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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with John Major, Prime Minister of the UK
on November 30, 1990 (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
John Major, Prime Minister of the UK
Notetaker: Stephen E. Benko, NSC Staff

DATE, TIME November 30, 1990, 3:06 - 3:15 pm (EST)
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Hello. George Bush here. How are you? (U)

PM Major: Good evening. Just fine, thanks. (U)

The President: I heard you might be able to come over here before Christmas. That would be great if it's true. I hope it's not too inconvenient to your Christmas plans and your wife. I hope she can come too. (U)

PM Major: She's an extremely tolerant girl. I'd be delighted to come. (U)

The President: Barbara would love it if she could come. I was thinking we could get together at Camp David. I look forward to it. (U)

I'm calling about the press conference. I am determined to take the one last step. I wanted to tell you -- I told Fahd and everyone else -- that this means nothing from us on negotiations or concessions of any sort. My view on the Resolution, and thanks go to many here for their heavy work, is that it is helpful to signal our willingness to take that step. That man hasn't got the message yet. Each of us should work bilaterally to convince him we're serious. I've talked to Fahd, Mubarak, Ozal, the Emir, now I've got you, and I'm trying to get Francois to say that this is no departure. It's only a step to tell him, here's what you're up against. (S)

PM Major: I was delighted with the Resolution. I hope he understands that this does not mean negotiations. I hope he has got the message. I quite see the advantage of going the last mile in hopes of getting him to withdraw. (S)

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The President: That's it. There have been no negotiations or discussions underway with him. When he heard it, I'm sure it was a bolt out of the blue. He may not accept, after he heard the way the President framed the mission. The Saudis think he will accept it and send Aziz here. As Margaret once said to me, "George, this is not the time to go wobbly." I'm not going wobbly. It's just a last step before I have to make a very tough decision in January. I haven't changed my mind about that; I'm not going to step back from that decision. But we can talk more about it when we get together. (S)

PM Major: I am extremely grateful. There is not a shred of difference between our positions. I hope he gets the message. (S)

The President: Mubarak thinks he has, Fahd is doubtful, Ozal has heard from friends that Saddam wants out. Margaret told me that at the Paris Summit, at the CSCE meeting, that Gorbachev was excited that Primakov told him that Iraq had agreed to get out with just access to the Gulf. I told her that that's a condition, and it's unacceptable. The only risk is that this might be looked at as a willingness to compromise. That's not what this is about. (S)

How is it going with your life? (U)

PM Major: It has not been the most relaxed week, but I am rather pleased with it. (U)

The President: John, the way you handled everything was very impressive and the response here has been just great. We have a great amount of respect for Margaret, but what you have done on your own is very impressive, not that it was ever in doubt that you would handle it so extraordinarily well. (S)

PM Major: I'm glad it was so well received there. She'll be missed; she was a towering figure, and will be hard to replace. (S)

The President: I want to confide one thing with you and ask your judgment about it. I want to confer on her our highest honor here at the White House; it's what we call the Medal of Freedom. I wouldn't do it if it conflicts with your role as Prime Minister. But I have checked on the modalities and it is not hard to arrange. I know it would be very well received by the American people. I just want to check on what you think the timing should be. (S)

PM Major: I would be very grateful if I could just look at the timing. On the substance of it, I think it's a wonderful idea, and I'm sure she will be thrilled by it. (S)

The President: Check on the timing; there's no rush, maybe the spring or winter. I won't discuss it outside of the White House. Maybe there is some parliamentary procedure there it could fit in with. (S)

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PM Major: Okay. I will check on it just so that the time doesn't look odd. (Ø)

The President: That's it, that's it. Let us know. Well, I look forward to seeing you soon. Goodbye. (U)

PM Major: So do I. Thank you. (U)

- End of Conversation -

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