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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Ozal of Turkey on April 16, 1991

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

DATE, TIME: April 16, 1991, 2:30 - 2:38 p.m.
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Turgut. (U)

President Ozal: Hello. Yes, George, how are you? (U)

The President: I told you I would call you back and wanted to get back to you quickly. We've got a few things to discuss. I shared your sense of urgency once you told me how extremely distressing the situation is. We've been making a few phone calls. (S)

President Ozal: I know. (U)

The President: Obviously, there is a security problem and frankly I doubt that Saddam would interfere. Clearly we and others will warn him not to interfere, but I think that we will only be able to convince the people to go to the flat areas if we provide some security. So what we have in mind is something rather ambitious that builds on your thinking. The long term goal, obviously, I think we would agree, is to get the Kurds to return home safely. That is the long term goal but there is the immediate need that you told me about to get the refugees to go to those flat areas in northern Iraq just inside the border. We believe that our military is the best suited to build these temporary encampments in a hurry. We've located a lot of equipment. So we are prepared to have our military go in there to build the temporary encampments for the refugees and we obviously want to work with your people and anybody else to create the supply trains that would be necessary to get the equipment into Iraq. Do you have a question? (S)

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President Ozal: In that case, we are going to help you as much as we can. (Ø)

The President: That's good. (U)

President Ozal: And if you want our military to help in that, we will. (Ø)

The President: Here's the next point. As for the security of the flat area encampments -- and we think there probably will end up being 5 or 6 camps if we can get all those people to come out of the mountains to go there -- but the U.S. air forces, with your permission in terms of operations out of Turkey, would provide cover with our air power to see that these camps were not attacked. We also think, Turgut, that we need ground forces and the reason for that is simply to reassure the Kurds that they can move into Iraq without fear. We think if Saddam says "I promise not to hurt you" that won't be good enough. The Kurds will say "The hell with that. You killed us once before." I have talked to Prime Minister Major and President Mitterrand and they are prepared to join us in supplying troops for the camps. We would call them military observers probably but we would have some forces there then on the ground to help build the camps and to protect what is necessary until we can maybe get the UN to do something. So this is what we're thinking about and we obviously would have to have the cooperation of the Turkish military. We need the people on the ground to work out the details but I've talked to de Cuellar and I think he is agreeable to this. He says that Saddrudin Aga Khan and a Belgian are in Baghdad and they are 90 percent sure that the Iraqis will permit this. Now he did not talk to them about U.S. and British and French forces being on the ground in northwest Iraq. And I don't want to get involved in a civil war. I do not want to send our young people into battle, but I think we have to protect the people in the camps and get them back to Iraq. (Ø)

President Ozal: George, we can help. You do not mention the Turkish troops. We will go in with you if you want. (Ø)

The President: I'm not sure we need that. I think we'll have enough troops and what we need is the cooperation of the Turkish army up to the border. Then we can talk further. I think the most important thing is to be sure that we get total cooperation with the Turkish, U.S., British and French forces as we move supplies in. I can see reasons why you would not want to have your troops in the camps in Iraq. I think we can get by but need total Turkish support right at the border. (Ø)

President Ozal: We will give you the people. If you want military, we will give military. We will help you in any case. (Ø)

The President: Maybe we could use some civilian support, like truck drivers. We will get people in touch over there. The new plan -- I'm going to try to announce it tonight. We will go

forward. We'll get some criticism, but not too much because the suffering is so great. We want to help. (S)

President Ozal: You know what is the Iranian situation? (S)

The President: I know its bad. What do you think? Germany is helping Iran you know. (S)

President Ozal: Rafsanjani is coming to Turkey the end of this month. Its an official visit. I will talk to him. (S)

The President: We'll get started on this plan. I hope it takes the pressure off of Turkey. You've been very good and I think we need to get these people to flat lands. (S)

President Ozal: Thank you. Its a good plan. We will do everything we can to help. (S)

The President: I appreciate that very much. You've been wonderful. We will move and we'll be back in touch at some level. (S)

President Ozal: Let us know through your ambassador or anybody. (S)

The President: Good luck. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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