

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: President's Call to the UN Secretary General
(U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar
Notetaker: Sandra Charles, NSC

DATE, TIME February 8, 1991; 5:00 - 5:15 p.m.
AND PLACE: Camp David

The President: Javier, how are you? (U)

Secretary General: Fine, George. How are you? (U)

The President: Fine, fine. I just wanted to touch base with you on a couple of things if you've got a minute. I heard about the letters from Iraq with those false accusations about you. What an ugly business. Fortunately, we all know they have a history of lying. I want you to know we still have total confidence in you and the good work you are doing. If there was any question of that, dismiss it and any question that hurt your feelings.

(P)

Secretary General: I am not easy to discourage. (P)

The President: I know there is a campaign saying we are bombing religious sites and civilian targets and people. I would like to offer to send you a team to show you why I say our bombing has had pinpoint accuracy. There is some damage. But you'll be impressed with the photos. If you are interested, I can have them shown to you. They show why we are targeting along the Jordan road where they are hiding missiles and moving troops. And using the bridges in the south for resupply. They show how accurate we have been. If that would interest you, I can arrange to have them shown to you with Tom Pickering. I don't want to burden you though. You don't need to feel that you have to make a statement about them. (P)

Secretary General: Yes, I would be interested to look at them. But my opinion is not enough. Other people need to see them. Maybe for strategic reasons you are not able to circulate them, but I am interested in you sending them over. (P)

The President: Okay. I also understand what you said about Jordan. (P)

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Secretary General: We are disturbed about the situation with Jordan. They are in an impossible position. But I would be pleased to see the briefing. (P)

The President: We will do this quietly. We will call and arrange it through Tom Pickering. I saw it and we have shown it to Mitterrand, Major and Ozal and others who are interested. We won't expect a statement from you or anything. It would just be for your information. (P)

Secretary General: I understand. (U)

The President: Another point, I know you got several indirect queries out of Iran. I know you told Brent of the interest there. We don't want to run down any individual trails, but I was just wondering if you had heard anything more. (P)

Secretary General: No. But I will let you know if there is anything new through Brent. The man here was to convey this back to his country. (P)

The President: Good. If it doesn't work, fine. But given their interest, it would be good to have a quiet chat. But we hadn't heard anything. (P)

Secretary General: I will do this with pleasure. (U)

The President: As for the rest, we intend to finish this. After what he has done parading our POWs, launching SCUDs at civilian targets, environmental terrorism -- this shows Saddam is a very difficult man. We will keep on unless he gets out. This is not expanding our war aims. We just want to get him out of Kuwait. But we will keep doing this until he does what he should have long ago. I am not optimistic that there won't be a ground war, but we have not made a decision to use our ground forces. General Powell and Dick Cheney are over there now. I will meet with them when they get back on Monday. (P)

I can tell you as I told our people this will not be long, costly in terms of human life like so many have predicted. But I always worry about even one human life. It will be a tough decision, but I wanted you to know it has not been made yet. (P)

Secretary General: That's what concerns me, what is horrible is the killing once ground operations start. And the appalling possibility that chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction could be used. (P)

The President: I don't know if he will use unconventional weapons or not. But he did use chemicals on his own people. I also have been disappointed with King Hussein's statements in the press. (P)

Secretary General: The poor man is under a lot of pressure. He is at great risk of being toppled down. But frankly, in the post crisis we will need him. (S)

The President: It is too bad. He is a good man. We have to understand the difficulties he is in now. But we won't have a ceasefire like Vietnam where the enemy has time to regroup and be strong again. We are going to finish the job. But I understand your position. We all want peace. Someday that will be realized. The truth, the facts are that we are fighting this war so that we will keep casualties at a minimum. We will not fail. We can't. Our country and the coalition believe we must fully implement the resolutions. (S)

Secretary General: It is important for the United Nations to support the coalition. But nothing is happening in the Council. It will be hard to hold off indefinitely. It will create the wrong impression if the Council doesn't do something. We need to find the right moment to hold a meeting of the Council. As such it is difficult to explain why the Security Council is not moving one way or another. (S)

The President: The Security Council has already taken strong action. Our position is the resolutions are there and we are helping countries to implement them. We know this can't go on forever. We don't want it to. I want this over soon. But there can be no ceasefire or something that let's him save face. (S)

Secretary General: The resolutions are clear. My view is they must be fully implemented, and if there is something new to help fully implement the resolutions, then we will take another look at it. Such a meeting could be used to get the Permanent members to stop in their tracks. But I agree, a ceasefire without a withdrawal is not possible. (S)

The President: Saddam is saying he won't get out. King Hussein is saying Saddam won't get out. In the meeting in Tehran, there was no movement by Iraq. I know your position as Secretary General and I respect it. Sometimes our nuances differ. But I wanted you to have my views. I also wanted you to hear from us that we aren't targeting innocent women and children. We are hitting some bridges used for resupply. We could cut the loss of life to the coalition if we used force indiscriminately. Do you know there is an anti-aircraft gun next to the al-Rashid Hotel? But we are not targeting it. We can show you where. What it does is risk our pilots' lives when they try to take out Iraqi communications and other targets. It is a difficult situation when he takes people to see an alleged baby milk factory and we have information that it is not. Just like Rabta was not making aspirin. (S)

Secretary General: He asked me to send a commission to investigate the fact of whether it is a milk factory or not. (S)

The President: If they go, be sure they get the right plant and get information beforehand on the plant. The Nestle people have said they never made formula there even though he showed that on TV. There are lots of things like this we can't get out. But I just wanted you to have our evaluation and to let you know we think you are doing fine. It was nice talking to you. Someone will be in touch next week to set up the briefing. (S)

Secretary General: Thank you. Just let me know through your Ambassador. (U)

-- End of Conversation --