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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON



MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with the British Prime Minister Blair
(U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Prime Minister Blair

Notetakers: Sean Tarver, Frank Jarosinski,
Jill Sandler, Clark Lystra, Dick Norland and
Ian Bowles

DATE, TIME AND PLACE November 23, 2000, 9:10-10:06 a.m. EST
Camp David, Maryland

The President: Hello, Tony? (U)

Prime Minister Blair: Hello, Bill. (U)

The President: Hey, Tony, How are you? I'm fine. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: I'm fine. I'm in good form, but how are you? (U)

The President: I'm doing great. I had a good trip to Vietnam. I'm still jet lagged. I guess it's just old age. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: It was a great visit. (U)

The President: It was great for us and generally for encouraging a force for change within Vietnam. They tried to discourage the people, but they came out in droves. Sixty percent of the country is under thirty years old, so they are all kids. Most of them are thinking about tomorrow and there are not a lot of elderly people. The Chairman of the Party in Saigon was talking up private sector activity -- he sounded like the mayor of a big mid-western city. It was like a chamber of commerce speech. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: That's good. (U)

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The President: On the other side, the General Secretary said first we have to get what happened in the war straight. He said I'm glad you were against it. Your visit has helped us a lot. Our Ambassador, Pete Peterson, was in the Hanoi Hilton for six years. I said we were debating the nature of the conflict, but let's get one thing straight: we were not friends. Now that you have a united country, we are still having the same debate about how much of these things are eternal questions and how you have to join the debate. ~~let~~

Prime Minister Blair: It looks fascinating -- but what have you returned to? ~~let~~

The President: Between you and me, here's the problem. We always knew this could happen where someone could win the popular vote but lose the electoral college. You have electoral votes that correspond to representation in the House and then you get two more for your Senators, so it gives more influence to smaller states. The other argument in the old days was that we didn't have the telegraph, so we needed honest people to come and say how the people voted, and now that is obviously unnecessary. This happened only twice before where nobody could get a majority. In 1876 and 1888 we had a case where the winner of the popular vote lost the electoral college. In both times, the results were clouded and controversial, but largely the South was still solidly democratic. It was against the people who won the Civil War so you had fluky results. This is just a case where it just happened that 40,000 votes out of 200 million people is what the dispute in Florida is about. Gore has said he will not challenge the electoral college, but he wants to make sure that if Bush is given Florida that the people who showed up got their vote counted. The truth is, Tony, everybody knows Florida had complicated procedures. They used a ballot a lot of older people couldn't read, and more people intended to vote for Gore than Bush. You still have ten thousands blacks in one precinct. They were going to vote for Gore. Ten thousand uncounted votes in one county and six thousand in another. You have nineteen thousand predominately blacks in Palm Beach County who punched Buchanan and then punched Gore. That is another sixteen thousand votes for Gore. Then you had thirty two hundred Jewish people who voted for Buchanan and we had a statistician say it was a trillion to one shot that Buchanan could have gotten that many votes. The real question is: can Gore re-enfranchise enough people to win the elections instead of the Republicans? The Secretary of State was Bush's campaign chairman and now the Republican House is threatening to make him.

President if the electoral votes go to Gore or not. The Florida constitution says if you can divine the intention of the voter, the vote should be counted and ironically, everything Bush is fighting in Florida in the recount is precisely what the law he signed in Texas requires. Any indentation at all these voters make is supposed to count. (e)

Prime Minister Blair: So what's your bet? (e)

The President: I don't know. On the merits, Gore should win, if we can re-enfranchise enough voters, but even the Florida Supreme Court, they issued a great decision for Gore but Miami Dade said "we can't finish by Sunday, so we are not going to do it at all." So now they have to decide whether they can get their own order by delaying. They don't need to have any of this done until December 12th, but you know the Florida Legislature is Republican. The Republican Congress is threatening to change the law and they would throw it into the House. But if they do that, he will be destroyed and he never will recover. (e)

Prime Minister Blair: What is your opinion? (e)

The President: Right now it's evenly divided because the process is confusing but generally thought to be fair. The Republicans are great spin meisters. They just say it differently. It is a power grab. Now we probably will not get the ones reenfranchised who double voted on that illegal ballot, but the truth is, if these people were running for State Legislature, under the law, those courts would get those votes to Gore. They just don't have the courage to do it in a presidential election. You have heard only a slightly biased opinion. If I thought Bush won fair and square, I would tell Al to pack it in, but Gore has on the merits of those who voted, the stronger claim. So Bush is just trying to run out the clock. That's why they are desperate to shut it down because they know Gore lost a lot more votes in those that were thrown out. I don't know what is going to happen. (e)

Prime Minister Blair: Really amazing. (e)

The President: I think we will work it out and be all right. It is very important to remember that the whole right wing in America desperately wants this and they still control the Congress. There are other things we can talk about when I see you because Gore came back 4-5 percent last week and he started running his campaign on continuing the progress of the last

eight years and it was obvious to me in the last 48 hours, I told one of our people, he might win the popular vote and lose the electoral college. I don't think there is any question that if everybody in Florida had their vote counted as intended, Gore would have won by thirty thousand votes. (c)

Prime Minister Blair: The right wing press here has just been desperate for Bush. (c)

The President: They are all upset that the military people got disenfranchised because they came out in force for Governor Bush so he carried them 2 to 1. But World War II veterans and holocaust survivors, they were perfectly fine with having them disenfranchised. (c)

Prime Minister Blair: They are a lot more ruthless than our folks aren't they? (c)

The President: They are. They hate us more than we hate them. It's all about power to them. They don't care as much about government, they just want the power. I will tell you more when I see you. I have not said publicly what I just told you. I have to be President here. The New York Times finally went after the Republicans today. They said they are just over reaching. I wouldn't even be surprised to see the U.S. Supreme Court try to overturn the Florida Supreme Court. (c)

Prime Minister Blair: Blimey. (c)

The President: So here we are. (c)

Prime Minister Blair: As I say, I can't wait to see you. We are going to have a good talk about it. (c)

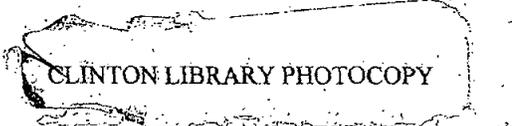
The President: Yes. Let's talk about that. Did our people tell you we might be able to come over on the 12th and maybe go to Belfast and Dublin on the 13th and 14th? (c)

Prime Minister Blair: Any time. (c)

The President: Is that soon enough? (c)

Prime Minister Blair: I've got to go to Zagreb tonight to this European Balkans thing. (c)

The President: I'm really glad you are going. (c)



Prime Minister Blair: I will go there with Bertie Ahern and we will talk on the plane about the outlines of an agreement. Jim Steinberg will fill you in.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: Yes. (e)

Prime Minister Blair: I am going to go through with Bertie tonight what are the three more difficult issues:

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

What we aim to have by the middle of next week is a package we agree on. The right package to go with. But I would have thought the 12th-14th is about the right time. (e)

The President: Okay, I will set it up. I can do whatever in England. I am coming there basically for you, so I will do whatever helps you the most. I can come to Chequers or maybe give a speech at Oxford. I thought about talking about five or six major issues the whole world will face together over the next ten years. Something that would keep the Third Way thing going, but I don't have to give a speech at all. I am interested in helping you. (e)

Prime Minister Blair: That is very good of you, Bill. I think a speech on that theme would be very useful. Why don't I give some thought to where it should be. We got an inkling, and it's fine with us, that you preferred outside of London. (C)

The President: No. I just thought that if we went to London, you would have to do a big dinner or something. I wanted to help you politically and push our agenda. If it helps you, I am happy to do that. (e)

Prime Minister Blair: That is really kind of you. I will work on that basis. (e)

The President: If you think it is better, I will go to Oxford. (e)

Prime Minister Blair: That is great. I will think that through. (C)

The President: The only caveat might be if we have timing problems because the 12th is the day all the electors are supposed to be certified and there might be some reason I have to wait until the next morning to come. But I went to Brunei and Vietnam and the best I can do is show the country that everything is just chugging along. If in the next week something goes haywire, I will call you. (e)

Prime Minister Blair: I certainly think a speech is good and my instinct is to stay outside of London. We can get some private time as well. That is my instinct. But why don't I go through it with my folks and we will come back to you with clear suggestions. (e)

The President: Okay. (e)

Prime Minister Blair: So you will be here on the 12th through the 14th? ()

The President: Yes. My thought is the 12th with you and to go to Belfast on the 13th. Maybe Dublin too, or on the 14th -- might have to allow two days in Belfast. If there is actually some sort of deal cooked that you need me to bless, we might be able to allocate a whole day to be there to work this. I am going to allow for that, but I think I just have to wait and see. (e)

Prime Minister Blair: I will be in a better position once I speak to Bertie tonight and take the temperature of the people over the weekend. I don't want to land you in something where you only have a half day. (e)

The President: I won't do that. That's why I left a day open. (e)

Prime Minister Blair: Okay. (e)

The President: Can we talk about the Hague and climate change? (C)

Prime Minister Blair: Absolutely. (e)

The President: You know, first of all, thank you for helping moderate the EU position so that we can all have agreement. I think you and Dutch are key for an agreement. The French and the Germans aren't there yet. I have to tell you where the politics are going to be in the United States. We have Congress evenly divided. We have Republicans acknowledging, even Bush,

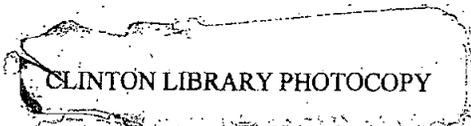
that this is a real problem. Something has to be done. We now have through this partnership with Detroit on the next generation of vehicles that Al Gore spearheaded, we got these cars that will get 80 mpg. We are trying hard. The last step is chemical research, which would help everybody and make your oil money good for 30 years. Bio-mass fuels can help us get something like seven or even eight times more efficient gas or oil than we have today. That is about a third of the problem with transportation. We are also trying to get this massive progress to rapidly accelerate the construction industry. We have another plan for dealing with our utilities and heavy manufacturing which is the last third. Finally, after being treated like I was trying to wreck the economy, we are finally getting broad acknowledgement. If we get what we need on the sinks, forests and all our potential, the gain is something like 300 million tons. We are prepared to go down to less than a third of that, but we need to get something. We will be flexible, but we need to get something. I think we are down to 125. I think it is a mistake to put limits on emission trading because that is a real killer for us politically. I think it would be seen for what it is, that Europe wants to try to make America adopt its tax structure and reduce our emissions in the least efficient way. It would give us less incentive. So the problem may get worse as we get better. I think it is bad policy. Even Bush acknowledges it. Right now, about two House seats left to be decided. The Senate is 50-50 if Bush wins but 51-49 if Al wins because Lieberman would leave his Senate seat and the Governor of Connecticut is a Republican and would appoint a Republican. There are enough Democrats from energy producing areas that if this looks like we are getting a bad deal, that will hurt us. It also sends the wrong message to developing countries. What matters is not the results, but how we achieve it. I think it is important to get an agreement. If we get no agreement, we just give the reactionaries an excuse to walk away. (Z)

Prime Minister Blair: Here's my take. I just spoke with John Prescott, who is heading our delegation over there, on the sinks issue.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

I think there is probably something you can do there. (Z)

The President: Absolutely. We are prepared to take the overall number lower than the science indicates. I think the other thing is you want to have some encouragement in this document for sinks. We also need to do something about the rain forests - an approach that is totally voluntary. (C)



Prime Minister Blair:

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: Yes. But the French proposal is to tax itself. We said, "Let's establish a fund." I don't think any other countries have done this as much as we have. We have done it in two contexts in America with pollutants. We had quicker compliance with clean air efforts at lower costs than the people projected. Every time we did it, it worked faster and cheaper. I understand why some Europeans want to limit trading in any way, but it is a big mistake. Developing countries are important. They don't have much of a problem, but you have to give them the incentive to take action. ~~(e)~~

Prime Minister Blair: I am totally in agreement with you.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: Yes. I will push our proposal on a fund more and make it attractive to the G-77 and you want us to buck up Aznar and Guterres. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: Yes. And Schroeder.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: We ought to be more for a market solution here. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: Exactly. (C)

The President: The regulation should be the outcome, but how to get there should be left to the most efficient means. Let me ask something else. How did your visit with Putin go? (C)

Prime Minister Blair: It was fine. Very interesting. He feels that he is not understood about the problems he is facing there. He was very anxious to impress me. He wanted to see America as a partner, I think. (C)

The President: I think he does, depending on who wins our elections, it might take a while to get it going, but the more time you can spend with him the better. I think he is a guy with a lot of ability and ambitions for the Russians. His intentions are generally honorable and straightforward, but he just hasn't made up his mind yet. He could get squishy on democracy. (C)

Prime Minister Blair:

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: Politically, he has got to be with the Arabs on the Middle East dispute, but I told him one real problem you have here is that it is not clear how much can be controlled in

this situation. Violence begets violence.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(d)

If you are the stronger person, that is what you have to do. It was like (gap) but I think especially for the next year, whoever is President here, and until we get organized, the more time you spend with him, the more it will pay off. (e)

Prime Minister Blair: Yes. I will carry on with it. I think the other thing is he is only now choosing the people around him. That really matters in terms of what is being pumped into his ears. He is highly intelligent. (e)

The President: Yes. A lot of people pour crap in. He wants to do a good job and he works at it every day. He is intelligent and disciplined. The last thing. I know you had a meeting with Barak, and I know you're worried. I am doing my best. We've made little headway today.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(d)

I am doing my best but you see what the problem is, don't you?

(e)

Prime Minister Blair: Absolutely.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: Did you tell him that? (e)

Prime Minister Blair: Yes, I have. I will follow it up and speak to him.

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

[REDACTED]

The President: It is interesting. The Israelis have good substantive policies, but the level of misunderstanding between the two sides is pretty high. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: [REDACTED]

The President: I agree with that. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: We will try. [REDACTED]

E.O. 13526, section 1.4(b)(d)

The President: Yes. We're trying to take another run at him on that and maybe we'll get some movement today. I am really glad you are going to this Balkans conference. Tell all those Balkan guys I said hello. I am thrilled about what you are doing. I think America will do its part out there, no matter what you're hearing out of the Bush campaign. ~~(C)~~

Prime Minister Blair: Ridiculous isn't it. Happy Thanksgiving, Bill. ~~(C)~~

The President: Thank you so much. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: How is the Senator? (U)

The President: Happy as a clam. Chelsea asked about Leo. (U)

Prime Minister Blair: He is absolutely great and you will see when you come over. (U)

The President: I know Chelsea is coming. Hillary wants to but she still has to sort out some scheduling things. I hope we see you on the 12th. (C)

Prime Minister Blair: Okay. (U)

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12

The President: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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