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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with Nelson Mandela of South Africa on March 6, 1991

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Nelson Mandela, African National Congress of South Africa  
Notetakers: Robert C. Frasure  
Charles Grahl, SWO

DATE, TIME: March 6, 1991, 9:45 - 10:02 a.m. EST  
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

President Bush telephoned Nelson Mandela who had expressed a desire to speak to the President on the sanctions issue. (Ø)

The President: Mr. Mandela? How are you? (U)

Mr. Mandela: I'm very well. I'm happy to hear your voice. (U)

The President: What do you have on your mind? I think you were trying to call me. (U)

Mr. Mandela: I have your letter to me. And I have Hank Cohen's letter. In the context of your letter, we have had a chat in the ANC National Executive. (Ø)

We thank you for your letter. (U)

I have two issues I want to raise with you; first, the sanctions issue and then secondly the Gulf. (Ø)

The President: Please go ahead. (U)

Mr. Mandela: Firstly on the Gulf, I don't know whether you have seen the full text of the statement we made. (Ø)

The President: No. But I have seen a summary. (U)

Mr. Mandela: We intended to make a balanced statement. We hoped it would be welcomed by all. We say that the following items are critical: withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait and the resolution of the dispute by bilateral negotiation. Our view is similar to the UN. (Ø)

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2

Secondly, there should be the convening of an international conference for a comprehensive settlement of the problems of the Middle East including the restoration of rights to the Palestinians and the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories. That is also similar to what the UN has said. (S)

Finally, we wished to oppose the efforts of the White minority government on the Gulf in offering facilities to participants. We are committed to peace and wanted to make a contribution. (S)

Lastly, we called on the government and the police to stop harassing our people who were demonstrating about the Gulf. (S)

That was the totality of the statement. We were disturbed that you took exception to it. (S)

We wanted to handle the issue in a way to draw people together. (S)

On sanctions, we note what you say in the letter and welcome that you will take us into your confidence. We also recall that our International Affairs Director Thabo Mbeki met recently with Mr. Bob Frasure, your Africa Director, and with Mr. Hank Cohen. We should want to leave the matter as we discussed it with Mr. Frasure. I'm sure that when all conditions in your legislation have been settled, you will be able to lift sanctions.

When that happens, we hope you can say that you won't support organizations that support Apartheid, that you can say on South African Airways for example, that Apartheid is still being practiced. You should tell South African Airways that the service should be democratic that all population groups should be represented, that you are not prepared to accept an Apartheid service. (S)

The President: I appreciate hearing your views. (U)

On the Gulf, I had not seen your total statement. But we opposed Palestinian linkage from the beginning. It plays into the hands of the brutal dictator Saddam Hussein. The UN stayed away from it. Maybe we have an honest difference of opinion. But linkage plays into their hands. (S)

Secondly, I reject any perception that puts the Coalition on the same moral ground as Iraq. Yemen, Cuba and a few others tried to do that. And the rest of the world didn't buy it. (S)

And I don't like being equated with Saddam Hussein. (S)

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3

I will say tonight that we want to play a constructive role in the region including on the Palestinian question and Israel on things like UN Resolution 242. (S)

We are very pleased that the war is over. Most people supported us and the UN. I didn't expect the ANC to support us. It engaged me. We had world support. When the South African government supported us, we welcomed it. I don't want to mislead you. (S)

Mr. Mandela: I have heard you. (U)

The President: I understand your concerns about not lifting sanctions too soon. And we welcome your views. (S)

Our legislation on the subject -- in particular the 1986 Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act -- is very specific. (S)

Under that law, as certain events take place including the freeing of political prisoners and the repeal of Apartheid legislation, I am mandated by a very powerful Congress to take certain actions. (S)

Of course in doing so, I will be consulting with members of Congress and others. I welcome your views. I don't want to do anything to set back the irreversibility of the process. You should feel free to criticize and to send us suggestions. (S)

Of course, we won't be lifting some sanctions such as the arms embargo. (S)

My hands are bound, however, by very clear legislation. But I'm not going to do anything premature. I would welcome your continuous contact with Frasure and Cohen. And call me anytime. (S)

I like the open spirit of our communications. We need to keep the lines open to see whether the differences are real or not. It's better than reading about each other's views in the press. (S)

Mr. Mandela: Thank you. I have noted all of your remarks. I will pass them along to the ANC National Executive Committee. (S)

The President: Good. How do you feel? How is your health? (U)

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4

Mr. Mandela: I feel good, especially having heard your voice today. I'm planning to leave for a month's vacation. I will get to see the faces of animals rather than the faces of human beings. (C)

The President: Good. That will be good for you! All the best on your vacation and goodbye. (U)

Mr. Mandela: Goodbye to you, sir. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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