

January 21, 1991

**Cable, Richard Armitage to the White House for Mr.
Robert Gates, 'Hussein/Armitage Meeting January
21, 1991'**

Citation:

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Summary:

The President's special envoy to Jordan, Richard Armitage, updates the White House on a private talk he had just had with King Hussein. The King briefed Armitage on a secret meeting recently held with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

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PRT GATES SCOWCROFT
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FM RICHARD ARMITAGE

TO WHITE HOUSE FOR MR. ROBERT GATES NIACT IMMEDIATE
EYES ONLY GENERAL BRENT SCOWCROFT FOR MR. ROBERT GATES
WHITE HOUSE PLEASE PASS TO SECSTATE, SECDEFENSE
SUBJECT: HUSSEIN/ARMITAGE MEETING JANUARY 21, 1991

>BEGIN SUMMARY>

1. SUMMARY: AT THE END OF A MEETING (INCLUDING LUNCHEON) LASTING NEARLY THREE HOURS, KING HUSSEIN TOOK PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY ARMITAGE ASIDE AND INFORMED HIM THAT HE RECENTLY MET ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER SHAMIR IN EUROPE (DATE AND PLACE NOT SPECIFIED) AND, IN THE PRESENCE OF IDF OFFICERS (NFI), URGED SHAMIR TO REFRAIN FROM RETALIATION. HE TOLD SHAMIR THAT JORDAN HAD TAKEN THE STEP OF DEPLOYING GROUND FORCES TO THE EASTERN PART OF THE COUNTRY TO COUNTER ANY IRAQI INCURSION. THE KING ALSO CONFIDED TO ARMITAGE THAT JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER BADRAN HAD JUST RETURNED FROM BAGHDAD, WHERE HE LODGED COMPLAINTS ABOUT SCUD MISSILE ATTACKS THROUGH JORDANIAN AIRSPACE AND CAUTIONED THE IRAQIS AGAINST USING UNCONVENTIONAL WEAPONS. AS A RESULT OF BADRAN'S VISIT, THE KING BELIEVES THAT IRAQI MISSILE ASSAULTS AGAINST ISRAEL MAY BE FINISHED. END SUMMARY.

>END SUMMARY>

2. DURING THE LATE MORNING AND EARLY AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 21, 1991, PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY RICHARD L. ARMITAGE, ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR ROGER HARRISON AND FREDERIC C. HOF (STATE) SPENT NEARLY THREE HOURS IN MEETINGS (AND LUNCHEON) WITH KING HUSSEIN, CROWN PRINCE HASSAN, PRIME MINISTER BADRAN (WHO

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ARRIVED LATE DURING LUNCHEON). CHIEF OF ROYAL COURT ZAID BEN SHAKER AND POLITICAL ADVISOR ADNAN OBU ODEH. THE KING, ALTHOUGH CLEARLY DISTRESSED BY WHAT HE CHARACTERIZED AS A DRIFT TOWARD REGIONAL DISASTER WHICH HE HAS TRIED TO PREVENT, NEVERTHELESS GREETED ARMITAGE WITH WARMTH AND SEEMED GENUINELY MOVED BY ARMITAGE'S STRONG REAFFIRMATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S HIGH PERSONAL REGARD FOR THE KING AND SUPPORT FOR THE FUTURE OF FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE HASEMITE KINGDOM.

3. ARMITAGE OPENED BY ADVISING THE KING THAT THE USG WOULD NOT PUBLICIZE HIS PRESENCE IN JORDAN. IF THE GOJ WISHED TO GO PUBLIC FOR ITS OWN PURPOSES (NOTE: COURT PHOTOGRAPHERS WERE PRESENT), IT WAS FREE TO DO SO. BUT THE U.S. DID NOT WANT TO FORCE THE KING OR HIS GOVERNMENT TO ACKNOWLEDGE HAVING RECEIVED AN ENVOY FROM THE PRESIDENT DURING THESE VERY TENSE AND SENSITIVE TIMES IN JORDAN. THE KING EXPRESSED HIS BEST WISHES FOR THE PRESIDENT AND HIS PLEASURE AT BEING ABLE TO RECEIVE AN ENVOY SO WELL KNOWN TO HIM AND HIS ADVISORS.

4. ARMITAGE TOOK PAINS TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE PRESIDENT WISHED TO REAFFIRM HIS WARMTH AND AFFECTION FOR THE KING AND HIS DETERMINATION TO SEE HASHEMITE JORDAN PLAY A POSITIVE ROLE FOR PEACE IN THE POST-WAR MIDDLE EAST. THE PRESIDENT'S RECENT PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT ABOUT JORDAN WAS NOT THE PRODUCT OF BUREAUCRATIC TALKING POINTS; RATHER IT WAS FROM THE HEART AND

REFLECTED THE PRESIDENT'S FIRM BELIEF THAT NOTWITHSTANDING CURRENT DIFFERENCES OF OPINION THERE WAS, MOST DEFINITELY, A PRODUCTIVE ROLE FOR JORDAN TO PLAY NOW AND IN THE FUTURE. ARMITAGE TOLD THE KING THAT A PRINCIPAL REASON FOR HIS VISIT WAS TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT JORDAN FULLY APPRECIATED THE PRESIDENT'S EFFORTS TO WORK ON JORDAN'S BEHALF BY URGING ISRAEL TO STAY OUT OF THE CONFLICT DESPITE ENORMOUS POLITICAL PRESSURE WITHIN ISRAEL TO RETALIATE. IN THIS REGARD, ARMITAGE URGED JORDANIAN RESTRAINT IN THE EVENT OF ANY ISRAELI ACTION. ARMITAGE RETURNED TO THIS POINT SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE INITIAL OFFICE CALL AND THE LUNCHEON, EVENTUALLY ELICITING FROM THE KING THE STATEMENT THAT HE WAS "AWARE OF AND APPRECIATIVE

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OF THE PRESIDENT'S EFFORTS TO PREVENT A WIDER CONFLICT.

5. THE KING MADE IT CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT ANY ISRAELI ATTEMPT TO RETALIATE THROUGH JORDANIAN AIRSPACE WOULD MEET WITH JORDANIAN RESISTANCE. HE EXPRESSED A SENSE OF POWERLESSNESS IN THIS REGARD, CLAIMING THAT THE ISRAELIS EXPECTED JORDAN SOMEHOW TO INTERCEPT INCOMING MISSILES. ARMITAGE REJOINED THAT NO ONE COULD EXPECT JORDAN TO SHOOT DOWN IRAQI MISSILES, BUT THAT JORDAN COULD CERTAINLY DEMARCHE IRAQ ABOUT THESE REPEATED VIOLATIONS OF JORDANIAN AIRSPACE. ARMITAGE RETURNED TO THIS POINT SEVERAL TIMES, BUT THE KING REFUSED TO ENGAGE UNTIL HE PULLED ARMITAGE ASIDE AFTER LUNCH AND DESCRIBED, VERY BRIEFLY, HIS RECENT EFFORTS TO DEFUSE THE CRISIS. THE KING CLAIMED TO HAVE MET PM SHAMIR "RECENTLY, FOR ONE DAY, IN EUROPE," WHERE HE URGED THE ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER TO "DO NOTHING" IN TERMS OF RETALIATION FOR THE RECENT SCUD ATTACKS. HUSSEIN DID NOT CHARACTERIZE SHAMIR'S REPLY, BUT STATED THAT THE PM WAS IN THE COMPANY OF SEVERAL IDF OFFICERS "WHO WERE VERY NERVOUS" AND ADAMANT ABOUT THE NEED FOR AN ISRAELI RESPONSE. FURTHERMORE, SAID THE KING, PM BADRAN (WHO JOINED THE MEETING DURING LUNCH) HAD JUST RETURNED FROM BAGHDAD WHERE HE HAD "COMPLAINED" TO THE IRAQIS ABOUT THE SCUD ASSAULTS THROUGH JORDANIAN AIRSPACE AND ALSO REMONSTRATED WITH THE IRAQIS ABOUT THREATS TO EMPLOY UNCONVENTIONAL WEAPONS. THE KING OFFERED NO READOUT ON THE IRAQI RESPONSE TO BADRAN, BUT STATED THAT HE "DOES NOT THINK" IRAQ WILL LAUNCH ANY MORE MISSILES TOWARD ISRAEL. THE KING ADDED THAT HE ADVISED SHAMIR THAT JORDAN HAD DEPLOYED GROUND FORCES TO THE EASTERN PART OF THE COUNTRY IN ORDER TO COUNTER ANY THREAT OF AN IRAQI INCURSION. HE ALSO ADDED THAT SYRIAN EFFORTS AT INFILTRATION CONTINUED.

6. MUCH OF THE THREE HOURS WAS, QUITE PREDICTABLY, TAKEN UP BY THE KING'S RECITATION OF RECENT HISTORY, FOCUSING ON HIS BELIEF THAT OUTSIDE FORCES HAD FRUSTRATED A DEAL HE HAD PUT TOGETHER WITHIN 48 HOURS OF IRAQ'S INVASION TO SECURE IRAQ'S WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT. ARMITAGE LISTENED POLITELY, NEITHER ACCEPTING THE KING'S VERSION OF EVENTS NOR ENGAGING HIM IN DEBATE. REPEATEDLY HE URGED THE KING TO ACCEPT THE PAST AS PAST AND

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FOCUS ON NOW AND THE FUTURE. ALTHOUGH HE EXPRESSED A GENERAL WILLINGNESS TO CONTEMPLATE JORDAN'S POST-WAR REGIONAL ROLE. IN BOTH THE PALESTINIAN AND GULF CONTEXTS. THE KING PROVED UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO ENGAGE. HE DID, HOWEVER, EXPRESS INTEREST IN ARMITAGE'S SUGGESTION THAT THE TIME MAY BE RIGHT FOR THE KING TO DISPATCH A TRUSTED SUBORDINATE TO WASHINGTON TO ENGAGE IN

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