

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Prime Minister Shankar of India on February 8, 1991 (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Prime Minister Shankar  
Notetaker: Sandra Charles, NSC

DATE, TIME February 8, 1991; 5:30 - 5:40 p.m.  
AND PLACE: Camp David

The President: Mr. Prime Minister, how are you sir? This is George Bush calling from the United States. (U)

Prime Minister: Good morning. Prime Minister Shankar here. (U)

The President: I am calling to thank you for your assurances to Ambassador Clark that India would do everything necessary to support the coalition's efforts. I am very grateful to you for that. (Ø)

Prime Minister: Yes, we are doing everything possible. Our people are anxious about developments in the Gulf area. (Ø)

The President: We are anxious ourselves. I want to tell you personally that contrary to his propaganda we are not targeting innocent civilians like Saddam is doing with his SCUDs which have no military value. Our targeting has been effective and our technology is working well. (Ø)

Our casualties are lower than we thought they would be. I am determined and so are the 27 countries in the coalition. I wanted to call to thank you for your support. I know you are under strong pressure at home. (Ø)

Prime Minister: Yes, you know the difficulties here, and the position the political parties have taken. They say we should not allow refueling of US planes, but we have. I said we should do it for humanitarian purposes. Parliament will meet in a few days. Political opinion is with the opposition at the moment. (Ø)

The President: I recognize the pressure but hope you can stay with it. The UN also puts you in a strong position. No one likes war. This won't last long. This brutal man has engaged in environmental terrorism, threatens to use chemical weapons, has brutalized our POWs. This man must be brought to justice. And I hope the public upholds your forthright position. I called to express my appreciation for it. We all do want to stop the killing. All he has to do is get out of Kuwait. But there is no evidence he will. In his talks with the French, the Iranians and others, he says he won't get out. (Ø)

Prime Minister: The opinion is he will get out but not from outside pressure. We need to stop the fighting and find a peaceful way for him to get out. I know there is a certain compulsion to finish this but we should find some way to stop. (Ø)

On the refueling, could you consider another option by going to Sri Lanka? I hear they have granted you rights to use refueling facilities. Can you shift from India to Sri Lanka? (Ø)

The President: I wasn't aware of this. We had been pleased to use India. We had not thought about shifting. But I will look into it. I hadn't thought about it frankly, because I thought you were able to support the coalition. (Ø)

Prime Minister: Please look into it. Parliament may take a different view. We will keep your Charge' informed. But you should reconsider the problem. (Ø)

The President: But we cannot reconsider on UN resolutions. (U)

Prime Minister: I agree there. That is why we gave you refueling rights, but in Parliament they may not agree, and I cannot take this decision without Parliament. I don't want to say no to it. But you could make the decision to change the venue to Sri Lanka. (Ø)

The President: I hope you will carry the day in Parliament. But we will see. But thank you for what you have done. (Ø)

Prime Minister: You had a need for refueling so we extended the cooperation, but now... (Ø)

The President: No one wants this war to end any more than I do. (Ø)

Prime Minister: How long will it be? (Ø)

The President: General Powell and Dick Cheney are over there now. They will discuss with me Monday the question of using ground forces. Please understand no decision has been made.

But if they are used I am convinced it won't take long. I am not being overly confident or macho, but I believe we will overwhelm them fast. But I want to wait to hear from our generals, and those from Britain and France. Powell and Cheney will be talking to them too. (Ø)

Prime Minister: I am concerned about the 5,000 Indians still there and their security in Kuwait. (Ø)

The President: It is difficult with the way he brutalizes people. I hope he is not doing that to the Indians. He is still is to the Kuwaiti people from the reports we see. (Ø)

Prime Minister: He has done nothing to our people, but they know he can be cruel. (Ø)

The President: I am sorry to call so late, but I am glad I called. I appreciate what you have done, and I will look into the other thing. (Ø)

Prime Minister: Thank you, Mr. President. I want to give this cooperation but our people are incensed over the Gulf so I have to consider this obstacle. (U)

The President: Thank you. (U)

Prime Minister: Thank you for the call. Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --