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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with F.W. de Klerk  
of South Africa on February 4, 1991 (Ø)

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
F.W. de Klerk, President of South Africa  
Notetaker: Robert C. Frasure

DATE, TIME February 4, 1991, 9:45 - 10:05 a.m. EST  
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President telephoned President de Klerk to congratulate him on his February 1 speech.

President de Klerk: Good morning. How are you, sir? (U)

The President: Hello. I'm fine. I hope you are too. (U)

I wanted to call you to commend you on the vision you so clearly displayed on February 1 in your speech. It has gotten a lot of interest back here. People are favorably recognizing your commitment to progress. (U)

I just wanted to weigh in to show our support. (U)

We also are taking heart in the Mandela/Buthelezi accord. We had been encouraging them to talk. We are encouraged that all sides will be taking part in this multi-party conference and wanted you to know that as well. (Ø)

Finally, I want you to know that we will be moving as soon as possible on relief on the sanctions. You have my commitment to see that this will be done. (Ø)

There may still be a few hardliners around here on the sanctions issue. But I believe we will find an enthusiastic reception in the U.S. for what you have done. (Ø)

Also I want to thank you for your support on the Gulf. I saw Minister Botha on television the other night and I am very grateful to him for what he said. (Ø)

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So that was the purpose for my call. And I want to wish you well. (U)

President de Klerk: Thank you. May I say how much I appreciate what you have said about what I have announced. We had a little surprise for everyone on the Population Registration Act. We can move sooner than we had anticipated on that, although there may have to be some transitional measures on certain aspects. (Ø)

All of this was in the offing when I saw you in Washington. We have thus taken a series of unilateral actions. (Ø)

We have been gratified by the reactions inside the country. It has been supportive generally other than from the party to my right. (Ø)

The President: The Conservative Party? (U)

President de Klerk: Yes. (U)

And there has been a marvelous reaction internationally. We have even received support from unexpected quarters, Canada and Australia. (Ø)

The President: Good. I'm glad to hear that. (U)

President de Klerk: I was especially gratified by your support. We plan to turn words into deeds in this Parliament. This positive international response gives courage to our people. It is having a good effect here. A negative response would play into the hands of my political opponents. (Ø)

On the Buthelezi/Mandela meeting, we put pressure on them as well to get together. They agreed on some rules. It was not a policy accord. A key issue with them was the Constituent Assembly. And Buthelezi is against it. He takes the position that a sovereign state cannot have a void. That is supportive of our line of thinking. This accord will make a contribution to reducing violence among the Blacks. So it is a very important accord. (Ø)

It could be the opening up of the democratic process. That is the most important point. The accord recognizes the right of political dissent. In that sense, it is against intimidation. (Ø)

Another important development is the multi-party conference. The ANC accepts it. We have been asking for it. It makes for real negotiation, real consensus. Mandela made a quantum jump. Let's hope he sticks to it. (Ø)

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In sum, the positive factors for a negotiation are now stronger than the negative factors. (Ø)

We appreciate your assurances and your interest. (U)

On the Gulf War, we are taking a principled stand. I will convey your remarks to Minister Botha. (Ø)

The President: Thank you for that. (U)

President de Klerk: Our Muslims are divided on this. Some support Saddam Hussein. Others support the Saudis. (Ø)

There have also been some negative voices from the ANC. (Ø)

The President: Is that right? I had missed that. (U)

Präsident de Klerk: Some in the ANC went overboard on the issue. Mandela had to cool it, I believe. But there were strong negative voices. (Ø)

The President: That's too damn bad! How much control does Mandela have in that organization? Is he really in charge? (Ø)

President de Klerk: There are some pretty wild elements in the ANC. It is a coalition of forces in alliance with the South African Communist Party, as you know. It is hard to get them to become a political party and not a liberation movement. They need encouragement from everyone. What is required in the world community is pressure on them. (Ø)

Things are often not as simple as they seem. It is not all cream cakes and cool drinks. (Ø)

But Mandela realizes that there can be no winner-take-all system. We are working with him. I can tell you confidentially that there will soon be some high level discussions to talk about the remaining stumbling blocks to the multi-party conference. (Ø)

I must say it is positive at the leadership level. Mandela must not shirk from taking a lead. He must take courageous steps. (Ø)

The President: That is a very interesting update and I appreciate it. I talked to John Major the other day and he is as enthusiastic about the situation as I am. (Ø)

We are spending a lot of time here on the Gulf, as you can imagine. But I want to play a constructive role on South Africa, if we can. (Ø)

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President de Klerk: Are you satisfied with the way the war is going up to now?

The President: Yes. It is on schedule. We are continuing to do what we have to do. We are attacking their armor and their strategic positions. The bombing has been pin point for the most part. We have had fewer casualties than we had anticipated. Khafji was a disaster for them. The Republican Guards are not broken yet. I think support is high for the war in the U.S. We may have to use our ground forces but not yet. (S)

I'm satisfied so far. The hardships in Baghdad are legion. World opinion is on our side partly because of three things, the horrible things he has done to our prisoners, the Scud attacks and his environmental warfare. (S)

All of this has turned opinion against him. So I am satisfied that the plan is being implemented. But there could be some unforeseen developments. (S)

President de Klerk: We are thinking of you. Our stand is based on principle. We will stick with you. You have a heavy responsibility on your shoulders. But we have full trust in your leadership of the coalition. (S)

The President: Thank you. (U)

I don't know whether South Africa will be approached on any of these so called peace plans which are floating around. But you should know that we are not interested in any pauses. There will be no compromises. None of them is acceptable to me. There can be no rewards for aggression. It's not that we don't want peace. (S)

President de Klerk: There must be withdrawal from Kuwait. Aggression cannot be recognized. (S)

The President: That's right. And under the UN resolutions there must be reparations. (S)

We appreciate your support. (U)

President de Klerk: Thank you very much for your phone call. Please give my best wishes to Mrs. Bush. (U)

The President: All the best to you. I'll do that. Good bye. (U)

President de Klerk: Good bye. (U)

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