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JG P, 8/5/99
Case No. 98-0099-FF

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with Prime Minister Major of Great Britain (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Prime Minister John Major
Notetaker: Richard Haass

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: September 25, 1991, 16:45 - 17:00 p.m. EST
The Oval Office

The President initiated the call. Opening pleasantries. (U)

President: I am calling to let you have our thinking vis-a-vis Iraq and to get your guidance. I think we agree that Iraq's interference with the inspection teams is a challenge to the entire cease-fire regime and to the UN. We have concluded that we've got to act despite Iraq's apparent acceptance of UNSCR 707 and free movement of helicopters because it is not enough to get to sites; we feel inspectors must be free to obtain the evidence once there. (S)

What we plan is this: We would give Saddam a few more days to allow the inspectors to leave with their documents. This would allow us to complete some military preparations, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] (S)

Prime Minister Major: [REDACTED] (C)

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President: We will tell the Iraqis to resolve the situation quickly and satisfactorily. Then, if they do not, we would instruct the inspection team to leave the site and then get all the inspectors back to Bahrain. (S)

We believe that the appropriate response under these circumstances would be carefully-targeted air strikes. Obviously, we will leave the targeting to the military experts, and we'd keep in mind innocent civilian life, but we would probably combine sites of suspected weapons of mass destruction capability and maybe another target. If we do something, we want to make sure he gets the message. I want to emphasize that we

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have carefully considered a proportional response. Our objective is that we want Saddam to comply with all the UNSC resolutions.

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[REDACTED] We would hope that this action would convince Saddam to modify his behavior. He might well modify his behavior before that; if not, we would then have to be prepared to take further steps. (TS)

I believe that this reasonable and relatively restrained approach would meet with international understanding and support. I'm confident of that. I know our legal people have been talking. Everything I am suggesting is wholly consistent, both legally and politically, with existing Security Council resolutions. Moreover, all this comes after months of Iraqi non-compliance and trying frustration of the world community. We simply cannot let this crazy man stick his nose at the world. I want to get your advice on this. Mitterrand has come through as fully supportive. (S)

Prime Minister Major: I don't have any difficulty at all. We want to get the inspection team out so they do not become hostages. There ought not to be too large a gap between the team's leaving and a strike. It will be difficult if people leave without documents. We will be criticized by public opinion. I don't want to give Saddam time to move people near sites. Secondly, I don't want any air strike to be postponed; I would want the strike to be as soon as practical after the people are out. (TS)

President: I agree. That's a good point, right on target. (C)

Prime Minister Major: The other point is that it is time to teach him a lesson. You didn't mention it, but we would like to take part if you wish. (S)

President: I very much would like this. It would send a good signal. Our two militaries should continue to talk. [REDACTED]

1.5a

(B)

(TS)

Prime Minister Major: You should have it. I'll have Stephen [Wall] liaise with Brent. (C)

President: I don't know if Jim [Baker] has consulted with Douglas Hurd, but it may be best for Stephen and Brent to handle. We don't think, by the way, we need any new resolution to do this.

(C)

Prime Minister Major: Neither do we. We agree we have cover under existing resolutions. (C)

President: Call me night or day if you need to. (U)

Prime Minister Major: One other thing that would be helpful is if we could have someone involved in the planning. (S)

President: Yes. (U)

Prime Minister Major: We also need to coordinate in advance what we would say after. (C)

President: Let's leave all this to Brent and Stephen. (U)

Goodbyes. (U)