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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone conversation with President Carlos Menem of Argentina (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Carlos Menem, President of Argentina
Interpreter: Lilian Nigaglioni
Notetaker: Donald C. Johnson

DATE, TIME January 14, 1991, 9:33 - 9:40 am EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

President Menem telephoned the President concerning the situation in the situation in the Gulf. (U)

The President: Hello, this is George Bush, are you there, Mr. President? (U)

President Menem: How are you, my dear President and friend, and how is your wife? (U)

The President: My wife is fine. She has a very minor break in her lower leg, but she's laughing and joking, and in great spirits. (U)

As for me, I'm in good shape. We're trying hard at the last minute to avoid a conflagration, and avoid a war. I must tell you that the report from the U.N. Secretary General is very discouraging in this regard. (U)

(line goes dead -- pause)

Are you still there? (U)

President Menem: Yes, Mr. President. Please go ahead with your report. (U)

The President: The line went dead for a minute. I'm discouraged by the lack of results from the Secretary General's visit. I haven't talked to him, but he debriefed our Ambassador in Paris. (U)

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I must tell you that at this late juncture, I don't see diplomatic efforts going forward that can be fruitful. As for my own disposition, I've said publicly that the United States and the coalition are standing strongly together, and we are. (Ø)

So although January 15 is not a date when military action has to begin, it's a very serious date as far as we're concerned. Through various channels we've tried to make clear to Saddam Hussein what is at risk as far as he's concerned if the coalition forces are used against him. (Ø)

So I wish I had a more optimistic report for you, my friend, but right now I'm not too hopeful. (Ø)

President Menem: I've clearly received your report, my dear George. We're also very concerned. If there is anything we can do, you can count on the Argentine Government. Apart from showing my concerns for you and your wife, I've called to tell you of our complete solidarity at this moment. The U.S. has a loyal ally in Argentina. And you have in the President of Argentina a complete and true friend. I remain completely at your disposal; if there is anything I can do to help, just call me. At this moment, I would like to tell you of our support and friendship. (Ø)

The President: That is a very generous and very important statement of friendship and alliance. I'm very grateful to you, Carlos. (Ø)

They're having demonstrations now, and accusing me of wanting war. Nobody in his right mind wants a war. But if we have to have it, we'll do our best. But anyway, many thanks, my friend. (Ø)

President Menem: A very big and friendly abrazo. I leave with you my respect and admiration. (U)

The President: You've lifted my spirits with this call of solidarity. Good-bye. (Ø)

President Menem: (In English) Good-bye, and good luck, Mr. President. (U)

The President: Thanks, Carlos, good-bye. (U)

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