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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with British Prime Minister John Major
(U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Prime Minister Major

Notetakers: Ralph Sigler, Larry Wright and
Steve Brennan

DATE, TIME September 1, 1996, 1052-1105 a.m.
AND PLACE: Little Rock, Arkansas

The President: John? (U)

Prime Minister Major: Hi Bill, good afternoon. (U)

The President: Thank you for taking my call. (U)

Prime Minister Major: Where are you? (U)

The President: Home in Arkansas. Just finished the nominating convention, and I went cross country. (U)

Prime Minister Major: The train was a brilliant piece of politics; looks like it went well. (UJ)

The President: It did. We had huge crowds along the way. Unfortunately, the United States has allowed passenger service to go down hill so this is quite a unique and wonderful thing. We had very large crowds by American standards. I am very happy about it. (U)

Prime Minister Major: It looked marvelous. I saw a lot of coverage on CNN while toasting my toes in the garden. I had a slightly more relaxing week than you. (U)

The President: Good for you. You just took the week off? (U)

Prime Minister Major: I had a holiday in France and a few days after that to work at home and watch a little cricket. I am sorry it is over, but I have to go back to work tomorrow. (U)

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The President: Do you feel better though? (U)

Prime Minister Major: Yes, almost human again; I am at the top of my range in politics (U).

The President: I think we don't realize how mentally tired we get. (U)

Prime Minister Major: I absolutely agree. (U)

The President: I have a guy that works for me; brilliant man. He is like a staff secretary; one of his jobs is to put a one page summary on top of everything I read. He saves me hours because he is so smart. (C)

Prime Minister Major: Sounds like a treasure. One or two page notes are sometimes sufficient but sometimes you just have to plow through things. Miserable affair in Iraq. (C)

The President: Yes it is. I know Tony Lake briefed your Ambassador here on the response we are considering. It is a difficult call because one of the Kurdish groups is in line with Saddam, but on the other hand, what bothers me is that if we don't do anything, the demarche was meaningless and might encourage him to go forward. It seems this approach we advocate might serve to let him know he is not in control. Since we issued the demarche, if we don't do anything, he would be left with the initiative and we would be left with his word to withdraw from Irbil. (C)

Prime Minister Major: Have you heard anything from Saudi Arabia and Jordan? (C)

The President: No, I am calling them now. As you can tell my voice is hoarse. I am calling King Hussein and President Mubarak today. I could get back to you after I talk to them. (C)

Prime Minister Major: Good. I know Tony briefed John Holmes. I

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The President: I think we would make it clear that an attack on SAM sites is not designed to force a withdrawal; we don't think we can force that or have that as an objective. If we attack the SAM sites, that would undermine his ability to interrupt the No Fly Zone and remind him we have a capability to do something to his war capability. (C)

Prime Minister Major: You would justify this action internationally by saying we are removing the threat to our No Fly Zone assets in the region? (C)

The President: Yes, I would say his attack on Irbil shows he still has aggressive intentions and we have to minimize that. We have to extend the No Fly Zone a degree and take out the SAM sites and remind him he can't take up wholesale aggression. We don't have the capability to remove him if he doesn't want to. What concerns me far more is both he and Barzani have a deal going on. We can not look the other way from this after the gulf war. I think we have to do something, but not be tied to a withdrawal from Irbil which would set us up for failure. (C)

Prime Minister Major: Have you had any contact with Talabani or has he been in touch with you? (C)

The President: To tell you the truth, Talabani is closer to Iran, which is one of the things that provoked this. We have not been in contact with them except for the talks in London. We have a representative there with you, do you think we should be in touch with them? (C)

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The President: I think Talabani might criticize this as inadequate. (C)

Prime Minister Major: It is possible he might do that. How do you think the other permanent members of the UN Security Council will react? (C)

The President: I do not know. As you know, I always call you first to get your feeling. Then I will call them and call you back. (C)

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The President: Okay, let us call around and get back with you.
(C)

Prime Minister Major: I will be at 10 Downing Street all day tomorrow so we can catch up. (C)

The President: Okay. If we agree we can't do nothing, I can't think of anything that would not have more complications than this. (C)

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The President: I will get on it. We are on track and will get back to you. (C)

Prime Minister Major: I look forward to hearing from you on this. God bless. (U)

The President: Good bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --