

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: President's Call to the Sultan of Oman

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Sultan Qaboos
Notetaker: Sandra Charles, NSC
Interpreter: Shukran Kamal

DATE, TIME February 14, 1991; 3:18 - 3:28 p.m.
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Your Highness, George Bush calling. (U)

The Sultan: Hello. (U)

The President: How are you, Your Majesty? (U)

The Sultan: Very well, how are you? (U)

The President: Just fine. We haven't talked in a long time.
(U)

The Sultan: You have been busy, there are lots of things on your mind. (U)

The President: If you have a minute, I just wanted to bring you up to date and compare notes with you. (U)

The Sultan: I have all the time you want. (U)

The President: First off, regarding the war, things are going well, and I am confident that when a ground offensive is required, the significant coalition of forces will do the job. Speaking very candidly after talking to Powell and Cheney, I don't think the ground operation will take long. He thinks he can bog us down in a long, drawn-out war. I don't think this will happen. Our preparations are very good. I am pleased our casualties, given the intensity of the attacks, have been so low, though each death you mourn, and each prisoner taken captive, particularly those brutalized in contravention of the Geneva Conventions. (U)

Let me say a word about the commendable efforts to arrange a ceasefire. I say these are commendable efforts because I understand the intentions of these people, including the Soviets and Gorbachev, whom I've have been in contact with, but the thing I can't do -- and the United States won't do -- is agree to

a ceasefire hoping that will encourage Saddam Hussein to get out of Kuwait. Every so-called peace initiative has resulted in his staying absolutely firm in Kuwait and is failing to get him to say he will get out. So I can't and won't accept any language for a ceasefire saying if we stop shooting, he gets out, or calling for negotiations and he gets out of Kuwait. We want nothing of that nature. We've said what is required. He knows what is required, but I don't think he is prepared to stop and make a credible withdrawal and restore the legitimate rulers to Kuwait. But I know he won't do that. (Ø)

Needless to say, I know you well enough to talk candidly about the bombing of the bunker in Baghdad. It has caused a lot of concern because innocent civilians were killed. I want to tell you personally we do not target civilians. I have incontrovertible evidence that the bunker was a military target. He put people there knowing this, like he publicly said he would put POWs there and placed innocent travelers there from before as human shields. As much as it hurts Barbara and me whenever we see these babies -- anyone would be concerned to see civilian casualties -- but he is using his civilians and he has gassed his own people before. (Ø)

I personally saw the intelligence on what the military did, and there was no collateral damage to anything other than to this command and control bunker which unfortunately was used to house innocent civilians. We have gotten a lot of bad press, but people now are starting to see the truth. We do not tolerate the bombing of innocent citizens. But I just wanted you to hear this from me. (Ø)

The Sultan: Thank you very much. (Ø)

The President: Your Majesty, how do you feel and do you have any advice to offer? (Ø)

The Sultan: From what I have heard and seen and what you said, I think things are going very well indeed. People in this part of the world expected more casualties and more intense fighting from the other side. But of course with careful planning on your side, things are going very well. Speaking as somebody with some military experience, I think your planning was excellent. (Ø)

On the civilian side, when you fight a war you cannot avoid some civilian casualties. Sometimes it does happen, especially if the command of that country deliberately puts civilians or puts military equipment in civilian areas to make propaganda against those fighting for a good cause. This will happen. I do believe he would do this to make an impression that the allies and the coalition is targeting civilian people. And if I may say so, anybody who can think properly knows this is not so and a lot of people will know this is not so. (Ø)

The President: Well, I hope that's right and I think you are. We've had about 24 hours of flamboyant publicity, but I think people are beginning to see it as you do. (Ø)

The Sultan: On the effort for a ceasefire, the last time I heard of this effort was from Pakistan, during a visit from the Pakistanis. In my words I told them it would do no good unless he packs up and goes and takes all his equipment and soldiers and leaves Kuwait; then that is a different matter. But to speak of a ceasefire or peace settlement while the cause is still there and who caused it is saying nothing to go away from Kuwait, then there is no good talking because he will take advantage to consolidate his political and other aims. (Ø)

The President: That is so true and I don't understand why some don't understand this. (Ø)

The Sultan: Speaking honestly, I think these people do this for domestic consumption. They try to appear as peace makers. But peacemakers must be seen to remove the cause of it all and make the person who caused the problem go away and not stay. At the same time, they speak about tying things together, talking about other problems, comparing them with the problem he caused. That is not the correct way to go about it at all. I think all your friends do see this; I believe they do, so I think you should not take much notice of people making peaceful noises to arrange this or that. I am convinced they don't believe in it. This is my feeling. (Ø)

The President: Yes, we agree totally on that position. I wanted to assure you things are going well. We are determined as ever. There is some hope no ground forces will be required, but I am afraid they will be. We have done a great deal of thinking and a lot of planning has gone into this. I have not lost my determination to do what is required; it will be relatively soon. I am confident I can say to my own children for example that there will be less loss of life with a ground offensive than is said in the press in this country. (Ø)

The Sultan: Yes, the press magnifies things and talks about subjects that they don't know much about. They make up stories. (Ø)

The President: That's so true. (U)

The Sultan: The worry in this part of the world is just whether there are capabilities for chemicals and other unconventional weapons that have not been used yet. (Ø)

The President: Well, let me assure you, that's a nonstarter on our part. If it happens that he does use chemical weapons, as far as we are concerned, that would raise the stakes. As your friend I want to say we have no intention of doing so, and don't need to. He has used gas on the Kurds. I worry about our troops and others on the front lines, and worry whether he can put them on missiles into cities. We are certainly aware of the complications for us if unconventional weapons are used. (S)

The Sultan: Yes, that is so. Perhaps in this instance Saddam will be wise enough and not try to use unconventional weapons and complicate things. (S)

The President: I hope not. It has been nice talking to you, Your Majesty. Barbara and I wish you good health, and send you respectfully our best wishes. (U)

The Sultan: Thank you very much. I send you and Mrs. Bush my best wishes. Let me take this opportunity to reassure you of my friendship and my support. (U)

The President: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --