

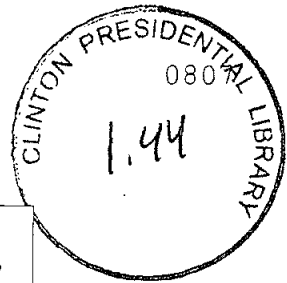
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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

DECLASSIFIED UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE
INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL,
E.O. 13526, SECTION 5.3(b)(3)

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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with British Prime Minister Blair
(U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Prime Minister Blair

Notetakers: James Smith, Roger Merletti,
David Higgins, Matthew Sibley, Elizabeth
Rodgers, Robin Rickard, Michael Manning,
Larry Butler

DATE, TIME February 4, 1999, 2:13-2:30 p.m. EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Nice to hear your voice. Al had a wonderful
time. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: It was great. He went down well. He was
fantastic with all the New Deal programs. He met with all those
business people. The unemployment program was really
impressive. I thought it was a good visit and he was fantastic
on it. (U)

The President: He also liked when he went into Prescott's
office and the only decoration was a bowl of bananas. I heard
all about it. He was very happy. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: I hope we get all that sorted out. (U)

The President: My staff won't let me talk to you unless I have
a banana at hand. I'm sitting here with a banana; it's a big,
ugly, brownish one. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Now Bill, I thought we should have a word
about Kosovo. (C)

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Reason: 1.5(d)

Declassify On: 2/5/08

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The President: Yes. Let me tell you, the Prime Ministers of both Macedonia and Albania were here today and they make us look like old men. They are 31 and 33 years old.

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Prime Minister Blair: I think Robin and Madeleine did a really good job and we got a plan. The parties are coming on Saturday and the KLA are involved, as well. That is all good.

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The President: I agree. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: First of all, I agree with everything you say about maintaining pressure on Belgrade and the Kosovars on the interim settlement. I'm encouraged by Saturday's talks. There is no other way it works over the long run unless we can get a peace agreement and troops on the ground. ~~(C)~~

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It is a hard sell in Congress. They still lecture me on Bosnia and how we didn't pay for it in advance. I tell them Bosnia is a great success story and they ought to be proud of it and keep it going, and not let it be wiped out. I gather there is a general feeling that a lot of European countries are willing to make troop contributions. That will help me to get Congress to support participation. You know I always want to be part of these things. ~~(C)~~

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I just gave a speech today. I basically said we were considering our participation and talking to Congress about it. I will make the strongest case I can, but our system is that they have to come up with money for it. The more European countries that are willing to participate and the greater extent, the better luck I will have with the Republican Congress. (C)

Ironically, all the business with me might help us get something done here. I think the announcement of substantial British participation, which I gather is your decision, will help us a lot. I want to help and I made my first big public pitch today. We will work with Congress and stay in close touch. Our military people are in contact and are simultaneously designing this concerning who contributes what. I will do the best that I can. I wish I could give you a number now, but I don't know what level yet. I am working it and I'll do the best I can. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: Well, Bill, that is great.

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The President: Great. Let me say, there's one other thing that would help me. If you put out that we talked, say that we have this under active consideration. That is what I just said publicly. If you could not say that I have made a definite decision. Because the Congress is Republican, at every public hearing we have, they start moping and saying that I expect them to fall in line afterward because they never refuse to support the troops. If you could say I haven't made a decision, that would give me another day to massage the congressional psyche and break it loose here. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: Don't worry, that is absolutely fine. That is very good indeed. Thanks, as ever. (C)

The President: Well, you are doing great. You even got good press in the New York Times. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Well, it cost a lot of money. (U)

The President: You got good press in the New York Times and I got a good editorial in the Guardian. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Yes, you got an editorial in the Guardian. (U)

The President: They said I was more liberal than you. I don't know if that is good or bad. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Well, it's good for you. Your State of the Union, as I suspected, had a big impact around Europe. I was in Vienna last week with center-left leaders. It made a big impact there.

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The President: We need to think about our next steps. I thought that NYU conference was good. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: They (the Center-left leaders) are absolutely desperate for it. They now buy entirely the argument that we can learn from America. The State of the Union did help. The leader of the United States was talking about building a cohesive, peaceful society and the rest of it. It was language they can understand. (C)

The President: Yes. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: I think we certainly should do some more. They are desperate. (C)

The President: One thing I think you should have your guys thinking about. What is our response to tough challenges? Like, is there a third way response to financial crises? How do we stop the reversal of trade liberalization and take it up again? With all these troubles in Asia, the temptations to close down the movement for trade liberalization will be great. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: I think that is absolutely right. It has to be a big part of our discussions.

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The President: I agree with that. I think when we do the next G-8 meeting we really ought to give some thought to setting up our trade position and also think about what wrinkles need to be in the finance system position as well. We will have a lot to talk about in advance, but the G-8 will give you a forum and me a forum and our crowd a forum to elevate some of these issues. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: I agree completely. ~~(C)~~

The President: We will be in constant touch the next few days to wrap it up and nail down what to do. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: King Hussein. What a terrible thing. I'm really sorry. ~~(C)~~

The President: Yes, he just left here. He is going home on life support. You know he did his best, but I will be surprised if he pulls out of this. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: I just saw him a couple of days ago and thought he was looking better. ~~(C)~~

The President: He had a severe relapse. Noor brought him over here. I just think that this is the way these conditions are. They overwhelm your system and you have nothing left. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: It's a shame for the guy. Bill, just one other thing. E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

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[REDACTED]

The President: Any time, day or night. It is my own private passion. I have been worried for you. To the people on the outside, it seems idiotic that we would allow these elements to disrupt progress. You are where you are and whatever I can do to dislodge it, let me know. If you have something specific for me to come at them with, let me know that, too. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: Is Bertie going to be all right? ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: I hope so. We need him. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Really, we do need him. [REDACTED]

The President: Yes. ~~(C)~~

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Prime Minister Blair: Let us keep in touch on Kosovo and other matters. ~~(C)~~

The President: All right, man. I'll see you soon. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: All right, Bill. All the best. (U)

The President: Goodbye. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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