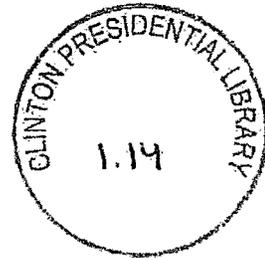


THE WHITE HOUSE



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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Lake Meeting with President Jacques Chirac of France (U)

PARTICIPANTS: French President Jacques Chirac
Jean-David Levitte, Diplomatic Counselor to President Chirac
Bernard Emie, Deputy Diplomatic Counselor to President Chirac
VADM Jean-Luc Delaunay, Military Advisor

U.S.
Anthony Lake, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Pamela Harriman, Ambassador to France
Peter Tarnoff, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Alexander Vershbow, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European Affairs, NSC (Notetaker)

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: November 1, 1996, 12:00 - 2:40 p.m., Elysee Palace, Paris

President Chirac: I understand that you have just had a meeting with Jean-David Levitte and Admiral Delaunay. I wanted this opportunity to review a number of issues. First, I would like to discuss one that is especially topical, Zaire. I received the three Presidents of the three neighboring countries yesterday. I am monitoring developments in Zaire closely and in conjunction with Mobutu. I am very worried. Zaire is the central pillar of the African order. If Zaire explodes, there will be enormous destabilization throughout Africa. There will be internal battles that are extremely severe because there is no figure in Zaire with sufficient political authority to impose himself even on part of the country. There will be a huge number of refugees who will leave in every direction and destabilize neighboring states. Therefore, there is a real danger. The only man who can control the situation is Mobutu. He is slightly better, but he will not be able to return to the country before the end of the year -- or December 15 at the earliest. His health has improved

markedly, but it is hard to control events from Lausanne. The only solution I can see is an international conference of the five concerned states under the UN or OAU. For now, Rwanda opposes such a meeting. Many other leaders in the region say it is necessary, but it is difficult to implement. How can we achieve this goal? Only President Museveni of Uganda could influence Rwanda. Museveni is an intelligent but perverse man with an extraordinary capability to say yes to everyone but then never to deliver. The key lies in the fact that the only leader with sway over Museveni is Qadhafi. Therefore, we are in a tricky situation. If we don't want to commit ourselves massively (and no one wants to do that) and we want to avoid a humanitarian disaster that is of unprecedented in the history of Africa since the time of slave trade, then we have to force Museveni to intervene. The only way to do this is to contact Qadhafi. I know that this is not easy. (S)

Anthony Lake: Not for us. (S)

President Chirac: We need to weigh the pros and cons. (S)

Anthony Lake: First, before I reply, let me extend President Clinton's personal regards. I was struck by the fact that if the President is reelected next Tuesday, then he and you will have the longest mandates of any western leader. This offers immense opportunities. In our talks today, we will discuss some of our tactical differences. But the direction that you have taken French foreign policy -- coming closer to NATO and strengthening the partnership with the United States -- as well as the nature of your personal relationship with President Clinton create huge opportunities to remake Europe and to work together on problems like Zaire and Rwanda. President Clinton is very excited by this. The specific questions in the short term reflect some real tactical differences, but they take place in a very encouraging strategic context. (S)

President Chirac: I know one should never say anything before an election, but I pray every day that President Clinton will be reelected and also that the House of Representatives will be retaken by the Democrats. I also hope that the President will be elected with as big a majority as possible. The greater the margin, the greater his authority, and I hope he will have greater authority. President Clinton is a man who is very open, intelligent and capable, with a remarkable woman at his side. This is an essential point for us: we can talk and discuss issues with him, which has not always been the case with the U.S. Administration. So I pray every day, not just because of our friendship -- although I do have a genuine feeling of friendship for the Clintons. (S)

Anthony Lake: That friendship and our common strategic interests create opportunities to get things done. On Zaire, the situation does threaten an immense human tragedy. There is also the possibility of the worst possible events with Burundi and Rwanda, namely, a regional war between the Tutsis and Hutus, not just within each country, and with the region's governments lining up on each side of the conflict. Uganda and Zaire are almost at war through Rwanda. One of the terrible spin-offs of the situation will be the loss of control of the government in Kinshasa over North and South Kivu. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: There were antigovernment riots in Kinshasa last night. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: It would be a triple tragedy if the Zairian government were dismembered. This is perhaps why Zaire will not send its best troops to Kivu, since it needs to keep an eye on Saba. I am glad you are in touch with Mobutu. I agree that we cannot solve the crisis without him. The intelligence about movement of refugees is very disturbing, as is the word of increased fighting around Goma and Bukavu. We've supported the idea of a Great Lakes conference under the UN and OAU, but the interim step that we should take is to find a way to get Rwanda and Zaire to sit down and resolve the specific disputes between them immediately. If we can get Rwanda and Zaire to meet, we will implicitly involve Uganda as well. In this regard, we do have some influence with Museveni. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: No one but Qadhafi has influence over him. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: You do have some influence with Museveni if you come up with something that is in his interest. He needs us to some degree with respect to Sudan, and we do have more influence with Meles. He has some influence with Museveni. Our influence is small, but we should use it and not only play the Qadhafi card. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: I didn't say that we should only play the Qadhafi card. But my question was whether we can play the Qadhafi card. Of course, we should play other cards too in order of priority. I am not happy about the idea of involving Qadhafi in this, but my question is: Can we play the Qadhafi card at all? ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: He tends to be a wild card. This is a perfect case in which our two governments need to work together, along with the Belgians, to get something done. There will be a meeting in Nairobi early next week. Kagame said that he will go or send his president, and we do have some influence with him.

