

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez of Spain (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez
Interpreter: Patricia Arizu
Notetaker: Adrian Basora, NSC Staff

DATE, TIME January 21, 1991, 7:48 - 8:02 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: Camp David

The President telephoned Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez concerning the Gulf crisis. (U)

The President: Hello, buenos dias. (U)

Prime Minister Gonzalez: Good day. (U)

The President: I am calling just to check in on the Gulf crisis and cover a couple of points. If I sound bad, it is because I've got a head cold. First, I would like to thank you and Spain for the role you are playing. I have been fully briefed on the Spanish role and I am very grateful. Second, I would like to brief you on the situation on the Gulf, if you have a few minutes. (S)

Prime Minister Gonzalez: Yes, I would appreciate that very much. I am very interested. (S)

The President: The first days of the aerial campaign were very successful. Unfortunately, we have had bad weather for the last couple of days and therefore we don't have a full estimate of the damage. But, even without a full bomb damage assessment, the precision armaments are working well. We are confident that, if we haven't totally eliminated his nuclear installations, we have at least damaged them enough to set back his program. It will be years before they can be fired up. We are pleased with the way the Patriot anti-SCUD missiles are operating but, with the bad weather, he is still able to launch SCUDs against Israel and

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Saudi Arabia -- although we have countered some of them with our Patriots. (S)

So far, thank God, Israel has reacted with restraint. I hope they will continue to do so. But if the missile attacks continue, it will be hard for them not to respond. If they are hit again, they may do so even though we have intensified our targeting of western Iraq. (S)

Prime Minister Gonzalez: That's understandable. (S)

The President: We are starting to hit his Republican Guards in southeastern Iraq and Kuwait. We have total control of the air. Every time they have tried to fly against us, we have shot them down. The balance is 11-0. One of our early planes lost was shot down by a SAM, but we think that since then the rest have been hit by anti-aircraft fire. We control the skies, and when we turn to their forces in Kuwait, it will be very difficult for Saddam Hussein because he has never had to fight without having control of the skies. (S)

The coalition is holding quite well. You will hear cries from some quarters for a halt or a cease-fire. But all of the people I have talked to think that we should pursue our campaign until the objective is achieved. That's about where we are now. (S)

But what do you think? I would like to hear your views, and if you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them. (S)

Prime Minister Gonzalez: First, you can count on our cooperation, and we now have the full backing of the Parliament. (S)

The President: Wonderful. (S)

Prime Minister Gonzalez: We have gotten a 90 percent vote of support from Parliament, even though public support in Spain is weaker than in other countries. How do you foresee things unfolding from here on in? Do you think it will be a long war? (S)

The President: I don't really think so. Because of our cutting off of communications, Saddam Hussein and his commanders don't know how badly his facilities have been damaged. When they do realize the extent of the damage to military and to military-related targets, such as power plants, maybe someone will force him to quit. Maybe this is wishful thinking, however. (S)

Our softening up of the Republican Guards will be continuing for quite a while, until we soften them up more. Our search and destroy operations in Kuwait will also continue, until our planes

there finish the job. We are also continuing efforts to cut off supply lines in southern Iraq and Kuwait. (S)

At that point, perhaps his troops may run away, or perhaps they will stand and fight. If so, it will be very difficult for them. It won't be as difficult to dislodge him as people think. Having said that, it is impossible to predict exactly how long it will last. I have discussed this with the Turks, the Saudis, the Egyptians, and others close to the area, but no one can say for sure. That's about it; that's how I see it as of today. (S)

Prime Minister Gonzales: All right. I thank you so much, Mr. President, for the information. I think the current outlines of the international coalition should be kept as is, including its linkage to the United Nations. You will continue to have our support. (S)

The President: Thanks. I will be in touch later on and I appreciate everything that Spain is doing. (S)

Prime Minister Gonzalez: Very good, Mr. President. (U)

The President: Good bye. (U)

-- End of conversation --