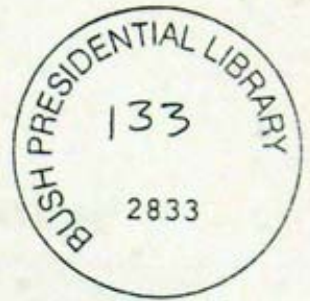


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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON



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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with Javier Perez de Cuellar,
United Nations Secretary General,
on April 16, 1991

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Javier Perez de Cuellar, UN Secretary
General
Notetaker: Nancy Bearg Dyke

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: April 16, 1991, 12:45 - 1:10pm EST
The Oval Office

The President telephoned UNSYG Perez de Cuellar concerning the refugee situation along the Turkey/Iraq border. (U)

The President: Javier! Where are you? (U)

Secretary General Perez de Cuellar: Hello, George. Strasbourg, France. (U)

The President: Have you got a minute for me to run an idea by you? I feel a real sense of urgency on the plight of the Iraqi refugees, especially the Kurds in southern Turkey and northern Iraq. President Ozal phoned me yesterday. He is extremely anxious and nervous. He will take 40-50,000 refugees, but there are hundreds of thousands more in the mountain areas -- maybe 250-300,000 -- he cannot take and who will not be able to survive indefinitely there. (U)

His view is that we must get these people off the mountains and into lowlands where we can deliver and distribute food, medicine, and shelter on the necessary large scale. (U)

Along with this, there is the related problem of security. Although I doubt Saddam would interfere, we will only convince these people to move to the flatlands if they are convinced they will be safe. (U)

What I have in mind is to build upon the thinking of Major, Mitterrand, . . . (U)

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Secretary General Perez de Cuellar: He is going to call me today. (U)

The President: . . . and others. We have two goals: 1. to get the refugees out of the mountains and get them to not be freezing and feed them and take care of their sick children; 2. to get them to go home, safely. (U)

There is the immediate need to encourage the refugees to return to the lowland areas in northern Iraq, just inside the border. Our own military is best suited to build temporary camps in a hurry. We will work with Turkey and others in creating the supply train to get supplies into the new camps. There would be five or six camps. (U)

Let me get your opinion. As for security, US air forces operating out of southern Turkey could provide cover. We are talking about survival. I don't expect Iraq to interfere. Maybe gunships too. We haven't moved things yet. But I think we would also need a ground presence, primarily to reassure the Kurds that they can move into Iraq without fear. If there is no support for them on the ground, they will be too scared to move. No amount of Iraqi promises will do, but I believe Saddam Hussein might keep his word on not interfering with the humanitarian effort.

[REDACTED] b1

That gets to the question of the UN. It is best for the UN to be involved in running these camps. I need your opinion. I am confident this effort is consistent with UNSC Resolution 688.

[REDACTED] b1

Secretary General Perez de Cuellar: We have people on the ground and an emissary from Belgium, Suy. I have a report from them that they are working with the Iraqis and are 90 percent satisfied that we can create human centers all around Iraq where needed. They are negotiating about it now. My people said they are working toward Iraqi acceptance of these human centers in their country. A Memorandum of Understanding is being worked on. They must have made good progress if they are working on an MOU.

[REDACTED] b1

Will human centers be enough for the Kurds to come down from the mountains? That is the question. (X)

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The President: That is the problem. We don't think they will come down without protection like the blue helmets. (Q)

Secretary General Perez de Cuellar: [REDACTED]

b1

The President: I told Major I think we need a new resolution to do blue helmets. (Q)

Secretary General Perez de Cuellar: Yes, I am afraid you would need it. (Q)

The President: These human centers would not be enclaves. (C)

Secretary General Perez de Cuellar: Yes, places for people to be fed. (U)

The President: Without security, the Kurds won't come down. My gut instinct is I don't want to put US troops there, but for this humanitarian purpose I will join with the UK and others to provide forces. (Q)

Secretary General Perez de Cuellar: [REDACTED]

b1

The President: We have to act very fast. Only the military can go this fast. If I say "go," they can start in a few hours. If Saddam Hussein tells Sadruddin to set up centers, the Kurds won't come. I think we have to do it ourselves. I don't think China would vote for this at the UN. It is a sovereignty question; they would veto. (Q)

Secretary General Perez de Cuellar: [REDACTED]

b1

The President: I don't think Sadruddin is talking about having force there; probably just about the centers. People won't come down without security. (Q)

Secretary General Perez de Cuellar: [REDACTED]

b1

The President: Observers at human centers is a good way to put it. Armed, of course. It is so urgent -- we have to move very, very fast. Can you call me back? (Q)

Secretary General Perez de Cuellar: I'll call you back. (U)

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The President: Let's do what we propose:

1. UN refugee people run the camps. (U)
2. We will work out the security -- just enough for a guarantee. (C)
3. We will keep air power handy so we could protect the Kurds. (C)
4. We can look into extending UNSC 688, but I want to just say that 688 lets us do it (this operation). (C)

Secretary General Perez de Cuellar: I hope that in 24 hours we will be clearer about how the human centers will work, with military observers. (U)

The President: Good term. Thank you and goodbye. If you have a chance to call back in 30 minutes, you can hear what Mitterrand said. (U)

Secretary General Perez de Cuellar: Anyway, I will support you. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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