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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: James Smith, Patrick
O'Shaughnessy, Cynthia Lawrence, Jeffrey
Rathke, Joel Schrader and Nancy
McEldowney

DATE, TIME March 31, 1998, 12:39 - 12:48 p.m. EST
AND PLACE: Air Force One

The President: Hello? (U)

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

The President: I am great. How are you? (U)

President Chirac: Fine. It's a great pleasure to hear from you. I want to congratulate you on your African trip. Do you mind if I give the phone to the interpreter? (U)

The President: Thank you. Do it. (U)

President Chirac: I wanted to congratulate you on your trip to Africa. (U)

The President: Well, thank you. I sent you a letter about the trip, and now that I'm here, I wanted to check in with you. I've been very impressed by the leaders I have met and by the people I have seen. One thing I hoped to achieve was to change Americans' perceptions of Africa, and I think I'm doing that. I wanted to just talk to you about your own view. You know a lot more about Africa than I do, and I wanted to ask what you think

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about the future of the continent -- are you optimistic? Secondly, I'm on my way to Senegal -- I just left Botswana -- and I wanted to see if there's anything you recommend that I should do or say while I'm in Senegal. (S)

President Chirac: I want first to say that I'm delighted the trip is going so well. I am very much in favor of cooperation between France and the United States in Africa. On Senegal, you are going to a country that is genuinely democratic. But I think I should tell you that they are in the preparatory stages for elections, and they look as if they might be difficult. Therefore, they have to be treated with some caution. Secondly, concerning the G-7/G-8 in Birmingham, we will of course be talking about Asia but, in view of your trip, we should also talk about Africa. Your visit is itself an important aspect in relations between Africa and the West. (S)

The President: I agree with that. We need to discuss the whole debt relief issue and whether we need to do anything else on that, and some of the other issues facing the continent, especially Nigeria. There are a lot of things I'd like to discuss when we get to Birmingham. (S)

President Chirac: Yes, I'm certainly in favor of such a discussion, including of course on Nigeria, with whom France entertains perfectly adequate relations. The discussion, as you know, could also bear on the world. I'm in favor of forgiving debt of the countries in difficulty whenever possible, on the basis of the Lyon terms. It would be useful to talk about that in Birmingham. Another issue you could perhaps raise in Senegal is AIDS -- it was raised in Abidjan by Africans, Europeans, and Americans -- in particular the establishment of a treatment or therapeutic fund to enable Africans with AIDS to benefit from the same facilities as can be obtained in the West. (S)

The President: That sounds good. We'll follow up on all this. When I get home in a few days, I'll write you a letter with further thoughts. We will also organize our thoughts on how to proceed in Birmingham. (S)

President Chirac: Yes, I quite agree. Also, I wanted to tell you that every day on television we see wonderful photos of your trip, and in particular, some very beautiful pictures of Hillary. (U)

The President: Thank you. It is very beautiful here. (U)

President Chirac: Please be kind enough to convey to Hillary my affectionate regards. (U)

The President: I will, Jacques. Thank you very much. (U)

President Chirac: Thank you, Bill. Have a good trip in Senegal and say hello to Abdou, he's an old friend of mine. (U)

The President: I'll tell him I talked to you. (U)

President Chirac: Goodbye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --