

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: President's Telephone Call from the Amir of Kuwait

PARTICIPANTS: The President.
Amir Sheikh Jaber al-Sabah
Interpreter: Gamal Helal
Notetaker: Sandra Charles, NSC

DATE, TIME May 28, 1991; 7:54 - 8:26 a.m.
AND PLACE: Kennebunkport, Maine

The President: Your Highness, how are you sir? (U)

Amir Jaber: Thank God, I am well. (U)

The President: We have been following Kuwait with interest and pride. I hope things are going well with you. (U)

Amir Jaber: First of all, I want to ask about your health. (U)

The President: It's very good. There is nothing wrong with my heart. The problem is my thyroid but it's under control. When we hang up I am going to play some more golf. I'm up at the seashore in Maine and I actually have one day off. I feel like a spring colt. (U)

Amir Jaber: Thank God, your health is good. That is what others think, too. (U)

The President: Thank you. How are things going in Kuwait, and what's on your mind? I just want to say first that we are still grateful for your support on the war and grateful we had a hand in liberating Kuwait. That spirit hasn't changed here. (U)

Amir Jaber: Actually, I would like to thank the United States for its stand and you for your position. That was one reason for my call. But I also have two other requests. (U)

The President: Go ahead, sir. (U)

Amir Jaber: First, I wanted to ask about your health. The second thing, the issue is the Middle East issue. The whole world is looking to the United States and its position to press Israel to end the Middle East problem. Because if we don't end it, the region will produce another dictator with a call to destroy Israel. If the problem is not solved, the climate will be right to create such a dictator. I am saying this as a friend, and am talking about a variety of things. (S)

The President: First, I understand what you are saying. Second, we are trying hard. I think our Administration has made it clear to Israel that it must participate and cooperate, and as you know we have spoken out forcefully against settlements. Having said that, it also is essential for Syria to come forward and essential for Jordan to come forward. It is not simply just one recalcitrant party. I know your country and my country were crosswise with the King of Jordan because of the war. In my heart I am still distressed that King Hussein in the war went too far over into the arms of Saddam Hussein. (S)

Having said that, we have reestablished contact to get him to participate in the peace process. He told me he would do that, he then went to Syria, and then he came back and said the time was not right, that he was not sure the he could do that now. He went back on what he told me before. I make the point because there needs to be cooperation from Israel -- and Jim Baker and I remain engaged on that -- but also there needs to be cooperation from Jordan and Syria. What's your view on what I've said? (S)

Amir Jaber: There is no doubt I appreciate what your Excellency, the President has said. On this issue we have done what we have been asked. We have asked the GCC Secretary General to be present at a conference to get Israel to compromise. But Israel didn't, and so it is difficult for Jordan and Syria to do something. (S)

The President: I am delighted that Bishara, the Secretary General has agreed to attend with your and King Fahd's leadership. It is a step for which we give you credit. I also agree that Israel must come forward. But the only point I would make is that anyone with influence on Syria and Jordan, that also would be very, very helpful. But I agree with your assessment. We mustn't miss the opportunity so we will continue to do what is necessary with our friends and the other countries to get everybody to attend this conference. (S)

Amir Jaber: I think Syria in particular won't agree as long as Israel won't find a way and change its position. (S)

The President: True, but if we can get both to a conference then that's where the concession stage begins. (S)

Amir Jaber: That's my point. Syria won't attend a conference with Israel if they are not assured that Israel hasn't changed its position. (S)

The President: Let me think about it. Israel has changed some in that they are now talking about attending to Jim Baker and before they refused to attend at all. Only the United States can encourage Israel to do what is necessary, and we are prepared to do more publicly and go the extra mile to get them to this discussion stage. In Israel, we now will get help from the Israeli people, but the government will be more difficult. (S)

Amir Jaber: I wish you success in your efforts because this issue is important to us. (S)

The President: Your Majesty, I wanted to ask you how things are going at home in Kuwait? (S)

Amir Jaber: I didn't mean this was my last point. (U)

The President: Okay. (U)

Amir Jaber: I wanted to give your Excellency an idea about what is taking place in Kuwait. Perhaps you are hearing in the news and reading in the papers the untrue stories about human rights and related issues. I am sure your Ambassador here is giving you a clear idea of what is going on here. (S)

The President: He came to see me and he had a different view from the papers. I was pleased because we have great confidence in Skip Gnehm. (S)

Amir Jaber: That's what we are trying to do, to be clear about the trials that are taking place and to give a clear idea that we will not put anyone on trial in absentia and that we are working hard to conduct these trials in a civilized way. Each suspect has his own lawyer, and this is something we regard as a duty because the reputation of Kuwait is something we can't compromise. (S)

The President: The more this gets out in the western press, which can be difficult, the better it is. The western press has made a lot about the man who got fifteen years for wearing the Saddam t-shirt, but I'm confident that on that man there was more to his record than that. (Ø)

Amir Jaber: True, but unfortunately the western press didn't reflect the reality of the acts this individual had committed which were horrifying. (Ø)

The President: That is a good example. If our Ambassador sends me the details, I'd be glad to see if we can get more balance on this issue. (Ø)

Amir Jaber: I will give him all the details on this case. (U)

The President: In any case, I am delighted to know your spirit on this. (Ø)

Amir Jaber: On the other issue, of course, Kuwait just came out of occupation, and things are improving gradually. We have a committee examining the issue of parliamentary elections to set up the activities needed and to work on those things affiliated with elections like registering voters, organizing election procedures. We hope for parliamentary elections next year. (Ø)

The President: I am delighted to hear that. How are you doing on the oil fires? (U)

Amir Jaber: On your question on oil fires, we have invited most of the companies with experience in this work and they have been able to put out over 130 fires. (U)

The President: Very good. (U)

Amir Jaber: We hope within the next few months to put out more. (U)

The President: Your Majesty, can I ask you two other questions? (U)

Amir Jaber: Yes. (U)

The President: First, on the extension of martial law for 30 more days, I am sure there were specific concerns involved and I'd be interested in what they are. And second, on Saddam Hussein and his survival. We are outraged at what he is doing, yet we don't know that he will get out of there. (S)

Amir Jaber: On the issue of martial law and its extension for 30 days, the main reason for this is to collect arms in Kuwait. A lot of Kuwaiti citizens and non-citizens have in their possession some types of arms and weapons still. So that is the main reason. It will not be extended beyond 30 days. We are hoping in 30 days to collect those arms in a peaceful manner. (S)

The President: Good luck on that. (U)

Amir Jaber: On the second point, we aren't comfortable at all with Saddam Hussein because he can't be trusted -- period. (S)

The President: I agree. We have to keep the pressure on. I hope that all will stick to the sanctions until his people can get him out. (S)

Amir Jaber: I hope so too. (U)

The President: We will work on that. I wish you the best Your Majesty. I am pleased you think things are moving well in your country, and again I am pleased that we were side-by-side with you in the war. (S)

Amir Jaber: Wish you the best of luck and good health. I don't wish to take more of your time. Have a good golf game. (U)

The President: First, I am delighted you called, and second, please call any time. We are committed to your success, and to the path you've set out. So on any matter large or small, don't hesitate to call, nor will I hesitate to call you. Some day I hope to come calling. I can't tell you how much I look forward to that, although it will be some months down the road. (S)

Amir Jaber: I wish you the best of luck in all your efforts and endeavors, and good health. (U)

The President: Thank you, your Majesty. God speed and good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --