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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Turgut Ozal, President of Turkey on April 15, 1991

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Turgut Ozal, President
Nicholas Burns, NSC Staff (Notetaker)

DATE, TIME: April 15, 1991, 10:21 - 10:37 a.m.
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Hello, Mr. President. Turgut, how are you, sir? (U)

President Ozal: Fine, thank you. How are you? (U)

The President: Well, I'm fine and worried about the refugee problem. I'm glad to hear from you but this is a terrible human tragedy. (U)

President Ozal: Yes, George, the reason I'm calling you is the problem on the Turkish-Iraqi border. There are very rugged mountains there. They are almost 7,000 feet and 400,000 people have come almost in one week, maybe more, and there is no flat place and it is all rugged mountains. It is a very difficult situation to get supplies to those people because there is no flat place in those two provinces. And therefore I suggest we should take a part of a flat place at the Iraqi border in Turkey. Now we are transferring some 40,000 from the most difficult parts to those areas. Today the transfer has started. (S)

The President: 40,000? (S)

President Ozal: 40,000. The problem is this. I think your people have seen it - your military and also embassy people and also some of the people related to the refugee problem -- it seems in the areas adjacent to the Turkish border there are very nice flat places and we have to get some of those people to those areas. Otherwise, they will be lost. Everyday something like 500 to 800 people are dying. (S)

The President: Oh, God. Well, how do we get them down there and what do you think is needed to get them in there? (S)

President Ozal: According to the UN Security Council decision, we should have something that Iraq should not object to putting those people in their territory. We would supply their food and electricity and other things. That is our problem. (S)

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The President: Yes. Well, can't they just go there? Can't we all just pitch in and send them there? (S)

President Ozal: But then if there is a military reaction, what are we going to do? We are going into another conflict. (S)

The President: Well, of course, what we've said is they must not interfere with refugee operations north of the 36th parallel. These flat places are north of that, aren't they? (S)

President Ozal: Well north of them. But there are soldiers on the border. Iraqi soldiers. (S)

The President: Are the Iraqi soldiers trying to keep these people from going back? (S)

President Ozal: If they go inside, there may be some kind of skirmish. But I'll try to go inside if you let us. (S)

The President: In principle, I think we need to back the concept of getting these Iraqi people in the flat places in Iraq itself. But do you feel that the soldiers will interfere with the normal flow going back into Iraq? (S)

President Ozal: We have not tried, but if you give the order to your people that you can go in, then ours will go also. (S)

The President: What people are you talking about, Turgut? Are you talking about our people, relief workers or others? (S)

President Ozal: The refugee people and your people. (S)

The President: You mean our relief team? You say my people. What people are you talking about going into Iraq? Would they be soldiers going in? Turgut? (S)

(conversation interrupted by technical problems for a few minutes)

The President: Hello? (U)

President Ozal: Yes, hello. (U)

The President: We got cut off. I was asking you what kind of people did you want to see go into the flat places in Iraq. That's the last I heard. (S)

President Ozal: What I'm going to suggest is we are now bringing 40,000 to Silopi and I also asked our people to establish another camp right at the border and other refugee camps. They are going to establish them and then there are other places on the other side of the Iraqi border. If I go there I am afraid there will be some kind of military intervention by Iraq. If that intervention takes place, then we will answer back. That's the problem. (S)

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The President: Well, we have said that they must not have military action against the refugee efforts north of the 36th parallel so if those people go back in there, I think we all would then have not only the right but the obligation to protect those people if the Iraqis came in there and started interfering with that. (S)

President Ozal: That is the point. You should give the order to your people and also I'll give the order. (S)

The President: What people are you taking about, Turgut? (S)

President Ozal: If there is some kind of intervention, then we should strike back. (S)

The President: Are you thinking of taking these couple of hundred thousand and getting them to go voluntarily to flat areas? (S)

President Ozal: I am not. I'm just trying to put new refugee camps in flat areas. (S)

The President: Exactly, that's what we want. Everybody wants that...and these cross the border into Iraq? (S)

President Ozal: I don't know how these refugees later on will go back to their original places.

The President: The French have an idea. They are working on that. They are trying there. (S)

President Ozal: How? (U)

The President: I don't know but they are talking about having UN personnel in each town -- not to stop repression, but they could report if there was a violation and we are talking to them about that. (S)

President Ozal: First of all, I think we should not let the sanctions be removed. (S)

The President: Definitely not. Definitely. (S)

President Ozal: And then maybe the real solution is that Saddam and his people leave Iraq. (S)

The President: Well, that's exactly what we want but the trouble is we don't have any way of enforcing it. And we are saying no normal relations with the U.S. as long as Saddam Hussein is in there. Do you think there is any chance to get him out? (S)

President Ozal: I think you put the refugees in those places along the border. I don't think he's going to make anything, if he does he'll get his answer. (S)

The President: If he interferes, then he gets hit. That's true. I'm not sure how to get him out of power. (S)

President Ozal: If he has no money, how can he stay? (S)

The President: And we will certainly be with you in keeping those economic sanctions. Let me talk to our people and get back to you. One, there is a hell of a problem. Two, we want to see Iraqi refugees be in Iraq in flat places. We want to see that. Three, we have said that he ought not, should not, must not interfere with any refugee efforts north of the 36th parallel. So we already have a marker to Saddam Hussein if he should start using military action and I don't know why those people could not be talked into going back to the flat places in Iraq with a pledge of support from the U.S. and other coalition members to support them in the flat places in Iraq. (S)

President Ozal: I think if you support us, we can also protect them. (S)

The President: Well, I think we can also support them. We've made clear that he must not use military force to stop refugee relief. So we would be prepared to support that. But I don't know what we're talking about in terms of support. If he uses his air force to stop convoys, that would be a clear violation and we would be required to use force. (S)

President Ozal: George, in northern Iraq -- we should go and your people should go in preparation of the camps. Also the water supply and electricity for these people. I mean this is a point we have to solve. (S)

The President: But wouldn't that be a proper responsibility for the UN to go there and send their refugee people and the rest of us supplying these drops and enormous amounts of supplies. (S)

President Ozal: You have 500,000 people in Turkey and probably some are engineers. If we are going to establish these camps in Iraq, then your people, my people and the UN people should go in and establish the camps. (S)

The President: I'll talk to my people today. I think we have got to have these camps established. (S)

President Ozal: I'll be waiting for your call. (U)

The President: In principle, we agree that these refugees should be moved to flat areas in Iraq. (S)

President Ozal: OK. (U)

The President: We'll get back to you as soon as we can. (S)

-- End of Conversation --