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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 Blair

Notetakers: Doug Bayley, Miles Murphy,
James Smith, Lawrence Butler and K. C. Brown

DATE, TIME April 29, 1999, 5:22 - 5:43 p.m. EDT
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: How are you? (U)

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

The President: Great. I thought your trip went very well, and everyone loved the DLC event we did later. So I think your trip went great. I called to follow up a little bit on the memo you gave me and what we're doing here. Let me make three or four points to respond to your memo and tell you what we are doing, then we can talk about whatever else we need to. (S)

First, on your statement [E.O. 13526, section 1.4(d)]
We've got a small group working to develop an integrated strategic plan that will merge our military and strategic objectives and focus on putting pressure on Milosevic, his cronies, integrating military targets, covert action, psychological operations and public affairs. And it is my understanding we're already in touch with you. We'll have a detailed plan ready sometime this weekend and share it with your people. We will coordinate two to three times a week in a telephone conference with people in a group led by John Sawers and Sandy Berger. So, we'll deal with that issue. (S)

[E.O. 13526, section 1.4(d)]

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Reason: 1.5 (a, b, d)
Declassify On: 4/30/09

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INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION APPEALS PANEL,
E.O. 13526, SECTION 5.3(b)(3)
ISCAP APPEAL NO. 2013-090, document no. 57
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affairs thing is in much better shape now; the war room you and I set up has a 24-hour capability and a rapid-response element, and I think Joe and Alistair are talking two or three times a day, including with the people in Brussels. I think that's good and we're trying to bring in the guy who used to work as my communications director to work our operation here for 30 days to make sure we've melded our political and diplomatic efforts together. On all those areas, we're doing pretty well. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: That sounds great. (U)

The President: The last item you raised is the need to do joint planning on the ground force option. I personally believe it can be done under the umbrella of the assessment. As I told you, we're working with our guys; they're so afraid it will leak. We have to work through it, because there's no point in doing this in detail unless we know how it will mesh together. I will keep working on that, but I think we've made reasonable progress on what we discussed and I wanted to see where you are on that. (S)

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(d)

If he means we won't assassinate him or bomb him or extract him from Serbia, I think we can make that commitment. I don't think we can make a public commitment on war crimes, because that is an independent body. Louise Arbour is here, by the way. (S)

I said we're cooperating with the tribunal, so that is a more difficult issue. He's looking for some assurance, but that's a pretty dicey thing. So, that's all I have to report. I do think Chernomyrdin has the bit in his teeth to do something, but whether he can, I don't know. They are very anxious to play a role in a diplomatic settlement and go in with their troops.

(S)

One other point: the Russians might want to be in an area of Kosovo where the Serbs are dominant in population. I said I personally had no problems, as long as the Russians had a hard and fast commitment to protect the Kosovars. I had never discussed this with the American people, not one time, without saying that if the United States has a role, it will be providing protection to the Serb minority as well as the Kosovar/Albanian majority. (S)

The second thing -- and Sandy raised the red flag on this -- I asked him to make it clear to Chernomyrdin that having Russians and Greeks, Ukrainians, or other Orthodox denominations could not become a de facto partition, because the EU has taken a strong position on this, as has the United States and as has NATO. As long as there's no partition, I think we could work that out. Basically, that's a read-out of what D'Alema said. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: Right. That is very helpful, Bill. First, I think on the bit with the press side, and NATO and SHAPE working together, we have a lot of people working well with your people. That is working better and will get better still. On the military side, I think that is great, to help SACEUR with what he is doing. On the video conferencing, I think that's fine. The thing to do is have a constant updating of all the different issues so they know exactly where we are, feeding through the information we are getting to your guys, and vice versa. (S)

The President: I agree. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: On the ground troop thing: I understand all the problems, and we don't want this to start running in the press and everything. We have done some work we are fairly confident of, and your guys will have to get in touch as you want, really.

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

So that is my only worry, is not to get caught by the winter. (S)

The President: Yes, I'm watching the calendar pretty closely. We're back to the efficacy argument here. The public in America, in the latest survey yesterday, is against ground troops; it supports bombing, but doesn't think it will work. I think whatever I decide is right, we can go forward with. I

think what we don't want to do is not do what we need to do in terms of planning. They're asking when this will be over. I looked at the weather map and said, "May is better than April, and June is better than May, and July is better than June." That had the right effect. It wasn't lost on them, to talk about how the weather is getting better. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: I think it is important, also.

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

The President: Yes. (S)

Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: I don't know. I just don't know. We have to wait and see. We may have to talk again before the weekend is over, when we see how he does. We'll have to wait and see. My guess is Milosevic will offer a little more tomorrow, but not enough, and then come back and say, "How about a pause in bombing?" He's still trying to stiff the Alliance. (S)

I want you to think about two things with your planners, if you've got a pretty good military plan now on the ground troop option. There are two things. Life is not perfect, but I basically had three objectives going in: one is to win in Kosovo, to have the people come back to a protected area and give them autonomy and then to have the larger approach to southeastern Europe that we discussed. (S)

The second thing is, to get from beginning to end with the NATO alliance intact. When you think about it, this is the first thing NATO has had to do in 50 years. In Bosnia, we had a lot of help on the ground from Croatian and Muslim forces; we didn't have to do as much as we do here. (S)

The third thing is, I was so happy about Chernomyrdin being back in harness. In talking to all our people, I've said that I want this to come out in a way that enhances Russia's diplomatic role and strategic partnership with us. That would be a real boost

to the forces of progress and those who want a partnership with us, rather than those who want to go off by themselves angry, hurt and humiliated. (S)

One thing you need to have your best Russia people dealing with: if it comes to a troop option, what the hell are we going to do with Russia if it leads to the collapse of our relationship.

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Prime Minister Blair: My view on this is,

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

The President: I agree with that. How about Ireland? Where are you? (C)

Prime Minister Blair:

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

The President: Do you think the IRA has decided they are never going to decommission? (C)

Prime Minister Blair:

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

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

[REDACTED]

The poll shows more people are in favor of the Good Friday agreement than at the time of the referendum. People just want this damn thing to happen. (S)

The President: They're tired of screwing with it, aren't they? (S)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

Anyway, we will keep on it. I think the next two weeks is pretty crucial and I am just thinking about what big thing we can do. I am going to Macedonia and Romania for a few days next week to visit our troops and also to address the Romanians. When I come back, I will do a couple of days on the Irish thing. (S)

The President: Great. I go to Germany next week. Germany is the one country where we have people flying and doing humanitarian operations and there are refugees, and Schroeder has the EU Presidency. My guys asked me not to go down to Aviano because it would be too disruptive, so I'll honor that. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: Yes, I think Germany is just the right place to go next week. If you give a message of public support, it will be very important. (S)

The President: Yes, He's been good to stay with us. There's a big article in the paper today, "Germans Seek to Separate Serb Leader From Support." It's in *The New York Times*. I can't tell, but it looks like they're trying to set him up for war crimes. I want to talk to Gerhard about it. I'll have somebody fax that to you. (S)

Prime Minister Blair: Okay. Just before we go. Three things our people should think about. [REDACTED]

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The President: I agree. I will get on all of them and talk to you. If you want to talk over the weekend, I'm available. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Thanks for the weekend. (U)

The President: Okay. Goodbye. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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