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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with Russian President
Yeltsin (C)

PARTICIPANTS: President Clinton
Russian President Boris Yeltsin

Interpreter: Dimitry Zarechnak
Notetakers: David Higgins, Mariann
Papadimitriou, Larry
Wright, James Smith,
Pat O'Shaughnessy, Ki Fort

DATE, TIME: November 16, 1997, 2:04 - 2:15 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: Malibu, California

THE PRESIDENT: Boris? (U)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: Hello, Bill. (U)

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks for taking my call. (U)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: I'm very glad to have a word with you, to be on the line with you. I'd like to transmit best regards from Hillary, who visited Sverdlovsk with Naina. It was a good program, and they had a very good meeting. (U)

THE PRESIDENT: Hillary had a good time. I appreciate your making her feel welcome. I wanted to talk to you briefly about Iraq. (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: I'm all ears. (U)

THE PRESIDENT: I'd like to make my points, then listen to you. I think Iraq's actions are a very serious challenge to the UN, the UN Security Council, and the security of the Persian Gulf. We have to find a way to make sure Saddam Hussein doesn't rebuild Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. (C)

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PRESIDENT YELTSIN: What's your proposal, Bill? What's your proposal? (C)

THE PRESIDENT: I want to make sure you understand that I want to find a diplomatic way to resolve this. I hope that you will do all you can to get Saddam to let the inspectors back in. I have some specific ideas that I want Madeleine to speak to Primakov about, but I want you to understand that from my point of view, I can't rule out the use of force under any circumstances, because he's threatened to shoot down our airplanes. Boris, UNSCOM has destroyed much more weaponry than the Gulf War did, it's destroyed almost 7,000 tons of chemical weapons agents, and discovered a biological weapons program. This is a very serious thing, but I want to find a diplomatic solution. I have some specific ideas that I want Madeleine to speak to Primakov about in the next few days, and I'd like you to help me convince Saddam to find a diplomatic solution. (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: Well, good, Bill. I understand you. Right now, a few minutes ago, Primakov spoke on the phone to Mrs. Albright, so I understand your point and agree with you. I'll write a letter to Saddam Hussein about the need to resume UNSCOM inspections, saying that they should have conditions for working in their normal way, but we should work through the auspices of the Security Council to deal with one problem at a time. For instance, this nuclear thing - no problem; we'll remove that, and move on to the next (problem). We'll proceed like that one step at a time, piece by piece. (C)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I hope we can resolve these issues. We'll work out the details of a proposal and get back to you. I want to make sure you know I don't want a big, violent confrontation. If there's any chance to avoid that, there's a good chance Saddam will listen to you. I don't want a confrontation, but we owe it to the world to get rid of these weapons, before they end up used in the Gulf or in the hands of some terrorist. I'll do everything I can to work together toward a satisfactory conclusion, and I hope it's a nonviolent one. (C)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: Good, Bill. Like I said, I'm going to send a letter to (Saddam) Hussein at once, within a couple of hours, mentioning many issues on the agenda; the Commission needs normal conditions to operate, and there will be other issues as well. Primakov and Albright will be in contact with each other on a constant basis. Perhaps they can come up with a joint document. And you and I will do our best. (C)

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THE PRESIDENT: That's great, Boris, and I will stay in touch.
Thank you and give my best to Kuchma. (U)

PRESIDENT YELTSIN: Oh yes, I will send your best regards. We
have a meeting with him today. My best to you, Bill. Goodbye.
(U)

THE PRESIDENT: Goodbye, Boris. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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