We need to get Kengo to go as well. We, along with the Belgians, could help resolve the humanitarian crisis if we can get them to agree on a few things. This would leave us in a better situation than two weeks ago and help preserve the integrity of Zaire. We need a cease-fire, and we need to convince Rwanda (along with Uganda) not to offer more assistance to the Tutsis in Zaire. We need to get Zaire to agree that it will treat the Tutsis as Zairian citizens and not subject them to more ethnic cleansing. We need to get Zaire also to agree not to help the Hutu rebels operating against Rwanda. Most importantly, if we can reach an agreement on a plan that refugees can go back into Rwanda rather than being driven deeper into Zaire (which would simply create permanent Lebanonization in the region), we would be in a better situation than when the camps were the source of the trouble. It is important that UNHCR is moving toward such a position. Therefore, let us work together over the coming days to secure a Zaire-Rwanda agreement, leading to a UN-OAU conference on the whole future of the Great Lakes region. It is very urgent. If we don't succeed, the refugees will move deeper into Zaire. The NGOs are already withdrawing their personnel and this could hit Zaire. (S)

President Chirac: There is now a huge international outcry. All the journalists are going down there. Ten French journalists are trapped just a kilometer from the combat zone, and we must study a military operation to get them out. (S)

Anthony Lake: That would be very difficult. (S)

President Chirac: Everything you have said is very logical. But we are not dealing with a country of logic, but with Africa. It is a fascinating place, but they do not operate under the same logic as we do. I admire Kengo. He is a good civil servant, but he can't make any commitments. No one obeys him. His decisions are without consequence. I asked Mobutu to give strong support to Kengo, but in Africa, you cannot delegate power; either you have it or you don't. The only legitimate person in Zaire is Mobutu. (S)

Regarding the first question, I know that region and the country. I am 100 percent for the process that you outlined, but I am afraid it won't be very effective. We are in a world full of passion, in which reactions are based on ethnic feelings rather than politics. The ties between the leaders are not well establish because of the ethnic factor. When you are not familiar with the tribal origins in Africa, you can't have an objective understanding of the situation. I persist in saying that the key to a solution is in the hands of Qadhafi. With all necessary discretion, we should force Qadhafi to exert influence. Naturally, we have no intention of taking such an initiative if

it is not on the basis of agreement with the United States, even informally. I am worried about seeing 100,000 refugees moving toward Gabon, the Congo and beyond. This will mean that France will have to look after the situation of those two countries. It will cost us a lot. We have automatic defense agreements, and I would have to apply them. So my question is, do we seek an informal contact with Qadhafi? If I do this, we will need to offer something in return. I don't need an answer today. You also have your own ways of intervening with Qadhafi. Again, I will not act alone, but I think that this is the only way a solution will be effective. The problem is that the Belgians don't know Africa anymore. They have washed their hands of Africa. Among other western countries, only France is reasonably familiar with Africa, and we have stayed engaged. Let me know your reaction. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: We will need to think about this. We have had similar problems in dealing with Mobutu. But because the Rwanda and Burundi situation is so important, we did reach out to him, since it was in our interests. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: We would have been better off if we had engaged all along with Mobutu. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: We disagree, as you know. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: It is all the fault of the Belgians. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: The question is what price do you pay with Qadhafi. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: Qadhafi, I know, is worse for you than Mobutu. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: That is right. Libya was involved in the murder of American -- and French -- citizens. There is nothing wrong in urging him to do the right thing with Museveni as long as he does not expect a quid pro quo from the United States in terms of our legislation enacted because of his refusal to abide by UNSC resolutions. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: I know that Qadhafi is a very sensitive issue for the United States. I don't want to take any initiative that would be opposed by the U.S. For some time, we have believe that we should try to integrate Qadhafi. The fundamentalist penetration into Libya from Sudan is worrying. We would prefer Qadhafi's government over a fundamentalist government in Libya. Moreover, Qadhafi has aged. There are Americans still working in Libya. They will tell you that today's Qadhafi is not the bad boy of recent years. We do need to resolve the issue of Pan Am

103, but we could convey a strong message: when Pan Am 103 is resolved, we will judge him on his good work, he could demonstrate that today by imposing a solution on Museveni. Again, we would not want to take such an initiative if it exposed us to criticism. We would need to do it discreetly. (C)

Anthony Lake: We have been very clear. We would welcome Qadhafi's integration once he has resolved Pan Am 103. Our strategic view is the same. We hope we can move forward, and we will contemplate what you said. We should not publicize this idea in the meantime. (C)

President Chirac: On Africa, more generally, we have studied the African Crisis Response Force as proposed by Mr. Christopher. Let me say one thing. I have publicly condemned the irresponsible declarations of Minister Godfrain. I was very upset by those stupid statements. You can allow my statement to be made public: It was stupid, irresponsible and I condemn it. I told him that without using any diplomatic language. What I just said is not confidential, and you can tell anyone I said it, including the press. (C)

The ACRF as initially presented was badly received by the Africans. The President of Mali was the first to react. He said that no Chief of State would accept sending a single soldier if it were outside the control of the OAU or UN. There was clearly a misunderstanding that the U.S. wanted a force outside the OAU or UN. When he flew here after the proposal was first made, I told him that he had misunderstood. I explained to him that the aim was to prevent crises, which was inconceivable without the UN or OAU's authority. Make no mistake, in my view the UN is the most important, because the OAU is filled with rivalries, whereas the UN is respected in the region. I think the ACRF is an excellent idea and a necessary step, but the entire international community should participate in the technical and financial makeup of the force. If it is not under UN command, it will never exist. (C)

In this respect, you have to be careful with our African friends. Please explain to George Moose that Africans are not African-Americans. There is no link at all. Practically all Africans are very kind people. They never say no, but always say yes. If you are not used to speaking with them, you go away without knowing that their yes has no value. Africans have a different way of talking. Westerners cannot understand this after just two hours of talking with African leaders. So be careful in how you set up the ACRF. Almost all the heads of state and government could join if you get it right. (C)

Anthony Lake: You reminded me of the time when I worked in Africa. I had an African friend, and we were both working for a ministry in Kenya. The government did not pay my colleague's salary, and I lent him the money out of pocket. When I asked him if he would repay me, he said yes, I will send it to you. But I waited and waited and finally when I asked him, he explained that his gratitude to me went far beyond mere financial considerations. So that is what "yes" meant. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: That is Africa. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: We have gone beyond this point with African countries. Several of them have agreed to the proposal and have offered to provide troops. You are absolutely right that we need to put this in the UN context. Any use of the force would have to be authorized by the UN Security Council. The command arrangements would need to be adjusted to the contingency. In building the force, I have the impression that the OAU is not willing or able to do this; they are not capable of NATO-style operations in Africa. We must always be clear this will be under UN authority. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: I believe it is a good idea, but it will be difficult to implement. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: I hope we can work together and establish a concept based on your proposal at the Biarritz summit. We should merge that proposal with our concept so that we can together put the idea into practice. It would be more effective if this were a common U.S.-French enterprise. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: The next subject on my list is the G-7, where everything is fine. The same applies to CTBT. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: Thanks again for your leadership at Lyons on terrorism. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: When it comes to terrorism, we will always be supportive of you, and there will be no limit to our support. The CTBT negotiations went well. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: If only Qadhafi could deliver India. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: We very seriously look forward to your response on Qadhafi. If you say no, we will not act. On Bosnia, there are no particular problems. As far as post-IFOR is concerned, we will take a joint position. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: This will be a difficult decision for President Clinton. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: It will be difficult for us too. We will take the same decision as President Clinton does. (S)

Anthony Lake: We will try to address this as quickly as possible. (S)

President Chirac: Our position is simple. If the U.S. leaves, we leave as well. If the U.S. stays, we will stay -- and in the same proportion. (S)

Anthony Lake: There will be problems next year; we are dealing with Bosnia. (S)

President Chirac: They have been fighting for centuries and won't stop. A word regarding China. I am not sure we are always treating China with the necessary respect. There is a group of high-level Chinese historians who are completing a dictionary of humiliations of the past 150 years. We need to keep in mind that they are the oldest living civilization in the world. They were at the peak of art and science when we were all climbing in the trees. And this fact has left its trace. For fifty years we tried to profit from China's weakness and systematically humiliated China. Now for the first time they believe they can become masters of the world. I know Chinese civilization well. They will make us pay a heavy price in 20-30 years if we are not careful now. They will become the leading economic power and then the world's leading power, so we have to be careful for our grandchildren's sake. (S)

For example, every year we perform a ridiculous exercise in Geneva. We introduce a motion to condemn human rights violations in China at the UN Human Rights Commission, where a majority of countries reject it. This proves globally the wisdom of the United Nations. We both look stupid and ridiculous. We recognize that there are human rights problems, and we certainly accept the universal value of human rights. But for 2,500 to 5,000 years the Chinese have been affected by Confucianism under which the question is "how does man serve society," rather than society serving man. Therefore, we need to find the right way to present the issue. When we were fighting each other as savages, in China they had the first judges. I believe we should move from a strategy of confrontation that is a dead end to a strategy of discussion. I tried last year but didn't succeed. Let us work with them so that we can agree on a common approach. (S)

Anthony Lake: I agree. This is one reason why the President sent me to China earlier this year. My purpose was not to bargain on each issue, but to give them our strategic perspective. I explained that it was not only a question of

friendship but that it was in our interest in seeing a strong China that is a full partner. We want an agreement with China in the WTO so that it not only plays by the rules but joins the international community in developing those rules. They do have a sense of wounded pride that is palpable, as you said. Human rights is a real problem, and we need to keep talking with them. We don't enjoy the process in the UN Human Rights Commission and would prefer not to have to deal with these issues publicly. We should talk with the Chinese on actions that they could take on human rights so that we wouldn't have to act in Geneva. If we could get the Chinese to take some actions, maybe we could avoid these confrontations. (C)

President Chirac: They are ready to discuss the issue because the UN procedure humiliates them. They would prefer a means of compromise, although not at any price. According to the Amnesty report, 1,100 people were killed in the Tiananmen events. Eight days earlier, 5,000 people were killed by the police in Pakistan, but this was not on TV, so there was no problem with public opinion. In contrast, every problem with China is on TV. The question is where do you draw the line.

Anthony Lake: We also have human rights discussions with Pakistan. (C)

President Chirac: Yes, but those are more discreet. (C)

Anthony Lake: The fact that the Chinese don't like the UN process suggests that we should try to get something in return before dropping it. (C)

President Chirac: I would like to talk about the Middle East, since things are often distorted by the press. Today there is no confidence in the Middle East. Where there is no trust, things come to a halt. Everywhere I went, I paid tribute to the work done by the United States since Camp David. But now there is a problem: rightly or wrongly, the Arabs believe that the United States is too close to Israel, so they have difficulties in accepting certain things. The reasonable ideas put forward by Israel and the United States will not be accepted by the Palestinians. However, the same things, if proposed by the United States, Israel and Europe together, will be acceptable. I am not criticizing U.S. leadership in the peace process or impugning it. The problem is that it is not sufficient now that Israel has become what it has. Who is Netanyahu? My personal relationship is better than that with Peres and Begin, but I don't know whether Netanyahu is still committed to the idea of a greater Israel, or whether he is ready to deal and make peace. Is he a leader or a follower? No one knows the answer. (C)

An example of these mixed signals came when I was speaking with President Asad. He is not much cleaner with respect to terrorism than Qadhafi, although we still have relations with him for reasons of Realpolitik. Asad said that if they returned the Golan Heights, everything would be negotiable. I discussed this with Weizmann and Netanyahu. Weizmann has greater moral authority and is keen to engage. Weizmann said that there is no other solution but to return the Golan but that this meant renegotiating the security arrangements that had been agreed at the Wye Plantation. David Levy seemed to accept this. Netanyahu first said that he could understand this; with renegotiation of all the security arrangements, then there was no reason he couldn't return the Golan Heights. That was on Wednesday. On Thursday, however, Netanyahu decided to authorize oil exploration in the Golan. I went to Cairo and met with Mubarak. He was very angry. He asked whether this was a provocation or just stupidity. When I received Netanyahu a month ago, he arrived at 12:30 and we spoke until 4 o'clock. I told him that the whole business with the tunnel was stupid and that there would be serious consequences for the region. He rejected this. When the meeting was over at 4 o'clock, we got the first press reports on the killings on the West Bank. Either this was a deliberate provocation or we are dealing with a man who is not capable of directing Israeli policy. I believe that Netanyahu will be obliged to divorce himself either from the peace process or from his coalition. If he sticks with the coalition, it will be a catastrophe. (C)

Anthony Lake: There was an interesting column by Tom Friedman of the New York Times. His point was that if the talks were concluded on Hebron soon -- and Arafat and the Israeli negotiators are very close to coming to a solution on the military issues -- then this would force Netanyahu to choose. He is prepared to make concessions. This would not end the coalition but would split the religious parties from the others. Arafat has it in his hands to help define who Netanyahu is. It is important that Arafat seizes the opportunity of a Hebron deal. (C)

President Chirac: On Hebron, Netanyahu and Weizmann need to tell Arafat that if he doesn't sign tomorrow, we will not have an agreement for a year. When I left Israel, the last thing Arafat said to me was that he could not accede to any form of blackmail. If Netanyahu thinks he can stop everything, it won't stop the violence or terrorism. The Israeli position is excessive. How many Israelis live in Hebron? There are 20 people who sleep there and a few hundred who work there. What Israel needs for protection is to respect the agreements already reached. When Israelis increase the pressure on the Arabs, we need to ask what they are after. They must realize that turning Arafat away means

turning away the only man who can deliver. Maybe a Hebron agreement will move things forward, but there is no guarantee. Once it is signed, Netanyahu could create yet another problem.

(C)

Anthony Lake: The agreement must be one that enables him to survive politically and physically. Let me make two other points. We agree that there was a loss of trust between the Israelis and Palestinians. Weizmann has done some good work. Part of the problem was helping Netanyahu figure out how to talk to the Palestinians. When they came to Washington, President Clinton encouraged Netanyahu to get the tone right in his discussions with Arafat. It is getting better, but there need to be some agreements. As in Africa, it is essential that we work better together on the Middle East. I will discuss with Jean-David ways that we can consult that we have not done before. Your letter to the President was helpful. The two of you can make sure we work together. Our people should speak regularly.

(C)

President Chirac: Let me say that I do not seek any glory in the Middle East. We've only received hard knocks over my trip. The French government is very unpopular in France right now, since we are making a considerable effort to improve the economic situation. France has the second largest Jewish community outside Israel and the United States. These are not farmers, but journalists and other influential people. I took only criticism, and it would be easier for me to say that we won't concern ourselves with the Middle East: but we are next door, it is in the Mediterranean. If the situation blows up it will be very bothersome for us. We have 4-1/2 million Arabs in France. Many of them are refugees, and if we can promote peace, it will be better than war. When I was in Israel, they surrounded me with big security people carrying guns, yet when I went to Ramallah, there were no security guards and no guns -- just people with olive branches. I wasn't in an armored vehicle and managed to open the window and everybody was happy. (C)

During our talks, Netanyahu told me that Asad had just made a major troop movements into Lebanon, moving troops out of Beirut. He told me that according to their information, he was going to swoop out of Syria. I asked whether they were making fun of me. Did he want me to believe that Asad was going to push into the Golan Heights in 24 hours without any time for Israel to react? Either this was a provocation or incompetence but this represents a real problem. Who is really afraid of being attacked? Certainly not Israel. Israel could be in Damascus in 24 hours. The risk is for Asad to be attacked by Israel or in Lebanon. What is the situation today? There are 800 people in the St. George's Hotel, another 400 in another hotel. Two Israeli

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rockets could kill 2,000 Syrians. That is the real danger in Beirut. [redacted] The troop movements may look like Asad was going after the Golan, but that couldn't be the case. (S)

Anthony Lake: Some people around him have created elegant scenarios about how Syria could hold Israeli units hostage. This is not real. But two times we have had to go to both sides to share intelligence in order to show that these were defensive moves. We have helped calm them down. After going to the Israelis, we went to the Syrians and told them that Israel's actions were defensive. Yes, half of the problem is the mistrust between the sides. We hope we have helped to defuse the tensions. (S)

President Chirac: One word on the Helms-Burton and D'Amato-Kennedy legislation. I know it was not President Clinton's idea, but we have an EU position that is very firm. You need to know that the EU will not show any weakness on this issue. I recently met with the Secretary General of the OAS. He said that their position is unanimous -- the same as that of the EU. Therefore, let us be careful. We will see what happens after your elections. If a French company is the target of these laws, I don't know what the EU will do, but I will have to react first in a most brutal way. It will be a *casus belli*. You can't organize the world and then do what you please when it suits you. When I discussed this with Bill Clinton, it clearly bothered him. I am sure that if he wins the election and regains Democratic control of the House, we will resolve this. (S)

Anthony Lake: I owe you a frank explanation. Both pieces of legislation reflect strong consensus in both parties in the Congress and in American public opinion. After the shutdown of the plane by the Cubans, the President also was supportive. There is no real prospect of the legislation changing. We don't like the fact that we are on a collision course with the government of France or the EU. On Helms-Burton, there is a way out. Stuart Eizenstat recently came to Paris and stressed that we share a common objective on Cuba, namely, the restoration of democracy. I understand that it is your objective as well, even though I also know of your repugnance for our legislation. Under the legislation, there is a question of bringing suits against foreign firms. The President has suspended such action until January. The more that Europeans can do, either through governments, companies or NGOs, the more it will help. (S)

For example, European governments have suspended negotiations between the EU and Cuba on a cooperation agreement. If the EU were to say that before those talks can resume, there should be progress toward democratization, that would be helpful. With

respect to European companies, if they took an approach along the lines that we took in South Africa -- e.g., only investing in companies in Cuba that have fair labor practices -- that would also help. In short, any actions by the Europeans that push Cuba toward democracy will help the President decide about further suspensions under Helms-Burton. We know that there is a problem since, from the European point of view, it is difficult to be seen as acting in response to our law. Therefore, such actions need to be disconnected from the law. But let me repeat that any measures European governments and companies can take to promote democratization in Cuba will help the President. He would not say that the Europeans have taken the steps because of our law, but would just welcome the actions when making his decision on whether to suspend the effect of Helms-Burton another time. (C)

President Chirac: The laws once enacted are now there. If they don't threaten France's interests, that is okay. Regarding democracy in Cuba, I am naturally in favor of this. Nobody mentioned Cuba before, but since the law passed, there has been a ground swell of sympathy for Cuba in Europe, Latin America and Africa. (I can't say about Asia because I haven't checked.) I don't think that this legislation was the best tactic. I have no sympathy for Castro, and I agree that we should make gestures that could make life easier for President Clinton, but this was a clumsy initiative that runs counter to U.S. interests. I will be glad to try to break the logjam for Bill Clinton. However, if French companies are subject to lawsuits in the United States threatening their interests, it will lead to an extremely violent French reaction. (C)

Anthony Lake: I understand. (C)

Ambassador Harriman: There are no French companies in Cuba. (C)

Anthony Lake: There are few European firms with interests in Cuba. (C)

President Chirac: You are talking about Cuba and democracy. You should listen to what the Latin Americans are saying -- not necessarily to you, because they are afraid, but to others. They think it is better not to keep the banana producers in slavery, and they are right. Similarly, why are U.S. companies staying in Libya under a Canadian hat? Why doesn't what goes for Cuba go for Libya? But I agree we need a way out. I know the President won't escalate the problem, and I am all in favor of facilitating a solution. (C)

Let's talk about NATO. Let me tell you what I think. First, France is not the demandeur. We can reenter a reformed NATO, and that would be good. If not, it would not be a problem for us

either. The problem of reentering NATO will be with French public opinion. Our public has become used to not being the in NATO military structure, and there would be unanimity against this step among the political class. That reaction doesn't bother me, but there are problems with respect to NATO reform. I had wanted the position of SACEUR to rotate between Europe and the United States. That proposal was refused, so I gave up on that plan. Then I said that if the two strategic commanders were Americans, then the two regional commanders should be Europeans. All the other problems I am sure can be solved. But for the two regional commanders, we face the problem of CINCSOUTH. The United States says that it is impossible to have a European Commander because of the Sixth Fleet, [REDACTED] Greece and Turkey, etc. I understand all that, but I say in response that we will not reenter NATO if the Southern Commander is not European. Without that, I cannot say that there is a European identity within the framework of NATO. Regarding the Sixth Fleet, it could be directly answerable to SACEUR. On nuclear weapons, I am sure a technical solution can be found.

