



Peace and Justice Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR
November 15, 2005

To: Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council

From: Peace and Justice Commission

Submitted by: Steve Freedkin, Chair, Peace and Justice Commission

Subject: Downing Street Memo

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution directing the City Manager to send the attached letter (Exhibit A) urging prompt answers to the questions raised by the Downing Street memo and related information per House Resolution No. 375, along with a copy of the Council Resolution on this matter, to President Bush; and that copies be sent to Representatives John Conyers, Jr., Barbara Lee and Tom Lantos, and Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein.

BACKGROUND

On May 1, 2005, the London Times broke the story of the Secret Downing Street Memo, which confirmed that the United States and Great Britain had secretly agreed to attack Iraq in the summer of 2002 before President Bush sought Congressional authority to engage in military action.

On May 5, 2005, Congressman John Conyers, Jr. and 93 of his colleagues wrote to President Bush asking about the troubling revelations in the London Times. They did not receive a reply to the letter.

On June 15, 2005, Congressman John Conyers, Jr. and 30 of his colleagues again wrote to President Bush asking about the troubling revelations in the London Times. Once again, they did not receive a reply.

On July 21, 2005, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, along with 26 co-sponsors, introduced a Resolution of Inquiry in the House of Representatives, which, if passed, will require the White House and the State Department to transmit to the House of Representatives not later than 14 days after the date of adoption of this Resolution all information relating to communication with officials of the United Kingdom between January 1, 2002 and October 16, 2002, relating to the policy of the United States with respect to Iraq. The bill was referred to the House Committee on International Relations. Since its introduction, 57 additional representatives have signed on

as co-sponsors. On September 16, 2005, the bill was placed on the House Calendar, Calendar No. 87.

At the regular meeting on September 12, 2005, the Peace and Justice Commission discussed the Downing Street Memo, the letters requesting a response from the President, and the bill introduced by Congresswoman Lee. After discussion of these items, the Commission passed the following motion:

M/S/C (*Cohen, McDonald*) to adopt a Resolution recommending that the Berkeley City Council direct the City Manager to send the attached letter (EXHIBIT A) urging prompt answers to the questions raised by the Downing Street memo and related information as per House Resolution No. 375, along with a copy of the Council Resolution on this matter, to President Bush; and that copies be sent to Representatives John Conyers, Jr., Barbara Lee and Tom Lantos, and Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein. **Ayes:** Unanimous; **Absent:** None.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager takes no position on the content and recommendations of the Commission's Report.

Attachments:

1: Resolution

Exhibit A: Draft Letter to President Bush

RESOLUTION NO. -N.S.

URGING PROMPT ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE DOWNING STREET MEMO

WHEREAS, Berkeley Municipal Code Section 3.68.070C mandates that the Peace and Justice Commission help the Berkeley City Council to develop proposals for actions in the furtherance of peace and social justice; and

WHEREAS, no weapons of mass destruction have been discovered in Iraq, causing many to question the basis upon which the Bush Administration went to war against Iraq without a declaration of war by Congress; and

WHEREAS, a document known as the Downing Street Memo, uncovered by the London Times, inspired Congressman John Conyers, Jr. to post a letter on his web site for signature, and after 560,000 people signed, he turned the letters over to the President urging a prompt response to the questions raised by the documents; and

WHEREAS, the President has not answered the questions raised by the letters; and

WHEREAS, the Berkeley City Council supports the Resolution of Inquiry (House Resolution 375) by Representative Barbara Lee, joined by over 50 co-sponsors, requesting the President and directing the Secretary of State to transmit to the House of Representatives all information in their possession relating to communication with officials of the United Kingdom between January 1, 2002, and October 16, 2002, relating to policy with respect to Iraq; and

WHEREAS, a resolution by the Berkeley City Council urging prompt answers to the questions raised by the Downing Street memo and related information can assist the campaign to force President Bush to answer for the war in Iraq against which the Berkeley City Council twice unanimously passed resolutions.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Berkeley City Council directs the City Manager to send the attached letter (Exhibit A) urging prompt answers to the questions raised by the Downing Street memo and related information per House Resolution 375, along with a copy of the Council Resolution on this matter, to President Bush.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies be sent to Representatives John Conyers, Jr., Barbara Lee and Tom Lantos, and Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein.

EXHIBIT A

[Insert date]

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. President:

On [insert date of Council meeting], the Berkeley City Council passed a resolution regarding our concern over disclosures of a Downing Street Memo in the London Times, comprising the minutes of a meeting of Prime Minister Tony Blair and his top advisers. These minutes indicate that the United States (U.S.) and Great Britain agreed, by the summer of 2002, to attack Iraq, well before the invasion and before you even sought Congressional authority to engage in military action, and that U.S. officials were deliberately manipulating intelligence to justify the war.

Among other things, the British government document quotes a high-ranking British official as stating that by July 2002, Bush had made up his mind to take military action. Yet, a month later, you stated you were still willing to "look at all options" and that there was "no timetable" for war. Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, flatly stated, "[t] he president has made no such determination that we should go to war with Iraq."

In addition, the origins of the false contention that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction remain a serious and lingering question about the lead up to the war. There is an ongoing debate about whether this was the result of a "massive intelligence failure," in other words a mistake, or the result of intentional and deliberate manipulation of intelligence to justify the case for war. The memo appears to resolve that debate as well, quoting the head of British intelligence as indicating that in the United States "the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy."

As a result of these concerns, we would ask that you respond to the following questions:

- 1) Do you or anyone in your administration dispute the accuracy of the leaked document?
- 2) Were arrangements being made, including the recruitment of allies, before you sought Congressional authorization to go to war? Did you or anyone in your Administration obtain Britain's commitment to invade prior to this time?
- 3) Was there an effort to create an ultimatum about weapons inspectors in order to help with the justification for the war as the minutes indicate?
- 4) At what point in time did you and Prime Minister Blair first agree it was necessary to invade Iraq?

- 5) Was there a coordinated effort with the U.S. intelligence community and/or British officials to "fix" the intelligence and facts around the policy as the leaked document states?

These are the same questions 89 Members of Congress, led by Rep. John Conyers, Jr., submitted to you on May 5, 2005. As citizens and taxpayers, we believe it is imperative that our people be able to trust our government and our commander in chief when you make representations and statements regarding our nation engaging in war. As a result, we would ask that you publicly respond to these questions as promptly as possible.

Furthermore, recently our elected member of the House of Representatives, Barbara Lee, has introduced a resolution requesting you transmit to the House of Representatives all documents in the possession of the Secretary of State relating to communications with officials of the United Kingdom from January 1, 2002 to October 16, 2002, relating to the policy of the United States with respect to Iraq.

The City of Berkeley wishes to support the efforts of both Representative Conyers and Representative Lee in asking you to turn over the documents to the House and answer the above questions.

We await what we hope is your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,