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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Call to Margaret Thatcher,
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister
Notetaker: Adrian Basora, NSC Staff

DATE, TIME September 7, 1990, 7:29 - 7:45 a.m.
AND PLACE Oval Office

The President: Margaret, how are you? (U)

Prime Minister Thatcher: Fine; I've just come from a debate in the House of Commons. There is strong support for our policy toward Iraq, with little difference between the two sides. Everyone is supportive of what we have done, but Labor as usual is shying away when there is a prospect of use of force. Therefore, Labor is asking that we go to the U.N. for further authority before taking any military action. I told them that we already have the authority and don't need to go back to the U.N. We may want another letter from the Emir, but we should not go to the U.N. and risk a split vote which would weaken our position. It took five days to get Resolution 665, and even then we couldn't get the word "force" into the text. (S)

The President: Ozal has suggested that we could use a new resolution as leverage on Saddam -- as a sword of Damocles. Gorbachev is also speaking about a U.N. resolution. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: I was going to comment on Gorbachev. He made a strong speech condemning Iraqi actions, but then he spoke of using "diplomatic means" to solve the problem. (S)

The President: I am glad to hear your views as I prepare to leave for Helsinki. Have you heard complaints about the Soviets retaining military advisers in Iraq? (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: Yes, and you should have a report on your desk this morning regarding the role of the Soviet military. I have a copy in front of me; it is very interesting. I don't want to say more on the phone, but you will remember that the Soviets launched two satellites right at the start of the conflict. They may be routinely providing the Iraqi military with information from the satellites. (S)

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The President: I will get the report and read it before I leave for Helsinki. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: The Soviets get along well with their Iraqi counterparts and may be passing them information. (S)

The President: Ozal says he has reports that the morale of the Iraqi military may be quite low, with questioning of what Saddam Hussein has done. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: Charles will have a word with Brent, in case you have trouble finding the report. (S)

The President: The Israeli (Foreign Minister) was in to see Jim Baker, and I saw him for five minutes. He was pleased with our actions and very grateful. They don't want to disrupt things. I had been concerned about the visit, but it seems to have turned out well. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: I think we are up against the same old problem with Gorbachev. He is not telling us everything. One other thing: we need to send more forces into the region, and I have decided to do so. (S)

The President: Have you had any criticism?

Prime Minister Thatcher: No, but there were questions regarding command and control arrangements. I said there was no problem. For example, I was sure General Schwarzkopf and the Saudis were consulting without problems. (S)

The President: Yes. The Washington Post story which reported that I had had to have a talk with Bandar to resolve a problem there was absolutely false. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: It's a matter of common sense. If you have troops on their soil and are planning to use them, you consult. (S)

I saw Nick Brady and heard his presentation of your plan. We will cooperate; it is a very good initiative. Now we are getting calls for refugee assistance. We have pledged \$5.4 million. (S)

I am scheduled to be in Eastern Europe for about a week, and I plan to go ahead with it -- but I can be reached. I want to urge all of them to enforce the embargo strictly. (S)

The President: I am worried, in advance of Helsinki, about the issue of humanitarian aid. At first, it was just a Jordanian idea, but now others are picking it up. For example, the Indians now want to ship food. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: The matter is clear. Medical supplies are outside of the sanctions. But, as for food, I hope they'll interpret it narrowly, such as food for the sick. Pressure on

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food is part of the sanctions. If Saddam wants food, he should get out of Kuwait. The way we should handle the food issue is to ask the International Red Cross to take an inventory of the food stocks and then (we) decide what is needed. If any aid is needed, it should be handed out by the Red Cross, as in Ethiopia, directly to the starving. If we were to agree that food was not embargoed, then Saddam would keep us there forever. (S)

The President: That is our position too, and I will make that point to Gorbachev. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: Food sanctions are a legitimate form of pressure; if he wants food, let him get out of Kuwait. (S)

The President: Yes. Another thing that worries me is the talk of U.N.-supervised elections. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: I agree. It is not for us to deal with the internal situations of these countries. I was struck by Jim Baker's comment, when he talked about regional ideas, that perhaps something like a Helsinki statement on human rights might be appropriate. (S)

The President: Yes, but I wonder what meaning human rights would have within the Arab culture. (S)

I am leaving tonight, but will have part of a day in Helsinki on Saturday before I see Gorbachev on Sunday. Please don't hesitate to call me if something important comes up. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: I won't hesitate. (S)

The President: I worry that something will happen requiring quick action. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: I don't think that our response to an urgent event would pose a problem. But, for now, Saddam Hussein is lying low. He is trying to undercut the embargo and has launched a major propaganda campaign. (S)

The President: Thanks for your call, and let's stay in touch. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: We will, as always. (S)

- End of Conversation -

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