

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Boris Yeltsin of
Russian Federation (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Yeltsin
Interpreter: Dimitry Zarechnak
Notetaker: Jessica Stern

DATE, TIME: October 10, 1993, 12:15 - 12:40pm
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello, Boris. (U)

President Yeltsin: Hello, Bill. (U)

The President: Good evening. (U)

President Yeltsin: I'm glad to hear your voice. (U)

The President: It's nice to hear your voice. (U)

I'm calling to follow up on the letter I sent you earlier today. I just wanted to reiterate to you personally how grave the situation is in Iraq and how important it is that the United States and Russia remain united in responding to it. The latest information we have shows that Iraqi troops are massing at the border. But we know that the Iraqis are being hurt by the sanctions. The best way for Iraq to get relief is for Saddam to demonstrate that he is prepared to live in peace with his neighbors and to honor the UN resolutions. This buildup of forces shows us just the opposite: that Saddam is still dangerous and unpredictable. The Iraqi military is still a potent force. And as you know, our past experience leaves us with no other choice than to prepare for the possibility that Saddam could invade Kuwait again. We simply cannot assume that Saddam is bluffing. The best way to deter him from exploiting this build-up on the border is to move our own forces into the region as fast as possible so that we can make it clear to him that there is a serious danger represented by his move -- and that he must reverse it. (S)

We must not link this demand in any way to the question of sanctions. To do so would reward Iraq's threatened aggression and could mislead Saddam regarding the strength of our resolve.

We cannot let him, in effect, use this aggressive move to have us reconsider the sanctions. We cannot let him blackmail us on this. We need your support on this. I hope I can continue to count on your support on this. (S)

President Yeltsin: I understand the point. I hope you understand that I'm equally disturbed by the situation in Iraq. I am following the situation very closely...hour by hour. (S)

First, a confidential point of information. Mindful of the fact that Primakov has good relations with the Chief of Iraqi External Intelligence, Primakov called yesterday to speak with him about Iraq's intentions. We also sent a special message to the Iraqi leadership warning against any rash actions. They assured us that what's happening on the border is no more than military exercises. We are satisfied with the information exchange we have had with the U.S. on the problem and because of these exchanges the UNSC is well informed on the situation and has taken steps to warn Baghdad. Kozyrev told me about his discussion with Christopher and I am satisfied with the division of labor here: forceful action together with diplomatic pressure. (S)

I took particular note of what Secretary of State Christopher said to Kozyrev, and reading between the lines of what you've told me. You are massing troops as a defensive measure and will only use force in defense of Kuwait. Still, Bill, I believe we have some diplomatic moves to make. Of course we have to handle Hussein in a tough way but on the other hand we should try not to drive him into a corner. Otherwise we could have on our hands a serious international crisis. And the Middle East Peace Process could be threatened. Saddam Hussein has people close to his way of thinking who would like to see the peace process threatened. (S)

I also instructed Kozyrev to depart immediately to Iraq for talks with the Iraqi leadership. Next, I have instructed him to go to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and only then, afterwards, to report his results at the UNSC, whether developments are positive or negative. (S)

I request that you in the two-three days while Kozyrev is traveling in the area not present any new initiatives at the Security Council. Since Christopher is also in the Middle East and our co-sponsorship of Middle East peace process has produced positive results, this should be widely publicized by the press. (S)

Now, if we see any open aggression, Russia would of course be on the side of the U.S. (S)

I now have an important question I want to raise with you on a different subject. As far as I know the Foreign Ministers of G7 are going to convene in Canada to discuss credit lines and Ukrainian debt. Do you remember that when we talked in the past we have talked about the G8? The country to which Ukraine owes the biggest amount -- \$4 billion -- is Russia. And yet Russian representatives have not been invited to attend the meeting in Canada. We were surprised to hear about this. Ukraine supports an invitation to Russia to the G7 meeting. Kuchma mentioned it to Chernomyrdin a couple of days ago when Chernomyrdin was in Kiev. This was all I wanted to tell you. (S)

The President: My understanding is that the meeting is sub-ministerial and that no decisions will be taken and that there will be a later meeting at which Russia would participate. But I support Russia's participation in this first meeting as well. And I have no problem getting back to the G7 to suggest that. People from your side should contact the G7 leaders. I support you on this. I have no problem with your participation in this meeting and I will go back to suggest that. (S)

President Yeltsin: All the more so because Kuchma is going to attend. (S)

The President: I have no problem with your attending the meeting. I support that. If you can have Kozyrev contact some of the other G7 members -- Kohl especially -- that might help. (S)

President Yeltsin: O.K. Good. Thank you. (U)

The President: I have to say one other thing about the Iraqi business so that there can be no misunderstanding between us. I think it is fine for Kozyrev to try to talk some sense into Saddam. But I cannot agree to relaxing the sanctions and the Security Council resolutions in return for his withdrawing his troops. That is completely unacceptable to me. (S)

President Yeltsin: I think these are two different questions that must be considered separately. The first question is the withdrawal of troops. The second issue is that, in the normal prescribed fashion, we must consider whether Iraq is recognizing the relevant UNSC resolutions, they must confirm the border with Kuwait. (S)

The President: Yes. One other point. You have read my intent properly. I do not want armed confrontation with Iraq and I'm moving my troops to defend Kuwait, for defensive purposes only. But there's a limit to how long I can leave them there -- I can't leave them there indefinitely. There will be a point when I will

not be able to leave aircraft and troops there indefinitely. If Hussein creates a permanent threat in the area...I won't take further action without speaking with you further. What we're doing is for defensive purposes but if there are no results I can't keep these troops there indefinitely. We will of course have other discussions before anything happens. But I wanted to lay this out up front. We will talk again. (S)

President Yeltsin: I get your point and I'm in full agreement.
(U)

The President: O.K. Thank you very much. (U)

President Yeltsin: O.K. Thank you and good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --