

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Chirac of France (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Chirac

Interpreter: Marcel Bouquet
Notetakers: Robin Rickard, Don Cheramie,
Roger Merletti, James Smith and Hoyt Yee

DATE, TIME: January 7, 2000, 4:23-4:33 p.m., EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hello, Jacques. (U)

President Chirac: Oh, Bill. How are you? (U)

The President: Fine, thank you. (U)

President Chirac: It's very nice of you to call me back. I know you're busy, so I will be very short. First, let me say happy New Year for you and also for Hillary. And you know what I mean. The best for her. (U)

The President: Thank you. She's working hard and I think she will do okay. (U)

President Chirac: I'm sure she will win. Do you have a translator? I also wanted to congratulate you for the negotiations regarding the Middle East and, of course, to say we are entirely available if Europe or her friends can do anything to help in the process. But I called you, Mr. President, to say a few words about an issue regarding the IMF. And I know you are in a hurry, so I'll be brief. You know that Director Camdessus has given his resignation in the middle of his term of office. So therefore a new general director for the IMF will need to be appointed and, according to tradition, there should be a European. For that reason, I wanted to say France has a candidate whom you know very well -- the former Prime Minister, Mr. Fabius -- and I didn't want to begin the campaign for Mr. Fabius before I personally warned you about it. We have not

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announced anything about this campaign before warning you about it. And this is the former Prime Minister of President Mitterrand, someone who is 50 years old. That is what I wanted to talk to you about. Of course, we would like the support of the United States, but basically I wanted you to know before we started campaigning for him. I thought it appropriate and the most correct thing to do. (G)

The President: First of all, Jacques, thank you for calling. This is an important choice for all of us. Obviously, the IMF needs strong leadership and obviously it should be a European. I want to work with you and the other G7 countries and I hope we can agree on a candidate. To this date, I haven't announced support for any candidate and I think I ought to consult with some of the other Europeans. But I know the former Prime Minister and I thank you for calling. (G)

President Chirac: Of course, we are not asking for your reaction at this point, but I just thought it was the right thing to do before we launch the official campaign. (G)

The President: Of course. Thank you for that. Can we talk a little about the Middle East peace process? (G)

President Chirac: Yes. (U)

The President: I think, all things considered, they're going well, though there's the strain of all those years they were apart. We're making some progress, I think. But I do believe that before this whole thing can be wrapped up, there will be a role for the Europeans to both endorse it and support it, because there is a chance that within 60 days we will have an agreement between the Israelis and both the Syrians and the Palestinians. I think we are doing quite well, but I think if we hit a snag and I need you, I may call you. So, if I do call in the next few days, you will know what it's about. (G)

President Chirac: Bill, we don't want to interfere in these difficult negotiations, but we are entirely available to you. And when I say "we," I mean France as well as Europe. (G)

The President: Thank you so much. I am hopeful and will stay in touch with you about it. (U)

President Chirac: Thank you very much, Bill. Please transmit all my affection to Hillary. Tell her Bernadette and I are constantly thinking of her and have the best wishes for her success. And good luck in the Middle East. We are beside you. (G)

The President: Jacques, one more thing. If you are in touch with any of the Arab states not involved in the negotiations, any gesture they can make toward Israel will help. They're very sensitive about needing people to travel there, open offices, do something to reach out to them. (C)

President Chirac: A few days ago, there was an exchange of wishes for the new year here. I received all the Arab ambassadors and I made a speech in which I told them all the Arab countries must now help the peace process by establishing relations with Israel, and that was published by the whole Arab press. And for three days now, I have been seeing the heads of state of the Middle East to give them the same kind of advice. And Barak knows very well I have done that, because he had Minister Levy thank me for that. (C)

The President: That is wonderful. Thank you. (U)

President Chirac: We are ready to help. Anything you need. (U)

The President: Thank you. (U)

President Chirac: And thank you, Bill, for calling back. (U)

The President: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --