

431. Memorandum of Conversation¹

Washington, September 29, 1983, 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

SUBJECT

Summary of Conversation Between the President and British Prime Minister
Margaret Thatcher

PARTICIPANTS

The President
Peter R. Sommer (notetaker)
Margaret Thatcher
A.J. Coles (notetaker)

[Omitted here is discussion of Lebanon, relations with the Soviet Union, the European strategic balance, and Central America.]

Mrs. Thatcher agreed that the Western countries had to do a much better job of explaining their policies in the world at large. Duarte came to see me recently, she observed, and stressed that if democracy is not seen to be working in El Salvador after the next election then the democratic forces would lose out. *Mrs. Thatcher* added that before leaving Latin America she wanted to urge the President to think carefully before supplying arms to Argentina. (S)

The President replied that once Argentina returned to civilian rule the U.S. would be under intense pressure to make it eligible for arms purchases. (S)

Mrs. Thatcher rejoined that the last civilian government in Argentina was not a model for democracy and that it would be greatly misunderstood in Britain—America's most loyal and ardent supporter—if sales resumed. (S)

The President and *Mrs. Thatcher* broke for lunch at 12:30 p.m. (U)

¹ Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/S Special Handling Restrictions Memos 1979–1983, Lot 96D262, ES Sensitive October 1–8, 1983. Top Secret. The meeting took place in the Oval Office. Kimmitt forwarded the memorandum to Hill under an October 12 covering note. (Ibid.) The complete text of the memorandum of conversation is scheduled to be printed in *Foreign Relations, 1981–1988*, vol. VII, Western Europe, 1981–1984.