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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Conversation of Meeting between Saudi Ambassador Prince Bandar and President Bush (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker, III, Secretary of State
John Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Richard N. Haass, Senior Director for Near East and South Asian Affairs

Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Saudi Ambassador to the United States

President Bush and Saudi Ambassador Prince Bandar met at the U.S. Ambassador's Residence at 9:45 a.m.

Prince Bandar: President Assad understands that Saudi Arabia is coming to the multilaterals despite Syria. He will not back off on bilateral talks with Israel. But they are scared and nervous over the internal security. They have put Jabril's people under house arrest. Jabril is no longer in control of the PFLP/GC. Jabril is still in Tehran. President Assad told me he is worried about being shot. He is paranoid about his security. But he expressed confidence in the President and Secretary Baker. I argued to President Assad that he needs to work on how he packages his message. He is scared to death--his face, his manner. Even though Rafsanjani told them they were not targeting Syria, Khaddam says Jabril and others are seen as threats. (S)

Secretary Baker: I've seen information that Motashemipur is getting active in the region. (S)

Prince Bandar: Assad was not composed. I explained our position on the multilaterals, that our credibility was on the line. He understood. He was taken aback by the decision of King Fahd and President Mubarak to attend the multilaterals. (S)

Governor Sununu: How large are Jabril's forces? (S)

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Prince Bandar: They are worried over the unlimited pool of Palestinians in the camp. Assad is uncomfortable over being ahead in the peace process. He is contradicting his traditional opposition to bilateral negotiations. He said, though, he would stay involved. Khaddam says Foreign Minister Shara could be vulnerable when he returns. (S)

Secretary Baker: That is why we need some progress early, say on settlements. (C)

Prince Bandar: Our problem is with the media, that all the signs are that the Arabs are compromising, not Israel. (C)

Secretary Baker: We need to solve the question of venue for the bilaterals. (C)

Prince Bandar: Washington is best. (C)

President: We have a big Israeli problem. (C)

Prince Bandar: Washington is best. The Syrians never said "no" to this. (C)

Secretary Baker: I never raised this with the Syrians before last night. (C)

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