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~~(c)~~

U.S. interests certainly exist in the Mediterranean, but they are not superior to European interests. I don't want this subject turned into an issue of confrontation. If we can find an accord, that would be good. If not, we should not make it into a crisis. I repeat that we are not the demandeurs. If the answer is no, I won't be displeased. We will avoid a further crisis in France, and I will not lose another 10 points in the opinion polls (if our ratings went any lower, we would strike oil). You may say that polls don't matter, that one can lose in the polls and win the next election, but let's not exaggerate that point. There are major efforts that we still have to make on the economic and social front, and I am not looking for additional worries with public opinion. NATO is in our general interest. We will rejoin but not if the Southern Command is not European. ~~(c)~~

Regarding enlargement, I am in favor, but in conditions that are acceptable to Russia. I don't want to give the Russians a veto, but we have humiliated them too much. The situation in Russia is very dangerous. One day there will be dangerous nationalist backlash. A pact between NATO and Russia is quite possible. This will permit us to have NATO enlargement without any problems while respecting the Russian position. Then we can begin the NATO enlargement process -- identifying the countries that will join first and starting negotiations. One observation with respect to the first group is that is unfortunate that we have not included Romania; we support Romania. ~~(c)~~

The next question is when will we decide all of this. We want to leave the new U.S. administration some time to consult and then

reach agreement on a schedule. I would propose that the NATO Summit be delayed until July. This would allow time to prepare things with serenity. Regarding the Summit, I propose a two-day meeting. On the first day, the 16 would meet and, if agreed, approve the reforms of the Alliance. The next morning we would sign a NATO-Russia agreement, and in the afternoon we would have a small celebration party with the other partners in connection with a decision on NATO enlargement. We have to make all the countries happy. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: This would not just be a little party but a historic one. Let me tell you that we have a real problem on the Southern Command. We had a good discussion on this this morning with Jean-David and his colleagues. We need to begin by looking at the stakes. You have made a courageous and wise decision regarding the potential full integration of France into NATO military structures. For our part, the President reversed previous U.S. policy in supporting a European defense identity within NATO as part of his view, and our common vision, of a Europe that is undivided, democratic, and at peace. France's potential role, your decision to come closer to NATO and Francophone-U.S. relations -- as well as your personal relationship with President Clinton -- are all essential to that vision. It is extremely important that we work this issue through. ~~(C)~~

As you said, we have survived in the past with a NATO in which France was not integrated. We can proceed with NATO enlargement and NATO-Russia relations without French integration, but it would be better to do so with it. At next year's Summit, which I like to call a Super Summit, we could have NATO enlargement, a new NATO adapted to the new era and a NATO-Russia agreement. This would be of huge, historic significance, on the order of 1815. That should be our objective. We have been working toward a European role within NATO which could, in specific terms, turn over NATO resources to the Europeans in cases in which Europeans might be acting without the United States (although we hope that would not be the case in most situations). We should do it, however, in a way that is militarily sound. What makes NATO effective is its military capabilities. The command structure needs to be militarily sound as well. ~~(C)~~

Second, this should be done in a way that ties the United States as closely as possible to Europe. There is a tension: as we support a greater European defense identity, we have to be able to tell our public and Congress that this is being done in a way that does not weaken our links to Europe. The President's greatest concern is not just the threats that exist in the Mediterranean, but the fact that without the command of AFSOUTH, we could not have sold our participation in Bosnia. For us to

give up AFSOUTH would be perceived as the beginning of strategic retreat from the new NATO. So I plead with you, Mr. President, to work together with us to find a package of other changes in the NATO command structure, together with the larger changes we have supported so far, that will allow you to sell to your public opinion -- with our help -- the fact that France is taking a central role in a new NATO. But we should not do this at the expense of steps that would be damaging in building the new NATO. There are a lot of other billets. We could also go back to three regional commands, although I know that raises German concerns. We want to work with you on that package. If we can agree on a package through serious private talks, reached in a way that is consistent with the interests of other Allies, it would be worthwhile. We can try to control our government and not claim a success or victory for the United States, but a success for all Allies, especially France. This would be because it would be following through on your decision, which we have already applauded, and it would be an historic step toward a Super Summit. (S)

Regarding the timing of the summit, we would like to do it a bit earlier, but we can look at July. On NATO enlargement, we have made no decisions on who should be in the first group. Therefore, we have not made any decision on Romania and this can still be discussed. I have insisted that there be no meetings within the U.S. government to make such decisions, given the transparency of our government. We don't need any stories on a premature American choice. (S)

One important point with respect to our dealings with the Russians: we need to convey how genuinely and deeply we want to work with them on an understanding for the 1997 Summit. But if we give them the impression that there will not be NATO enlargement until such arrangements are worked out, that will give them every reason not to reach an understanding with us. If they believe that by delaying the NATO-Russia understanding, they can delay NATO enlargement, the whole thing could crash. So we are doing everything we can to push forward on the NATO-Russia track, as we proceed prudently on NATO enlargement, but we must stress that these are parallel tracks. Otherwise, the Russians could take negative steps that would reinforce the nationalists. (S)

President Chirac: On that last point, I think that to the extent that we know who is in charge in Russia, they are ready for an accord. The advantages would be considerable for Moscow. The Russian people are convinced that nuclear weapons are going to come down on their towns. It is one of the reasons that fuels nationalist critics of their government -- that they are not

protecting the people against American bombs. That is really how Russian people see it. ~~(c)~~

Anthony Lake: We have our own critics who feel that way as well about the Russians. ~~(c)~~

President Chirac: The Russian government -- Yeltsin, Chernomyrdin -- has an interest in reaching a rapid agreement with NATO. Their interests in this are stronger than their interests in accepting NATO enlargement. I don't think it is in their interest to delay NATO enlargement by delaying the NATO-Russia agreement, but that is a logical analysis. It is necessary for Chernomyrdin and Boris Nikolayevich to convince the Russian people that there is no danger and that their government has taken the necessary steps to remove any threats. So, the NATO-Russia agreement is more important politically to Russia than it is to us, but we need to present it to them politely. ~~(c)~~

Regarding the Southern Command, I understand your position -- if I were in the United States, I would adopt the same position. What is important in a command system is who is in charge. You said that President Clinton has already accepted the principle of a European defense identity and that this is a real change in U.S. policy. This is true, but it remains a change in words, not in reality. That is a U.S. problem; I would do the same if I were in your shoes. I am prepared to adopt anything that you propose, but not enter the system if there is not a real change. This is not worth a crisis between us. I will assume a low profile. NATO has worked well without France for many years and this will continue. We have all kinds of military agreements and this is not a problem. We are working together in Bosnia without any problem because we have various military ties. But I repeat, France is ready to discuss returning to NATO if there is a real change, and that means a change in the command structure. If this is not possible, it will not pose any difficulties for France; we just will not rejoin. ~~(c)~~

I suggested July rather than the spring for the Summit because it would give us more time to work. There will be a new U.S. Congress, and I have every confidence in Bill Clinton's realism. He is a wise man, and we can discuss this. If we wait until the beginning of the next Administration and everything is running smoothly, if the noise of the election has passed, I am sure that the imagination of our military and diplomats will lead to solutions. But this needs time. I also suggested that the meeting take place in Europe. Note that I did not say in France, but rather I think Brussels would be a good venue. Let there be no ambiguity on this. ~~(c)~~

Anthony Lake: I prefer ambiguity and have great affection for Paris. We can wait on this. Regarding your previous points, let me say that this is not an election issue. (c)

Président Chirac: I know that, but elections do create tensions. (c)

Anthony Lake: This is mostly an issue about our long-term position in NATO. It will affect debates on future crises and when we are pushing NATO enlargement through the Congress. That will lead to a debate, particularly since there will be costs. At that time, it will become more of an issue. But we do not need to wait until the new Administration to discuss this. Our position is clear. We should try to come to grips with this problem in a quiet way. It will be a focus of discussion at the December NAC Ministerial, and the more progress we can make before then, the easier it will be to defuse the issue. On the other hand, the more it is seen as a public issue, a zero-sum question in which there are winners and losers, we will have defeated our own purpose of finding a package that you can sell as justifying French integration into NATO. We will keep working with Jean-David on a process for coming to grips with this issue. (c)

On your larger point that NATO can survive without French integration, I agree that we can have a summit and a new Europe with just NATO enlargement and a NATO-Russia agreement, but that would be sad. We have an historic opportunity that could be based on the decisions of you and President Clinton. These are not only words. We have put forward some specific ways in which Europeans could act within NATO, including the CJTF proposal. We have already put on the table an increased European role for the Deputy SACEUR. So, some pieces of the package are on the table, and we can discuss other pieces -- for example, more billets within the regional commands -- as part of a determined effort to come up with a package that will enable us to seize the full opportunity. President Clinton has asked us to keep working at this. (c)

President Chirac: I agree that we should work along these lines. I am not sure that we can do it, but I repeat, let's not make it into a crisis. (c)

The last thing I wanted to discuss is this dreadful business with Boutros-Ghali. I would like to return to the origins of the problem. One day about a year ago, Bill Clinton called me and said there was a problem with Boutros-Ghali and that we need to find a solution. He asked whether we could help. In that conversation President Clinton said (without making any commitment, of course) that perhaps we could leave Boutros-Ghali

in place for another two years. I suggested another 2-1/2 years, that this was a compromise that we might be able to sell. I then put the phone down and the next day, Madeleine Albright made her famous statement declaring "out with Boutros-Ghali." She said that he had one year to pack his bags. That statement shocked people. It was very clumsy. This campaign will go down in the annals of history as the most counterproductive diplomatic campaign ever. This problem is one that we could have solved quietly, yet U.S. diplomacy got everyone's back up. (C)

We need to find a way out. The immense majority of UN members will vote for Boutros-Ghali. There are two ways out of this situation. One is an agreement, which is still possible without a loss of face for anyone, to prolong Boutros-Ghali's term. The second is a U.S. veto, which would not help the U.S. image in the world. There is also an important question of procedure. After your elections, the U.S. representative at the UN has said that the Security Council needs to meet immediately to vote on Boutros-Ghali. I believe that is a horrendous trap, it will be the summit of diplomatic stupidity if the Security Council meets immediately for the United States to veto Boutros-Ghali's extension. Then we will need to elect a new man. There is no acceptable candidate presented or even imagined. France will veto any candidate that is not perfectly Francophone since the United Nations is a bilingual institution according to its own statutes. All the names presented so far are objectionable in this regard. This is both dangerous and a bad process. (C)

The alternative would be not to vote right away, to allow three or four weeks for those concerned to discuss this situation. The United States would probably not want to veto before talking to Mubarak and two or three other leaders at the presidential level, at least by phone. Or if the President wants to bring Mubarak, me and others to Washington for a couple of hours, I am ready. I suggest you wait a few weeks, even if there is still no agreement. There will be plenty of time for U.S. veto. (C)

What is the way out? Boutros-Ghali is not happy. He did not expect that the U.S. would take such a firm stance. I had warned him of the problem, recalling that when I was in Washington three years ago, when I was still mayor of Paris, and I met with Senator Dole just after seeing President Clinton, I had an experience that underlined Boutros-Ghali's problems. I was received in Dole's office by a young lady who told me that there was a governor still meeting with Dole and that I would need to wait a few minutes. In chatting with her, she said "Ah, you support Boutros-Ghali; you should know that whatever happens, we will have his skin." I knew then that Boutros-Ghali was in trouble. But he told me that he thought it was not serious and that he had the best possible relations with the Americans. Then

your position hit him over the head. The best solution is a two-year extension. This could be negotiable. But to throw him out after one more year could cause worse damage for the U.S. image. You cannot be the nation that runs everything in the world. You cannot take decisions sole on the basis of domestic considerations. Personality issues have a considerable impact on your image. When I met with the head of the OAS, the only time he got agitated was when we were discussing this matter. No one outside of the United States can understand your position. If you use your veto -- and this is up to President Clinton alone -- it should not be done in a hurried fashion. Allow some time to inform Mubarak and others. There could be nothing worse than for Madeleine Albright to call an immediate meeting of the Security Council and an immediate veto. (C)

Anthony Lake: This is not just Madeleine Albright's position but that of the U.S. Government. The President said in his speech to the UN that our position was firm. The problem is a bit different than you describe, although I agree it is a terrible issue. We are between a rock and a hard place. The rock is the fact that our position is very unpopular, although we have received more encouragement from some other governments in recent weeks. (C)

President Chirac: Beware of what they are not telling you. (C)

Anthony Lake: The hard place is not strictly domestic politics. You are correct in describing Dole's view of Boutros-Ghali. He doesn't like him even though the President does like Boutros personally. The hard place is the fact that we are committed to the UN, yet we are in a position of being in arrears on our financial contributions. In our Congress, the UN is not at all popular, even though it is more popular with the American public. Spending money is not popular in general and particular on the UN. So we must be able to convince our Congress that the UN is worth investing in. And this means that it must be in the process of reform. While the Secretary General has done some good things and is a good diplomat, he has not thrown himself into UN reform. Therefore a change in leadership is necessary. (C)

Regarding the history of this matter, you will recall that Secretary Christopher went to Boutros-Ghali and explained that we had come to our position with some regret and that we would prefer to resolve the matter with dignity. We offered him a one-year extension, but he rejected it. It was not Madeleine Albright's press conference, but a New York Times article what unfortunately put the issue into the public debate. We would have preferred a private approach for all the reasons you have suggested. Where we are now is a position that will remain in

effect after the elections. It is not only Boutros-Ghali but foreign policy in general that did not come up in our elections. I am happy about this, since it means our foreign policy is strong enough not to offer any opportunities for the Republicans to run with. Regarding the timing, I will report what you say, but we need to work urgently to find a successor -- for the sake of the United Nations. I suggest we remain in close contact and work this issue through in the coming weeks. I will report to the President what you said. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: I am not personally involved. I just wanted to say that you have made a mistake. If you were willing to compromise, it would be better. Although I don't think we can find a compromise based on fewer than 2-1/2 years. If the issue ends up with a U.S. veto, it should not come without warning. This would not be in the U.S. interest. Bill Clinton should explain to those who are concerned, Mubarak, the Irish Prime Minister as EU President, and maybe others, what his objections are. But France will veto anyone who is not perfectly totally Francophone. Boutros-Ghali's Deputy, Kofi Annan, is an excellent Ghanaian, but he does not have the stature of a Secretary General, and he speaks French only poorly. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: Il parle mieux que moi. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: But he is not a Francophone. There may be one out there, but we can't have someone who is not capable of holding the job. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: We need to consult on possible names. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: As long as they are Francophone, just as Boutros-Ghali is. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: We have a lot of work to do, but this is the President's policy and not just Madeleine Albright's. ~~(C)~~

President Chirac: I only said that she had made it into a personal affair and was very clumsy indeed. ~~(C)~~

Anthony Lake: One might wish that our objective realities would change after November 5 but they won't. Let us stay in touch on this. ~~(C)~~

-- End of Conversation --