

THE WHITE HOUSE  
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## MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom on September 14, 1990 (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher  
Notetaker: Philip D. Zelikow

DATE. TIME: September 14, 1990, 7:29 - 7:42am EST  
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Margaret, I'm delighted to hear from you. What's on your mind? (U)

Prime Minister Thatcher: I have a couple of things I wish to talk to you about. But first I want to congratulate you on your speech to the Congress. It was terrific. (U)

The President: Thank you very much. I tried not to be too strident about Saddam. (U)

Prime Minister Thatcher: Thanks also for your message about your meeting with Gorbachev. I'm glad he came. (U)

The President: He wanted to be there, for a lot of reasons, some of them economic. There were some differences I could tell you about, but personally the meeting went well. You know him well; there was no rancor, a good discussion. (U)

Prime Minister Thatcher: Well the reaction and the publicity was just superb. There was wisdom in the results. (U)

I want to tell you that we just finished a meeting this morning of our Overseas and Defense Committee. We have decided to send a full armored brigade to Saudi Arabia. That will include 120 tanks, armored infantry with their Scorpions and other armored vehicles, helicopters, workshops, support facilities, everything -- a full brigade, just as General Schwartzkopf wanted. Plus we are sending more helicopters that can attack tanks. Plus we will be sending more Tornadoes specialized for ground attack, and more air defense Tornadoes. It will be a total of 7500 ground forces. Like you, we will be picking up ships to take them to Saudi Arabia. (S)

The President: Why that is just marvelous. My heavens, I already felt you were doing your share. This will be so well received. This is icing on the cake. (U)

Prime Minister Thatcher: I felt we ought to commit ground forces. Our people asked General Schwartzkopf what he needed. His preference was for an armored brigade, with tanks and armored infantry. We will take an armored brigade that is now in Germany -- lifting the whole thing out. I will be asking Kohl if our Tornados can do low flying practice and if our tanks can exercise before they come. It's a famous brigade in our army. It fought in the desert in the last war, and was known as the 'Desert Rats.' (S)

The President: I remember the name. My gosh, that is so superb. I hope you didn't mind my quoting you in the speech to the Congress. (U)

Prime Minister Thatcher: Not at all. It was very nice. (U)

The President: We edited it a bit, using the term 'bargaining chip' instead of 'bargaining counter.' We took a little liberty there, using a phrase more people would recognize here. (U)

Prime Minister Thatcher: You were very kind. (U)

We'll be making our statement in about two hours. (U)

The President: It will be big news. (U)

Prime Minister Thatcher: There are two other things I wish to mention. First, while we support the embargo on air traffic, we must work it out and get the authority to enforce it and know how we're going to enforce it. Our people will be in touch with you on this. Our previous experience has shown that we must not only know what we want to stop, but get the authority to use force to get it. They're putting equipment into civil airliners. (S)

The President: I'm embarrassed to say that I'm not very familiar with where we stand on this matter. We do need authority to back the sanctions up. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: This was discussed with Gorbachev in Moscow, all of our thinking about this. (S)

Also, on the Kuwaiti letter, the one we think is necessary to allow us to take the military option if need be along with Article 51. I heard the Emir is planning to send around letter of request to recapture Kuwait to all the countries that are helping in the region. This alarmed us. If it is done, the letter must be prepared using the strict legal terms so that he doesn't go around with this and then we have to go back later to make it right. (S)

I got our Attorney General to work on the letter. We've worked out a simple form which says what is necessary and no more. On a contingency basis I think we can agree with it. We got this done before contacting you because we did not want the Emir to dash around with a whole lot of letters before we had agreed on the text. (S)

I understand we're holding it up now. Some of your people feel it is not the right time for such a letter. I feel we need it quickly. When the time comes and we are ready to go, we do not want to have to go and then get such a letter from the Emir. This sudden effort would become known, and it would be a signal to Saddam. (S)

I feel we should have all the contingency planning done in advance. This will enable us to say, without contradiction, that with Article 51 and this specific request of the Emir, there is no need to go back to the Security Council. It would be most unwise to do so. Our people will get in touch with yours and work on the draft. (S)

The President: I have not heard anything about this. Bob Gates is here with me and I think he knows something about it. I see no reason to delay on this matter. It is important for every contingency to be taken care of. I feel Article 51 and Kuwait's original letter gave us the authority to use force. I will talk to Scowcroft -- Baker is halfway around the world -- and we will work to get a text and go forward on this. Anything we can get to enhance our legal authority, the better it is. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: We'll be in touch about that and about the embargo on air traffic. On burdensharing, we will work with the ideas Secretary Brady discussed with us. I'm very pleased with the Japanese. Have you heard yet about their decision? (S)

The President: Prime Minister Kaifu called me last night. I know his decision will be well received here. Congress is now seized with the idea of wanting everybody else to do everything. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: Well, you have done so much. They're entitled to ask that. (U)

The President: This will calm them. (U)

Prime Minister Thatcher: Support from Congress and the public has been marvelous. Both in the States and here. (U)

The President: How is it with the Labour Party? (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: They don't dare do anything other than support us. They want us to go back to the Security Council if we decide on the military option. We couldn't possibly do that. We have the legal authority. We risk putting that in issue if we go back to the Security Council, and will only give aid and comfort to Saddam and make us liable to a veto. Once having got it, we should not risk it again. We have the authority to do whatever is necessary. (S)

The President: I agree. We may be on the phone again late some night with a situation that must be answered without delay. We cannot let Yemen and Cuba hold us up in UN debates. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: It took five days to get the last resolution through, and they wouldn't even mention the word "force" then. (S)

The President: The Soviets have been very careful on the issue of use of force. We'll have to run this down to the end. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: I'm coming to the United Nations from September 29 to October 1, and I will be in touch before then to see about the possibility of a trip to Washington. (S)

The President: Why not look at a meeting in New York? I will be at the UN for two or three days. I think the NSC has been working on some ideas, like dinner on Sunday night. I'll check to be sure. It shouldn't complicate our schedules. Either way we have to get together. (S)

Prime Minister Thatcher: New York would be superb if we can do it. (S)

The President: I'll work it out. (U)

Prime Minister Thatcher: Tell Barbara she was on the radio here this morning with an interview she gave. It was terrific. (U)

The President: I'll tell her. Thanks for calling. (U)

- End of Conversation -