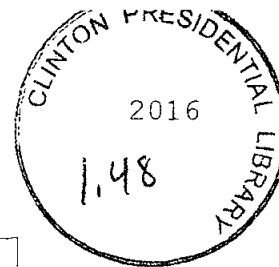


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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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

ISCAP APPEAL NO. 2013-090, document no. 46
DECLASSIFICATION DATE: October 14, 2015

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with British Prime Minister Blair
(U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Prime Minister Blair

Notetakers: Doug Bayley, Frank Jarosinski,
Joel Schrader, Miles Murphy and Lawrence
Butler

DATE, TIME March 21, 1999, 12:50 - 1:12 p.m. EST
AND PLACE: Residence

Prime Minister Blair: Hi, Bill. (U)

The President: How are you? (U)

Prime Minister Blair: I'm fine. How were things last week?
(U)

The President: What do you mean, last week? (U)

Prime Minister Blair: With the Irish -- Gerry Adams, Trimble
and everything. (U)

The President: I'm sorry; I have been through all kinds of hell
with this Kosovo thing. You ought to get a transcript of George
Mitchell's comments to them. I gave him a Medal of Freedom
here. He said, "I don't want to talk about what I did, but what
needs to be done." He said, "I hope that about a thousand
people will ignore me while I make these remarks to the
parties." It was devastating. He was great. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: I heard he was brilliant. (U)

The President: I did exactly what you asked me to. Hell, I
don't know. It looks to me like Gerry needs some sort of cover

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Reason: 1.5(d)

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for demilitarization and then can give cover to Trimble to do what he needs to do. It is important to keep pushing it forward. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: Okay, that's what we will do. (C)

The President: Anyway, I did the very best I could. I had chills running up and down my spine yesterday. There is a new book here by Daniel Silva who is a former Washington journalist. The book is called "The Marching Season" and you are in it. For some reason he uses a fictitious President, but the real you. There is an ultrasecret Protestant group and they are out there acting against everybody -- Protestants, Catholics. It's purely fictional, but it gave me the chills about what could happen if we don't keep doing this. I was frustrated, and I know you are, but I don't know what else I can do. I will do whatever. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: Okay, Bill, thanks anyway for last week. (C)

The President: You have to table some fix for this and let us pressure Adams to take it. I don't think there is anything else we can do. (C)

Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: Can we talk Kosovo? Milosevic has agreed to meet Holbrooke. He will go over there tomorrow and tell him he will bear the full responsibility for consequences for NATO military action unless he does what he is told to do. I got reports this morning of one village of 13,000 people that has been completely evacuated.

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Primakov is supposed to come here next week, and I need to give him a heads up so if he wants to cancel he can. ~~(S)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Absolutely. ~~(S)~~

The President:

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Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: I couldn't agree more.

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There are one or two issues that I want to talk to you about before going on, but we can talk in the next day or two on that. ~~(S)~~

Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: I agree with that. I had a meeting with a lot of members of Congress and several Republicans said that it sounds bad -- if he were out there practicing ethnic cleansing again we would support it, but if we take the initiative and he moves against the people it will look like we caused it. (S)

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Prime Minister Blair:

The President: The reason we did not take any other action is because the peace process was going on. (S)

Prime Minister Blair:

The President: That is what my critics here are going to say. (S)

Prime Minister Blair:

The President: I agree with that. Let me ask you this. How are the Tories reacting at home? Are they supporting you? (S)

Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: Our right wing isolationists certainly would if they thought they could get public opinion on their side and since they have the parliamentary majority they would cause a problem. The Republicans fluctuate between isolationism and unilateral action. They want the biggest possible military and want to spend money on only the military and concrete, but never want to use it on anything. I think that in the near term I am in need of a stronger presentational argument than you are. I am hoping that it will be fine, I couldn't agree more that we

need to get a strong presentation. If the others are going with us, we need Chirac and Schroeder saying the same thing. (S)

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Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: Yes, I will call them when I get off the phone with you. I understand they are even chiding us a little bit about whether we are moving quickly enough. [REDACTED]

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(d)

[REDACTED] I have to call and tell him the truth and let him stay home if he wants to. But he still needs to come here because he needs the money and the IMF agreement worked out. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

(S)

The President: I am still very worried about it. And I am worried about them because the Duma seems incapable of doing anything positive to help themselves along. We could save them a lot of money if they could ratify START II. Then I could go immediately to START III. And then I could pass this bill to accelerate threat reduction with the nuclear stockpile that could occupy as many as 20,000 or half the military scientists over the next two years. But the Duma seems incapable of doing a lot of this stuff. I don't think we have any choice whatsoever. We don't want to polarize them further, but we need to take some form of action. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: You got it. One thing we have to figure out is a strategy that will keep the money there that we pump in. All the money disappeared in 48 hours the last time. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: Why don't we plan on talking tomorrow or the next day and we will work on Kosovo right now. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Okay, we will be in a position to discuss it again tomorrow. ~~(C)~~

The President: Okay man. Sorry I didn't do more on Ireland, but I tried. I even got Trimble and Adams to sit in my private office alone for a while. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Well it went off very well here. ~~(C)~~

The President: I think the public vibes were very good indeed, but I didn't have the feeling that I helped you move the ball forward on the substance of it. ~~(C)~~

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Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: I don't think Gerry wants it to get off the tracks and that is heartening. I know damn well Trimble does not, but he wants his leadership position as well. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: If you could have a referendum on this, the people could come up with 15 permutations. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

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The President: That's another thing I thought about. I think the IRA people with personal history have a lot more ideology on this whole decommissioning issue than the facts warrant. They seem to think that if they unilaterally do this, it is like saying that what the struggle is all about and what they said all those years is illegitimate. They are loading a lot of crap that does not need to be loaded. The only way to get off the psychological hook is to make it part of a bigger disarmament or find some proposal people could ratify and let their reps off the hook. The atmospherics seem great, but I didn't have any specifics that I could glean. I don't see Trimble having a viable option. I did not mean to be so negative but I don't

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think Sinn Fein thinks they can say different words and make it happen. I don't think words alone will do it. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: [E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)]

The President: All right man. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: [E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)]
(C)

The President: I agree. If there is a problem with Chirac or Schroeder I will have to call you back. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: I am here. (U)

The President: Bye, Tony. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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