

Oct. 30, 1991

THE WHITE HOUSE

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WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Conversation of Meeting between Foreign Minister Bouez of Lebanon 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

Faris Bouez, Lebanese Foreign Minister

President Bush and Foreign Minister Bouez met at the U.S. Ambassador's Residence at 9:20 a.m.

The President: Thank you for coming here. I'd like to help restore Lebanon to what it should be. I agonize for the people. It is an emotional thing for me. (C)

Foreign Minister Bouez: I want to thank you and the Secretary and thank you for your sentiments. We made progress over the last seven or eight months in rebuilding our institutions. We hope in a short time we could have full sovereignty--especially in the south which is key. We hope we will arrive at a good result in the conference. (C)

The President: That is our hope too. We will oppose preconditions and will urge people to keep the big picture in view. It is a difficult for the world to condone terrorist acts on the eve of the conference. Everyone ought to condemn this. I hear what you are saying about getting everyone out of Lebanon. I only ask that you speak out again terrorism. (C)

Secretary Baker: What effort is going to be made to disarm Hizbollah? (C)

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Secretary Baker: Do you have the military ability to disarm Hizbollah without Syrian help? (C)

Foreign Minister Bouez: The Lebanese army pacified the south in several days. The problem is not a military one. But we need a political argument to have a military operation. (C)

The President: So you see a link between Israeli withdrawal and Hizbollah withdrawing? (C)

Foreign Minister Bouez: The government of Lebanon will be able to ensure security after the Israelis withdraw. (C)

Secretary Baker: They are the ones who attacked our Embassy. (C)

Foreign Minister Bouez: They threatened our Embassy here yesterday. (C)

The President: Disarming them and establishing control would be a good step. Regarding hostages, I ask you to try to do something. We know the realities and we are not holding the Lebanese government responsible. But the American public associates the two. (C)

I am not sure what I am asking other than you look to facilitate their release. We do not have a good enough relationship with Iran to influence them. This is important to us. (S)

Foreign Minister Bouez: I understand the linkage for the American people. We are victims of this situation. We lose visitors, financial support, business investment. We are doing our best at all levels. I went to Iran. We are doing our best to solve this. (S)

The President: I understand your position, but please help if you can. This is a separate matter, but one I wanted to raise. (C)

Foreign Minister Bouez: We feel morally responsible. Be sure that we are doing our best. This is the main subject we discussed with the Iranians. (C)

The President: What did they say? (U)

Foreign Minister Bouez: They cite their hostages in Israel. (C)

Secretary Baker: Iran is hosting an anti-peace meeting which makes it clear where they are coming from. (C)

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The President: Yet they say they want better relations with us. This is one obstacle. We need to keep our sights set on the big picture. (C)

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