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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Javier Perez de Cuellar,
United Nations Secretary General, on
April 25, 1991 (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Javier Perez de Cuellar, UN Secretary
General
Notetaker: Nancy Bearg Dyke

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: April 25, 1991, 3:35 - 3:45pm EST
The Oval Office

The President telephoned UN Secretary General de Cuellar concerning the Iraqi refugee situation. (U)

The President: How are you? Where are you? (U)

Secretary General de Cuellar: New York; I have been traveling. (U)

The President: I am calling to chat further on the Iraq situation, if you have a minute. I appreciated very much the conversation we had last week, and we went ahead since then trying to aid these pitiful refugees. What the US and others are doing for these victims of Saddam Hussein is right and necessary, and a tremendous amount of world opinion has backed up this action. (U)

There are two issues in this regard I want to talk over with you today: the care and treatment of the Iraqi refugees and the protection and security for them, until they can be returned to their homes -- maybe there is some hope they can return to their homes. First, the refugees. I hope there is no question about UNHCR having the authority to do everything necessary under UNSCR 688. It is our judgment that 688 gives this authority. (S)

I know this is a complex problem with many dimensions, but it is really important for the UNHCR to get into Iraq to where the refugees are now and to the temporary encampments we are building. (S)

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[REDACTED] b1

The President: We are thinking the same way. We want the UNHCR and the relief officials to come as soon as possible. Javier, do you have any timetable in mind? (S)

[REDACTED] b1

The President: I will get an up-to-date report and have Ambassador Pickering discuss it with you. We will get assets on the ground, what we have available, and a timetable. (S)

Secretary General de Cuellar: I have a 5:30 meeting with him. (U)

The President: Either Brent Scowcroft or Larry Eagleburger will talk with Pickering before that meeting. Our goal is to transfer the relief operation to you as soon as possible. Until you are ready, the only way to do the job, the only way to provide for the refugees, is through the coalition. (S)

[REDACTED] b1

The President: We will take the next step and have Ambassador Pickering talk to you later today. Then there is the question of security for the refugees. Without some credible assurance of security, the refugees will not be willing to come down from the mountains to the camps being constructed to care for them. (S)

Secretary General de Cuellar: Yes, they won't come down without security. (U)

The President: Now we are there with enough force. There was that Iraqi goon squad there. We told them they have to get out of there. It was 200-300 people in what they called a police unit. We got the word that they left. We want to turn responsibility over to the UN as quickly as possible but not leave the refugees in the lurch. But we can talk about it more later. (S)

Secretary General de Cuellar: Very well. If Tom Pickering can come, we can talk about it. (U)

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The President: I was intrigued by your suggestion in our last conversation about the possibility of extending the terms of reference of UNIKOM to UNSCR 688. Do you still think something might be possible, or do you think a new resolution is necessary. (S)

[REDACTED]

b1

The President: Why don't we talk to Pickering about this too? (U)

Secretary General de Cuellar: I am ready. Every military action has to be supported and endorsed by the UNSC. (U)

The President: Did the Iraqi foreign minister write you and request that the UN take over operations? (S)

[REDACTED]

b1

The President: We don't want forces there any longer than necessary. We know a UNSC resolution would be difficult to achieve, [REDACTED] But, we will do what needs to be done. (S)

[REDACTED]

b1

The President: We just felt we had to do it on an emergency basis to help these pitiful refugees. (S)

Secretary General de Cuellar: There can be no military movements without Council authority. (U)

The President: The south (Iraq) concerns me. (S)

Secretary General de Cuellar: The poor Shiites. (U)

The President: We have tried to take care of them. (U)

Secretary General de Cuellar: Saudi Arabia will take some, but some (refugees) will still be there in Iraq. (U)

The President: Your people are moving quickly, aren't they, into the south? (U)

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Secretary General de Cuellar: Of course. I am going to call Sadruddin right now and say we must keep in touch. (U)

The President: Do you think Saddam Hussein is willing to make a deal with the Kurds? (S)

Secretary General de Cuellar: [REDACTED]

(S)

b1

The President: No. But the Iraqi people have to get him out. I guarantee we won't have normal relations with Iraq while he is there, and we will encourage others to have the same policy. I have stopped short on war crimes because it may make it more difficult for his people to go against him. What do you think about war crimes? (S)

Secretary General de Cuellar: [REDACTED]

b1

The President: Will it be raised in a committee in the UN? (S)

Secretary General de Cuellar: [REDACTED]

b1

The President: Yes, then I'd like to get rid of Saddam Hussein -- that is, I hope his people will. That is the Bush view. I'm not asking my old friend to give a view. We will go forward on funding for the relief effort. There will be a lot of money from the US, and I made a pitch to the Japanese yesterday. (S)

Secretary General de Cuellar: There is not much we can do. We have no resources. (U)

The President: Call me if you need to be in touch. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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