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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: Jenny McGee, Robert Ford,
Joel Ehrendreich, Elizabeth Rogers,
Roger Merletti and Richard Norland

DATE, TIME: October 13, 1999, 10:38 - 11:29 a.m.
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Tony, how are you? (U)

Prime Minister Blair: I'm fine. (U)

The President: I haven't talked to you in a while and I wanted to check in on a few things. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: How are you doing? (U)

The President: I'm great. I've been fighting reactionaries in Congress, we're winning with the people. I thought your speech to your party group was great. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Thanks. We've got an interesting situation here at the moment because the conservatives have really moved off to a very far right position. (U)

The President: That's what our guys are doing here. One reason Bush is doing so well is because he criticized one thing on the right. He is making people think he is saving them from the right. But, it's a fraud because he is really for them on everything else. I have to figure out how to expose the fraud that Bush is the new Clinton, establishing a new Republican party like I made a new Democratic party. It's helping Bush but it is killing Al. They asked me what I thought, and I said it

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was terrible how the right wing was treating him. After all, he was for them, and his lobbyists organized them to kill our patients' bill of rights. He was for school vouchers and for the NRA trying to kill our handgun measures. Why were they being so mean to him? I thought it was terrible how mean they were being, but they wouldn't give what I said that much press -- it wasn't what they wanted to say. That is what we've got to do. Al has to position himself between Bush and Bradley. Now it's very interesting. We are at a point where the perceptions of major players are at variance with their positions. It's a terrible thing and there's a limit to how much I can do because, in our political culture, I can say what I think but it will hurt if it appears I'm trying to control the outcome of another election. I've got to be careful not to tell people how to vote. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Yes. Policy is the way to do it, isn't it? (U)

The President: Yes, you're right, it is. What I am doing -- the results speak for themselves. The question is not whether we are going to change, but how we change -- a U-turn or hold on to what we're doing. Here are the new ideas for the 21st century. That is the argument I am making, and the argument Gore has to make. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: I think he's got to really. If it comes down to general positioning, it will get more difficult. (U)

The President: The people still don't know what a VP does in our country. It's not an accident we've elected only two in our history. But it's still the best way to become president -- someone dies or something happens in the interim. The Vice President has become more important in modern American history. That's how Nixon got to come back as President. Nixon barely lost, and Bush won when Dukakis collapsed. It's not such a bad thing to be a Vice President now. It's not the handicap it once was, but you have to capitalize on it. So far we haven't been able to capitalize on it even though our ratings are slightly higher than Eisenhower's and Reagan's were at this point. He ought to be able to do that, I think he is getting it sorted out now. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: It's really about definition, I think. (U)

The President: It always is, isn't it? I have half a dozen things I'd like to discuss. How did your government change play out? (C)

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Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: I really like him. He is such a bright man. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: I saw him recently. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: He told me that. [REDACTED]

The President: It was probably time for Mo to get out. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: She served you well and worked very hard. She made people laugh when she pissed them off, and that's a great thing. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: If you want me to do anything, let me know. I know that Ian Paisley got mad at what I said last week, but

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I'll try not to offer anymore unhelpful analogies. I wrote to him that I will try to stay out of the analysis business. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

The President: I've always found that if someone's offended by a remark, it is better to apologize immediately because people who agree with what you said won't hold it against you. Anyway, ring the bell if you want me to do anything. They just have to finally decide whether to cut a deal or not. I think in the end they have to decide. It has dragged on so long I don't expect either side to eat the whole thing. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: Yes. [REDACTED]

The President: One thing Gerry said, I've never talked to you about it, Gerry told me they trusted de Chastelain and would stay on it if he promulgated a schedule. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: You could even have de Chastelain promulgate a schedule for decommissioning starting on a date that was ten days after they got in the executive. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: Yes. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

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The President: What if de Chastelain promulgated a schedule for decommissioning and then you said to Trimble that he'd better

let Sinn Fein in the government before then so he doesn't give them an excuse for slipping that date. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Yes. ~~(C)~~

The President: And then Trimble lets them in and says if they slip, we'll walk out. What about that? ~~(C)~~

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Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: What about Adams? ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

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

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: Anyway, that is best idea I've got. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: It sort of takes it away from them. If you could let de Chastelain offer the schedule, they could say something nice about how they respect de Chastelain. But they've got to be in the government to fulfill this obligation, then if this date slips then Trimble says I'm walking. And then it is all on them. They both have what they asked for, they are in the executive and then have this date staring them in the face -- only ten days away. It seems that would help Trimble with his constituents if he has a deal in advance and not three months away. Everybody's used to wandering around their offices and getting to know each other and trying not to look like the biggest asshole at the garden party. This has to happen fairly quickly. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: Why don't we call Mitchell and run it by him if you think it might have some merit. ~~(C)~~

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Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: That way Adams doesn't have to say anything to get into the government but they are screwed immediately and quickly if they don't deliver. Let me run it by Mitchell. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: Okay. There a couple of other things I'd like to run through. First, thank you and Jacques and Gerhard for running that piece on CTBT in the *New York Times*. Here's the problem. My Senate agreed to a truncated schedule. Half of the Republicans are against this on its merit. For the others it's just politics. They are out to screw me because they don't want to help me and don't want to help Al. But a bunch are genuine isolationists. They just say "piss on our allies" and "to hell with what they think; screw anybody who screws with us." It's just sick what a world we are living in here. But I'm trying to work a deal so this is not voted down. I'm trying to work on a schedule. If they start hearings, we will get them involved in the process. Even if they don't ratify while I am president, it'll be obvious to the world that they are strengthening the treaty. They will if they are working on safeguards. But it is just silly intellectually, just awful what they are doing. And they are hurting themselves. They are giving us a good issue in the elections. It is terrible what they have done. But your piece was very helpful and I wanted to thank you for it. The problem is that under the rules of the Senate they are in a position where a small majority can prevent the vote from being delayed now. We may get it put off by one vote. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Right. ~~(C)~~

The President: Whatever happens, we'll bang them pretty good.
(C)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

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The President: Thank you. I don't think this is the end of American leadership on arms control, just parliamentary

maneuvers. It's just a rightwing group and they are just way out there. (C)

Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: It's stupid. They won't pay UN dues and they don't want an aid budget. They want a big military that never does anything. They spend more money on defense than I do, but don't want them to do anything, and I'm the most pro-defense Democrat President that we've had. They want a bunch of bombs and missiles and a defense system, and then they just cut everybody's taxes. They want to put rich people behind gates so the starving can't get at them. They basically want an upscale Brazil for America. It is awful, but I think we can beat them back. I want to say a word about Florence, and then I've got two other things. I'm glad we let Cardoso come, but can you explain to me, in a European context, why we didn't invite Wim Kok or Guterres from Portugal? (C)

Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: The other guy I thought should have been invited, who has been a wonderful ally to all of us is Chretien.

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Prime Minister Blair: I agree.

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The President: I'm afraid it will undercut the whole idea of a global movement. I will not be in office to work with these people more than another 15 months, but you and Chretien may be around another five years. The other guy in Latin America is Zedillo,

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But if I were doing it and I were European, I would want Guterres and Kok and I don't know about Austria, I don't know him. Chretien, every time we need him, he shows up and raises the flag. (C)

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Prime Minister Blair: Absolutely. I am in complete agreement.

The President: Are you going to sing the Marseillaise? ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Yes.

The President: I do too. And it is also a way for Europe to get more influence over him in a positive way. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair:

The President: Is there anything we can do to help him? ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair:

The President: Maybe one thing that could come out of Italy is some sort of statement that will help him. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: The thing that bothers me is that he has the worst of both worlds.

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At least for all the horrible

bloodshed in '94 we had policies in place that turned the country around by '96, congressional gains in '96 and '98, and we may be able to get Congress back in 2000. ~~(C)~~

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Prime Minister Blair:

The President: Yeah. I'll take some guidance from you, and I will talk to him about it. I think he's trying to do the right thing but he's been a little foggy about it. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair:

The President: I agree. I will do what I can. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: Yes. Okay, we need to think about that. Let me mention a couple of other things. The WTO ministerial will be held in Seattle in Washington State in December and preparations are in full swing. I think this is a major opportunity for the third way agenda to put a human face on the global economy. We have to come out for more open trade and the legitimate interests of labor and environment. I've been to Geneva twice to talk about this and the child labor convention. We think it would be a very good thing to have a WTO working group on trade and strategy analysis, not on negotiations. We have been in touch with your people, and I hope we can work together on this. A lot of people are afraid to discuss the two things in the same breath. But the whole pitch here has to be we can't turn our backs on integrating the global economy. But I want to do it in a way that takes everybody along. ~~(C)~~

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Prime Minister Blair:

The President: Yes, it is. We're going to have every NGO and labor union demonstrating against us and we have to have something that answers what they are saying. I see rising protectionism in this country. In the last two years, we took on a huge amount of the shortfall of the Asian economy by increasing imports and running a trade deficit which is unusual in conventional terms, but the world has changed quite a lot. For example, in '97 and '98 we bought ten times more steel from Japan, China, and Russia than Europe did. Protectionism is rising among Republicans and Democrats, and I see it manifesting itself in other countries. We have to find a way to turn back the tide of it. We have to try to find mechanisms where we can discuss all these things together. Europe is in better shape on this than we are. I'm not trying to impose standards on other countries, but there's got to be a way to work our way through this. (C)

Prime Minister Blair:

The President: I wish you would. We have to see how this plays out against the media story in America to see if there is more coverage given to the people demonstrating than to the fact that we are going to meet. Two others issues I would like raise. President Frei of Chile raised Pinochet with me in New Zealand. He said Pinochet's presence in London is a big problem for the Chilean government. He thought they had worked out a solution to get rid of him by putting him in the Senate. They are very concerned now. Our position has got to be that this is a legal matter and whatever you do, we will be in agreement. But Chile has twice the per capita income of any other in Latin America, they have had this immense success, and they thought they had put this nightmare behind them.

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Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: The real thing we need to do is get more victims to say "send him home and let us handle it here." I got it.

(c)

Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: I won't say this to anybody. I'm also aware what a problem this is for you. My take on where they are is they thought they had done their version of Mandela's Truth Commission -- put it in a box and store it there, not live forever. (c)

Prime Minister Blair: Yes. (c)

The President: A final point -- Iraq. I am afraid we're in a different place in the Security Council. We worked all these years on negotiations and before that, and I hope we don't get divided here. The language your people worked out with the French crosses a red line because it suspends sanctions on Saddam Hussein before disarmament. When I took office, the Bush position was, I thought, unfair. We wouldn't ever lift sanctions until Saddam Hussein complied with his disarmament obligations and with obligations on all other UN resolutions, human rights and all that. Now I am prepared to say that if he meets his disarmament obligations and puts a system in place where he's complying, I would be prepared to suspend sanctions and liberalize the oil-for-food program -- especially with the price of oil going up, we should be better off. But I think if we say to this guy, "If you start to comply, we will lift sanctions," he will quickly reestablish the weapons of mass destruction program, and it will become known in two years that he has. It may not happen while I'm in office, but it will for you. It could become a real nightmare for you.

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I understand where the French are and we are prepared to move from our former position especially on oil-for-food

things. I know everyone is getting sanctions fatigue,

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Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: Would it end the suspension because any country could vote to veto continuing it? (C)

Prime Minister Blair:

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

[REDACTED]

The President: Our guys here in Congress, even the Democrats, are attacking me because I haven't done enough to get rid of him. I think they will eat me alive if I agree to lift sanctions while he has his weapons program going on. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: But it looks like the UN has finally given in to him if you have no sanctions without disarmament.

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: Have you worked out the differences between "certain" and "all"? (C)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

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The President: I don't know, I am very skeptical. I will look at the specifics. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: Look Bill.

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The President:

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Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: There may be a solution here in the details, but I am genuinely quite skeptical. I've been dealing with this guy for a long time. (C)

Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: We've been criticized for not being more condemning of the coup.

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Two

strong people can do the sensible thing. I think our objective ought to be to get them to do the sensible thing. (C)

Prime Minister Blair:

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The President: Okay. We will stay in touch. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Bill, when will we see you then? (U)

The President: I will see you in Italy and probably at the OSCE thing in Turkey. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Yeah. It will be good to have a proper talk with you. (U)

The President: Yeah. You are in a position, as you get more influence in Europe, I believe we've got a shot now, because of the two earthquakes, to resolve the conflict between Greece and Turkey. To accept Turkey into the EU will lock Turkey into the West for the next fifty years and that would help solve some problems if east of there goes sour. Two areas that I have wanted to make progress on -- the Aegean and India/Pakistan. We need to talk again, maybe before the OSCE, and I will tell you what I have been doing on it. But I think we've got a shot in the Aegean now.

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

(C)
Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

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

The President: The Turks and Greeks are getting along better. The earthquakes made them see each other as human beings again. The problem is Cyprus. The Greeks think they were uprooted and can't go to visit their relatives' graves. It's got to be a strictly cold-blooded deal. We've done our part with military cooperation. We've got to get something that leads them on the path to Europe. Otherwise, they'll never do it because they think they need to "get along" like the Irish. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

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

The President: That is what we need. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: Okay Bill. (U)

The President: I will see you soon and thank you. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --