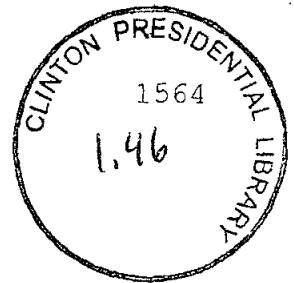


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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON



MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with British Prime Minister Blair
(U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Prime Minister Tony Blair

Notetakers: George Chastain, Doug Bayley,
Frank Jarosinski, Matthew Sibley, Roger
Merletti, Jim Smith and Lawrence Butler

DATE, TIME March 4, 1999, 4:40 - 5:04 p.m. EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

Prime Minister Blair: Hi, how are you doing? (U)

The President: I'm fine, I guess. I just got a bunch of stuff
going on here, but everything is all right. How are you doing?
(U)

Prime Minister Blair: I am fine. I'm really sorry to bother
you about this damn thing.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: When is the election, May 6? ~~(S)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Yes, May 6.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: Let me tell you what. I have to be a little
careful about how I say this. Most of our people think that the
WTO panel may approve a smaller aggregate amount. If they do, I
will try to do what I can to be helpful.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(d)

If

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Classified by: Glyn T. Davies

Reason: 1.5(d)

Declassify On: 3/5/09

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INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL,
E.O. 13526, SECTION 5.3(b)(3)
ISCAP APPEAL NO. 2013-090, document no. 44
DECLASSIFICATION DATE: October 14, 2015

we do this, it will presumably be well in advance of the election. Anything you can do through Leon to get the WTO panel to make their decision would be very helpful. The only way we can get nailed is if they approve the exact amount, but I assume it will be lower, then we'll have an opportunity. (c)

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

Prime Minister Blair:

The President: They are significant. One of the things I've tried to do before, and I hope this year will pass, is a new initiative to get more money through trade and investment. They're extremely vulnerable to drug lords, and bananas will be essentially a holding action. I think that maybe this is something the European Union and United States can do together and get them more help down there. I am worried about both Caribbean and Central America because of this storm.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(d)

I think it is a legitimate serious issue, not just about two Central American countries going broke. It's a deeper thing on all sides. I would be prepared to work on that. The main thing between now and May is to get these guys to talk. If you could get the WTO panel to make a rapid decision, maybe we could work something through on this. (c)

Prime Minister Blair:

The President: What they could do, what I am worried about, is they may be sympathetic to you, and maybe rule against you on the merits. If they keep kicking the can down the road, that would be the worst for you politically. (c)

Prime Minister Blair:

The President: I agree with you. I'm trying to pass a billion dollar trade initiative and all the right-wing Republicans bailed out on me yesterday. They spent all that money, billions

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

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E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

and billions, supporting dictatorships and taking sides in civil wars, but they won't help me get them back on their feet. They're trying to keep me from getting it before I go down there next week. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair:

[REDACTED]

~~(C)~~

The President: I got it. Look, basically what is at stake here is I've had to fight back 80 percent of both parties in Congress who want to legislate something worse than what I did. The whole credibility of the WTO is at issue here. But what is important, in order for me to do anything, is for the WTO to decide sooner rather than later. I should have some flexibility if they decide that it should be X million dollars less. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: That would be very helpful. ~~(C)~~

The President: That is why it's important not to talk about it. Because if we do I will have everybody all over me. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair:

[REDACTED]

The President: Can I ask you another quick question. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Yes. (U)

The President: What do you want me to say on St. Patrick's Day over here? Where will we be by then? ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair:

[REDACTED]

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E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

[REDACTED]

The President: Let me ask you this. Is there some way to manifest the commitment by something they say to you or me? Then a week later, some big declaration on decommissioning. Is there some way to do it that way? (S)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: Right now, they're saying trust me. But they could make these statements, then dick around. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: How do they justify the Good Friday accords? (S)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

The President: I completely agree. If you have any more instructions or advice between now and St. Patrick's Day, I'll be glad to have it. But, I got it. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: I think we have a chance to get the Kosovars to all right on the Kosovo agreement. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Really? (C)

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

Prime Minister Blair: That would be great. ~~(C)~~

The President: Bob Dole went over there today for me. He's been a champion of theirs. I'd say we have a pretty good chance. I'm worried about the possibility of the Kosovars saying yes, Milosevic saying no, and NATO will blink. I'm really worried. We need to suck it up. You and I may have to do another round of calls. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: All right. Let me know about all this other stuff. ~~(C)~~

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Prime Minister Blair: Thanks a lot. (U)

The President: I'll see you. If you have anything more on the other issues, let me know, directly or indirectly, through our channels. (U)

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Prime Minister Blair: Again, sorry to trouble you. (U)

The President: That's okay. I may have to start ordering 50 percent of my bananas from the Caribbean and Central America.
(U)

Prime Minister Blair: Okay, Bill. All the very best to you. See you. (U)

The President: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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