

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: February 8, 1991, 4:25 - 4:35 p.m. EST
Camp David

President Menem telephoned the President give him a progress report on the current situation in the Gulf. (U)

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

President Menem: Very well, George. (U)

The President: I'm just calling to check in with you. I had a very good meeting just an hour or two ago with your new Foreign Minister. And I want to go over some of the points I made to him in that meeting. (U)

President Menem: Of course, George, go ahead. (U)

The President: I thought I would give you a progress report on the situation in the Gulf. The air campaign is going well. We have total air supremacy, and right now we are using it to hammer away at the Republican Guard, and reduce his military machine. (U)

One point I wanted to reassure you on -- that we are intentionally not targeting civilians or holy sites. Obviously, there can be some collateral damage, but the bombing has been very precise, and most people who have looked into it understand it has been. (U)

No decision has been made as to a ground campaign. Although I am skeptical that air power alone can drive Iraq out of Kuwait, I want to hear from Cheney and Powell, who have gone out to the theater to assess the whole military situation. (U)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Declassify on: OADR

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 12958,
AS AMENDED
2009-08-26-MR
R 8/26/09

If we have to use military forces on the ground, it will not be a long war. We're also starting to look at how we might use the opportunities after the war to build peace and stability in the area. (C)

We will turn our attention again to other regional conflicts, especially the Arab-Israeli problem, after this war is brought to an end. I just wanted you to know this because of your interest in the area. (C)

We certainly don't want to see Iraq totally dismembered or destroyed, because, and I'm sure you agree, that would threaten regional stability. And also, I had a very good talk with Hafez Assad a few days ago. (C)

That was about all I wanted to report to you, and express my pleasure and gratitude that we are standing side-by-side in the Gulf. (C)

President Menem: Thank you very much, George. I hope that our Foreign Minister has already told you of all of Argentina's actions in this regard. We've had a favorable vote from the Congress to permit our ships to stay in the Gulf. (C)

The President: Yes. (U)

President Menem: When the ships were sent, we had 20 percent support in the polls, but now it represents 60 percent. I'm following very closely the situation in the Gulf. I hear your words and see you on TV frequently. I'm convinced that things are going well. We must try to prevent civilian damage in the aggressor country. (Note: Menem's interpreter did not interpret the following sentence: "Argentina will always be on the side of the Allied forces in this conflict.") I'm sure you know that I give you my full support. (C)

I hope this war will be as short as possible. It would be wonderful if after the war we can work to start conversations to deal with the other Middle East problems -- involving Israel, Syria, and Jordan. You know Argentina and I are willing to help you in any way you see fit. (C)

The President: That's good. (C)

President Menem: (Note: Menem's interpreter did not interpret the following sentence: "George, I'm convinced that success is certain. And I hope there will be low casualties.") But the cost of all this is the direct result of this one man who is totally demented. I am prepared to go with you with discussions and defend peace in that area. I hope you'll keep me informed. (C)

The President: Okay, we'll stay in touch. I'm delighted to have had the chat with your Foreign Minister, and look forward to keeping in touch as things develop. (Ø)

President Menem: I hope you'll send your regards to your dear wife and to your daughter who accompanied you to Argentina. (U)

The President: I will do it. Barbara and I are at Camp David, and I'll tell her that right now. Goodbye. (U)

President Menem: I send you an abrazo and my support. (In English) Good luck, George. (U)

The President: (does not wait for translation) Good luck, and thank you; I understood that. (U)

President Menem: Goodbye. (U)