It would help to have your personal involvement and Secretary Baker's. This would be the first test of the Arab world. We need to solve the crisis, and work on a resolution for the Middle East. (S)

The President: Jim, could you spend a few minutes after this and talk about this some more? It was good to have this talk. I wanted to be sure we are on same wavelength. We want no hodgepodge linkage that diminishes support for our efforts in the Gulf. (S)

Prince Saud: One last thing, I have to go see the newspaper men. I would like to say that we both condemned the incident. (S)

The President: We need to look at the UN resolution first. I said deplore today at the press conference. Let's go with that. (S)

-- End of Conversation --

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