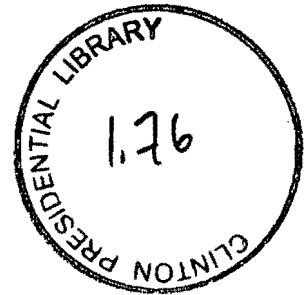


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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON



MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Jacques Chirac of France

NOTE TAKERS: Jim Smith, Joel Schrader and Frank Jarosinski

DATE, TIME December 17, 1998 -- 12:38 p.m. - 12:53 p.m. EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello. (U)

President Chirac: I just wanted to say hello and I want to talk through the interpreter, if you don't mind. First of all, I want to congratulate you on your visit to Israel and Palestine. It was a very difficult visit, but I thought you did it the best way you could. Second, needless to say, all the French people feel affection and sympathy for you for the ridiculous test you have to go through. Well, you know all that. I would not be ringing you up if I did not have a third question. When the strikes against Iraq are over, what are we going to do? What is going to happen? Do you already have a plan to get out of the crisis, to which France would be glad to contribute, or should we still be discussing things? Well, for example, if Saddam Hussein is neither killed nor overthrown, does UNSCOM go back or not? Is there tight control or not? How will the oil-for-food program be implemented? So, how do we get out of the crisis?

(S)

The President: First of all, I think that the trip to Israel and Gaza went great. But there are great difficulties there, as you know. The Netanyahu government is not stable and there may be new elections before long, and the political situation in Israel will make it difficult to go forward on the peace process. So I thought it was important to go and I hope we can keep going forward with the Wye agreement. The trip was a success. Secondly, I think in terms of what happens next, I

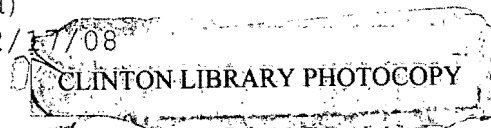
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Classified by: Glyn T. Davies

Reason: 1.5 (a) (d)

Declassify on: 12/17/08

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think it would be good if UNSCOM can go back there. If he does not let them back, then we have to keep the sanctions on. We have to keep that in force if he threatens his neighbors. We have to keep the oil-for-food program. If there are medical problems to be met, we may need to meet them and think about how to dramatically expand it to meet other needs and help the country develop and minimize military expenditures. (S)

President Chirac: Do you think we will be able to send UNSCOM back in to do its work? (S)

The President: I don't know. I think there may be a chance if he thinks he can get the comprehensive review. But I think the important thing is for us to say we would like to do it and I think we need to expand the oil-for-food program in the meantime. Really the whole idea behind the oil-for-food program was to return the people as close to normalcy as possible without a big military build-up. I think there is a chance he will take UNSCOM back under the right circumstances, if we make clear that if he keeps his commitments, we'll keep ours. Maybe Levitte could talk to Sandy Berger about it. I'm glad you're thinking about it, because I've been thinking that we should talk about where we all go from here. (S)

President Chirac: There is no doubt about that. Do you think Saddam Hussein could accept having UNSCOM back? If not, what do we do? (S)

The President: I think he might if the French Government asks him, if he understood from my point of view all the commitments are still on the table so long as there is actually compliance. I further think we should also be for a broader oil-for-food program. That is the only way we in the United States can move toward an end to the sanctions regime. What I am looking for is a strategy to end the danger that his WMD program causes and to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people. I think that for me I have not ruled out the possibility that we could go back to a situation where Iraq is committed to implementing the Memorandum of Understanding that Saddam and Kofi Annan reached. (S)

President Chirac: In any case, France has taken a very clear position that Saddam Hussein bears responsibility for the situation and, in actual fact, I just repeated that a short while ago on TV. So my concern now is about the modalities for getting out of the crisis and France is quite ready to associate itself with any discussion of how to do so. (S)

The President: I will have Sandy Berger follow up with you. I'm very grateful for the statement you made at the UN. It was very, very helpful. We need to work through the UN to get a resolution to this. I hope -- you know, the Russians are going to try to do something to express their opposition to what I have done and to Butler in particular. I hope France will not join this, and will perhaps work to become a mediating force. What's done is done; we need to talk about the future and how to help the people of Iraq. I'm glad to focus on that with you. I think you are in a unique position to reach out to the Russians and Chinese to get us on a responsible course and figure out where we all go from here. (S)

President Chirac: That is precisely the issue. That is the position I took on television. (U)

The President: Well, that is great. Thank you very much, Jacques. (U)

President Chirac: I do not intend to associate myself with any criticism, even on Butler, P1(b)(1)

P1(b)(1)
P1(b)(1) I have given instructions to our ambassador to the UN that everything is to be done so there is no division. (S)

The President: Thank you very much for that. (U)

President Chirac: Everything -- so that there should be a common position. We hoped Saddam Hussein would have understood by now. I don't know if you have spoken to Yeltsin, but I found him in extraordinarily good form. I tried to talk to him about the Iraq affair. I think he's being pushed toward criticism by Primakov and the Duma, but I found him -- Hello? (S)

The President: Jacques, I lost that. Who did you find in extraordinarily good form? (U)

President Chirac: Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin. (C)

The President: He's doing better? Good. I'm going to talk to Primakov and then I may call Yeltsin, but I'm glad to hear that he's doing better. That's good news. (C)

President Chirac: You ought to ring him up. Yeltsin is much calmer in this respect than Primakov. And I tried to calm him down, but he remained very bothered by this affair because of

domestic public opinion. But I think if you ring him up it will be a very good thing. (S)

The President: Thanks very much. I will. (U)

President Chirac: Well, Bill, we will keep in touch. I'm glad to have you on the phone. Please give all my best greetings to Hillary. (U)

The President: Thank you. (U)

President Chirac: I hope to see you soon, because we have a meeting in two months in Washington. (U)

The President: I'm looking forward to it. Thank you. (U)

President Chirac: Thank you. Goodbye. (U)

The President: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --