

Apr. 16

Calls to Major and Mitterrand

--I am calling to discuss the plight of the Iraqi refugees, especially the Kurds in southern Turkey and northern Iraq.

--I feel a real sense of urgency. The most recent reports we are receiving are extremely distressing. Despite all our best efforts, the fact is that we are not getting enough food and medicine to those who need it. Hundreds are dying daily.

--President Ozal phoned me yesterday. To be frank, he is extremely anxious, almost desperate. He will take in some tens of thousands of refugees, but there are hundreds of thousands more in the mountain areas who will not be able to survive.

-- His view, one that ~~I have come to~~ ^{our military and relief agencies} subscribe to, 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. *strongly subscribe*

--Obviously, there is the related problem of security. Although I doubt Saddam would interfere, we will only convince these people to move if they are confident they will be safe.

--What I have in mind, and it is entirely consistent with what I take to be your own thinking, is to encourage the refugees to return to the lowland areas in northern Iraq, just inside the border. | Our own military is best suited to provide massive relief in a hurry. | We will work with the Turks and your people.

--As for security, U.S. air forces operating out of southern Turkey could provide cover. But I think we would also need some ground presence, in part to reassure the Kurds, ~~in part to discourage them from using these encampments to mount operations against Iraq.~~ Would you be willing to supply troops to this?

~~--I will confess to some concern that building these large encampments in northern Iraq raises the danger that the refugee population could become permanent. It will be important to stress that this is temporary, and that the goal remains to see them return to their homes as soon as it is safe to do so.~~

--In this vein, it will be essential to get the UN involved in running these camps. I am confident that we could demonstrate that all this is consistent with UNSC Resolution 688. But I will also be calling Perez de Cuellar to see if I can get him to endorse this effort and energize the international bureaucracy.

--I'd like to get in touch with de Cuellar and get back to Ozal and then announce something. Do you agree with all this?