

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone conversation with President Carlos Menem of Argentina (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Carlos Menem, President of Argentina  
Interpreter: Patsy Arizu  
Notetaker: Donald C. Johnson

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: January 19, 1991, 10:14 - 10:28 am EST  
Camp David

President Menem telephoned the President concerning the situation in the situation in the Gulf. (U)

The President: Hello, Carlos? (U)

President Menem: Yes, George. (U)

The President: (in Spanish) Como esta? (U)

President Menem: Very well, and you? (U)

The President: (in Spanish) Muy bien. Things are going reasonably well. (Ø)

President Menem: I was calling on that and also to tell you George that you can count on the support of the Argentine people. (Ø)

The President: That's important to me. Things are going as well if not better than we had hoped at this point in the battle. It is gratifying to the whole world that casualties seem to be kept to a minimum -- not only on our side of the coalition, but also among innocent civilians in Iraq. (Ø)

The coalition air forces have been superb. Our sophisticated weaponry has been more accurate than I would have dared to hope. I think that Saddam's brutal use of city-busting SCUD missiles shows a sign of desperation, and his desire to undo our coalition. But my friend, Mr. President, Carlos, tell me -- the worry I have now is about that point. Israel may or may not respond to these attacks. With your knowledge of the Middle East, I want to know if you have any advice on that point. (Ø)

President Menem: I think, George, that Israel should not get involved in this conflict. Israel should wait to the limit of its patience. We've been sending a message of this type to the Israeli Government. The best way for things to finish is with this incredible weaponry. If Israel comes to the end of its patience, and attacks, I don't think that Syria will fight against the coalition. (Ø)

The President: We're trying to cool the passions in the area. Israel showed great restraint after the first SCUD missile attack. But it's increasingly difficult to get Israel to keep showing restraint, because their people are asking what the government there is going to do to protect its own people. (Ø)

President Menem: I believe, George, that we have to avoid another attack on Israel. Of course the Israelis have the right to defend themselves. After all, Israel is a country which has been attacked by Iraq. The Arab allies have also been attacked by Iraq. I don't think it will be so difficult to control other countries in the Arab world. We'll do everything possible to help you out -- to finish this conflict. We'll back any resolution to stop the war. If the UN asks us to do more, we want to do so. (Ø)

The President: Well, I appreciate this very much. The coalition will hold together. Things are going better than we had hoped. I pray that Saddam will throw down his arms, that we can stop the bloodshed, and start working on what we call the New World Order. (Ø)

President Menem: This seems very good to me. I too, in the name of the Argentine people, want to thank you for all you are doing for the cause of peace. War is not good. If you want, I could call the President of Syria to talk to him, and tell him to stay in the coalition. (Ø)

The President: I don't see anything now, but it might be very useful, if we wake up to see that Israel has responded, that you call Assad and tell him that he should view this as self-defense, and that he should stay in the coalition. This would be extremely useful coming from you. (Ø)

President Menem: I agree, George. If such a situation takes place, I'll immediately call Assad. (Ø)

The President: Thanks, my friend, for calling. I can't begin to tell you how much this means to me, not only for the friendship -- and my gratitude for the help of the Argentine people. (U)

President Menem: Thanks for everything, my friend George. My love to your wife Barbara and your family. (U)

The President: Well, over and out, and thanks again. (U)

President Menem: Goodbye. (U)