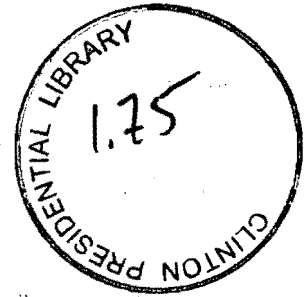


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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON



MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: The President
King Hussein of Jordan

NOTE TAKERS: Jim Smith and Frank Jarosinski

DATE, TIME December 17, 1998 -- 12:25 p.m. - 12:32 p.m. EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

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

King Hussein: Hello, welcome home and well done. (U)

The President: I had a great time in Gaza. (U)

King Hussein: How are you, sir? (U)

The President: I thought it was a good trip. Arafat produced a big crowd; he had over 500 members of the PNC there, and a lot of others. I think it went well. (U)

King Hussein: Very, very good. That is very promising. (U)

The President: I think I struck a responsive chord. The people of Israel supported my speech, even though Netanyahu's government didn't like it much. (U)

King Hussein: It was a wonderful speech about the future. Very moving. (U)

The President: Thank you. I wanted to call and say that the situation in Iraq seems to be going pretty well. The damage assessment indicates good results, all our pilots are back so far, and from what we can see, there are very low civilian casualties. (C)

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King Hussein: That's wonderful. (U)

The President: You know, I called off this action a month ago, but in the wake of Butler's report that Iraq is not even trying to cooperate, I had no choice. The Gulf countries and Egypt are giving us the cooperation we need, [REDACTED] P1(b)(1)

[REDACTED] P1(b)(1) so we are just going forward. I know the reaction of the Arab world will become more difficult. So far, their reactions are muted and even privately supportive, but it can become more difficult with civilian casualties. I know you are probably concerned with the refugee problem. We'll stay in close touch and I will help in any way possible with a rapid response. (S)

King Hussein: To support the refugee problem would be nice. It may be beyond our ability to deal with large numbers, and we look forward to your help. (C)

The President: We'll help if we can. One other thing. In spite of the fact that I had a good trip, the political situation in Israel is quite unstable. Bibi said that in short order one of three things will happen: he'll have Levy back and four more votes; he'll have a unity government with Barak; or there'll be national elections. If there are national elections, it may well delay the Wye implementation process. We'll work hard with the Palestinians, but the resultant government might be more secure in going forward. We'll keep pushing the Israel government to implement, but we need to watch closely; it's quite unstable. (S)

King Hussein: Yes, sir. May I ask, have Arafat and the Israelis finished working out cooperation on security and intelligence? (S)

The President: I think that's on track. I think there are two big problems for the Israelis, at least for the Netanyahu government: the whole question of how to handle the prisoner releases and Arafat's speeches on declaring unilaterally a Palestinian state in May. If Netanyahu implements the next redeployment, there'll be a vote Monday, a kind of no-confidence vote. If he does not make the next redeployment, the issue is why didn't he do it, and can he do it before the elections. We'll keep pushing for full implementation. I think security is back on track and I think we'll see evidence of that over the next few days. Now there's this Iraq situation; I'll try to get Arafat not to overreact. I wish I could say it was more certain, but it's uncertain. (S)

King Hussein: Everything you contribute to gives results, sir. This time, we're full of admiration for the way you went there and everything you said. I hope it will work out. If there's anything I can say, don't hesitate. ~~(C)~~

The President: Thanks. Are you and Noor coming back through here very soon? (U)

King Hussein: I am improving all the time. They're very optimistic. I just have to have time to build up resistance, and I will come through Washington before taking my leave to go home. (U)

The President: That's wonderful news. You sound strong. Your spirits are good? (U)

King Hussein: Yes, my spirits are good. You did very well with regard to yesterday. He asked for it. ~~(C)~~

The President: Thank you, Your Majesty. (U)

King Hussein: Good day. (U)

The President: Thank you. Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --