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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: THE PRESIDENT
BRITISH PRIME MINISTER BLAIR

LOCATION: JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

NOTE TAKERS: GEORGE CHASTAIN, FRANK JAROSINSKI,
JENNY MCGEE

DATE/TIME: 14 DECEMBER 1998/0205-0210 EST

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Hello?

THE PRESIDENT: Tony?

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Hi, Bill. How are you?

THE PRESIDENT: I'm fine, I'm fine.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: This is a pretty historic day for you in
the Gaza.

CLINTON LIBRARY PHOTOCOPY

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, it's been a pretty good trip, and I think I've done a pretty good job to get Netanyahu on the page. But the political situation in Israel is fluid, to say the least. There may be a no-confidence vote. We'll know on the 21st, at least. I called you about Iraq. We got word yesterday that Butler's report is going to say that Iraq is not cooperating and UNSCOM cannot do their job, that in five areas they only made a passing blush at cooperating and UNSCOM can't do its job. UNSCOM went into a room at Ba'ath Party headquarters, a room they had been in the day before, and the furniture had been removed, the files had been removed, and the wallpaper had been stripped from the walls - sort of a "screw you" deal. They are despairing, and a lot of the temporary inspectors are pulling out. If, in fact, he says that and UNSCOM can no longer do its job, I don't see we have any choice but to act and act right now. We can do it before Ramadan, but we have to have our military-to-military talks right away. I think we'll get killed if we sit around for five weeks and wait to see what happens.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: I think if he comes out with a report as strong as that, it's pretty difficult to avoid action. I should speak to George and Robin as soon as possible. How sure are we, Bill, that that's what he's going to say?

THE PRESIDENT: Ninety percent. I swear to God I've had nothing to do with this. Our people did not do this. I was frankly hoping this would not come up until January, but here I am and here we are. But we've got some timing issues, and we've got to start our discussions immediately. I'll be available at any time to talk with you.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: So when is he actually putting out this report?

THE PRESIDENT: Tuesday morning.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Okay, right.

THE PRESIDENT: The timing is essential and tight, but it can be done. We've got it all worked out, and it's a quick deal, but he'll be surprised. He doesn't think we can move this fast. That's why he's jerking us around. He thinks he's dragged us into Ramadan. But we've got to start the consultations now, and we'll see what happens Tuesday morning.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Yeah, if he says UNSCOM can't do its job, then we don't have much choice.

THE PRESIDENT: We won't have a leg to stand on if we don't do something.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: I think so. I'd better talk to George and Robin.

THE PRESIDENT: We've got to keep this super quiet. Last time he'd already moved most stuff out of most places. We've got a real chance for surprise.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Okay, Bill, we better get going on it.

THE PRESIDENT: We'll keep in touch.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: All right, Bill. We'll speak soon.

THE PRESIDENT: Goodbye.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Bye.

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