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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with Francisco Fernandez-Ordonez, Foreign Minister of Spain

PARTICIPANTS: The President
James A. Baker, Secretary of State
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President and Deputy for National Security Affairs
Joseph Zappala, Ambassador to Spain
James F. Dobbins, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs
Adrian Basora, Director for European Economic Affairs, NSC Staff (Notetaker)
Stephanie Van Reigersberg, Interpreter

Francisco Fernandez-Ordonez, Foreign Minister
Jaime de Ojeda, Ambassador to the U.S.

DATE, TIME March 5, 1991, 1:17 - 1:35 p.m.
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

During the photo opportunity, the President expressed his appreciation for Spanish support in the Gulf crisis, characterizing it as "steadfast and solid as a rock."

Foreign Minister Ordonez: Prime Minister Gonzalez is addressing the Parliament today on the Gulf war. (U)

The President: Is this a regular meeting of the Parliament? (U)

Foreign Minister Ordonez: No, it is a special session that was called for the Prime Minister to make a statement about the end of the war. His statement includes an expression of full continuing support for the coalition. (U)

The President: As I said when the press was still here, I appreciated Spain's strong support in the Gulf crisis. I also appreciate your good cooperation in this hemisphere. We should continue to work together on Latin America; we don't want to neglect our own hemisphere. Spain can be a tremendous catalyst

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for stability and democracy in Latin America. We must stay together on these issues. (C)

Foreign Minister Ordonez: The polls show that, even on the Gulf issue, 60 percent of the Spanish public supports the government. (U)

The President: Yes, but you had to lead public opinion to that conclusion. We had to do some of the same here in the U.S. (C)

Foreign Minister Ordonez: I bring you best regards from the King as well as the Prime Minister. They hope to see you in Spain, perhaps in connection with other travel to Europe. This is a very good moment in bilateral relations. We need to take advantage of it. (C)

The President: I appreciate the thought. Maybe we will get a chance to visit. Ambassador Zappala talked to me about that yesterday morning. (C)

Foreign Minister Ordonez: On Latin America, let us not forget the importance of dealing with their problems. They are serious. (C)

The President: Great respect for Spain has developed in Latin America. They have a high regard for what Spain has achieved. You can have a real role and a constructive impact there. (C)

Secretary Baker: Paco told me he was very worried about Nicaragua. (C)

Foreign Minister Ordonez: Maybe Spain could take steps to be helpful there. (C)

The President: The problem is with Violeta Chamorro. She thought that, by keeping Umberto Ortega on, she had chosen the only way to succeed. The result is that the Sandinistas are jerking her around. She has not been able to put in the economic reforms that she intended. The Sandinistas think that by doing this they can regain power through democratic means. (C)

The murder of Bermudez is another troubling thing. I hear stories that the murder traces back to some of the Sandinistas, and that the investigation may not be carried fully to its completion. If she pulls back on the investigation, this would be a bad sign. I love Violeta; she is a wonderful person -- but she may be heading for trouble. (C)

Foreign Minister Ordonez: The Maghreb is another problem that I wanted to mention. Terrorism there is a serious threat. I was the only European foreign minister able to visit the region in recent months. The French and Italians were not able to go. I am trying to convince our European partners to work together with us to improve the situation in the region. (C)

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The President: Our view is that, if we can help, we would like to. I don't know what the U.S. can do, but if you have ideas, please let us know. Saddam Hussein's defeat in the Gulf should help. His demise and the destruction he wrought upon himself may make things better. There has been less instability than originally predicted. (C)

Foreign Minister Ordonez: Yes, the aftermath has been less bad than we had feared. (C)

The President: Spain has close proximity to the region. Do you also have good relations? (C)

Foreign Minister Ordonez: To an extent. Maybe things will turn out better than we had imagined at the beginning. (C)

The President: I am glad that our bilateral relations are going well. Is Ambassador Zappala behaving? He is a personal friend, and so I have to worry about him. He and Jim Baker are very appreciative of our good relations. (C)

Where do you go from here? (U)

Foreign Minister Ordonez: I am going to New York to meet with Secretary General Perez de Cuellar on Central America. (C)

The President: He has tried hard in the Gulf crisis. I have nothing but respect for him. (C)

Foreign Minister Ordonez: He is retiring this autumn. (U)

The President: Do you have any idea who the next Secretary General will be? I believe an African is overdue for the post, but the African countries cannot agree among themselves. (C)

Foreign Minister Ordonez: The situation is not clear yet. (U)

The President: Please take back with you my appreciation to Felipe Gonzalez. (C)

-- End of Conversation --

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