

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President Chirac of France
regarding the United Nations ~~(S)~~

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Jacques Chirac

Interpreter: Marcel Bouquet
Notetaker: Richard Clarke

DATE, TIME, May 27, 1996, 10:08 - 10:36 a.m.
AND PLACE: Oval Office

President Chirac: I have a cold. That is why my voice sounds like this. How is Hillary? (U)

The President: Good, thanks. I want to thank you for what you did for us in the Central African Republic, getting our people out. ~~(S)~~

President Chirac: That's finished now. They are back in their barracks. Everything is OK. You know, many countries have this problem of not paying their troops. The IMF imposes such strict guidelines on them that they can't pay. We had this problem in Guinea 3-4 months ago. Today the CAR. Tomorrow who knows? They are 3, 6, sometimes 12 months behind in their pay. All it takes is one guy with character and you have a revolution. That's why we were so quick to act, although we did so with the permission of the democratically elected president. ~~(S)~~

The President: I understand the problem. We should talk about it at Lyons, along with other things. I'm looking forward to it. ~~(S)~~

Yeltsin is doing well, I think. ~~(S)~~

President Chirac: The President of Uzbekistan (he hates Russia) told me he doesn't know what the outcome of the vote will be, but he knows who will be the next president...Yeltsin. ~~(S)~~

The President: The election in Israel looks close. ~~(S)~~

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Reason: 1.5(b)

Declassify On: 05/27/06

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President Chirac: It is dangerous. It could be a catastrophe.
(S)

The President: The debate may have helped Peres a few points.
What he needs is to get out the Arab vote. (S)

President Chirac: Yes, that is key. (S)

The President: I am calling you about the UN. (S)

President Chirac: Then let us use the translator, if there is a serious problem to discuss. (S)

U.S. Translator: I am on the line. (U)

(Hereafter Chirac's conversation was in French.)

The President: I have spent a lot of time on the UN. I have tried to get the Congress to appropriate the money we owe the UN, and I have had some success. (S)

President Chirac: Yes, you have. (S)

The President: But I believe that we have to have a new Secretary General for the 21st century. I like Boutros-Ghali personally, but I am concerned about the future if he were re-elected. He told us explicitly five years ago that he only wanted one term. He has not done enough to reform the UN. My ability to get Congressional support for the UN will be virtually ended if he is re-elected. Boutros is a lightning rod with the Congress and will be a big issue in our election if he gets re-elected. (S)

I haven't talked to anyone else about this, not Major or Kohl (who was just here). We have raised this with no one but you and Boutros. (S)

Boutros may be unwilling to step down; I think he does not want to be the first Secretary General not to have a second term. He may force us to veto him. (S)

I could go along with a one-year extension, until his 75th birthday, but I'm not enthusiastic about that idea. (S)

I am hoping to work with you on this. Maybe we can find a candidate we can support together. (S)

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President Chirac: Two observations. First, I know Boutros very well, but my position on this issue has nothing to do with my friendship for him. We need a good Secretary General. (S)

Second, I think he has been a good Secretary General. The Iraq deal was the latest example. (S)

I know the Republicans oppose him. I sensed that when I met with Dole in the Congress. (S)

I don't want to create a problem for your re-election. Couldn't we put this issue off until after November? (S)

There is a concrete problem. Developing countries -- almost all of Europe strongly, the Asians, including the Chinese, most Latin American countries want him. This could be a problem for the United States. (S)

There is also no other candidate. Maybe Dole has a candidate? (S)

The President: It's not just Dole. The Democrats in Congress oppose him. Senior people in my Administration oppose him. We can work it out now or we can have a bruising fight. We also think that there are other countries that do not support him. (S)

As to waiting until after November, this is not about our election. Moreover, if we do nothing, key decisions will be made. He will be re-elected by default. (S)

President Chirac: Other countries will have the impression that the United States is imposing its choice. And the United States has a bad reputation at the UN for not paying its bills. There will be a strong reaction. (S)

The President: I'm not trying to impose a candidate. I don't have one. (S)

President Chirac: Speaking as a friend, I must tell you there has been a feeling developing around the world for two or three years about the United States imposing its will. It's not good. This initiative will only make things worse. Your domestic advantage will be offset by international costs. (S)

The President: I don't have choice. I could never defend a five-year extension for Boutros. We would never get the support we need to pay our arrears to the UN. One year is a possible compromise. (S)

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I have no desire to dominate the UN. I just want to be able to get us to pay our fair share. (S)

President Chirac: I understand your dilemma. But there will be a bad result after the fact. Couldn't you just say you were staying independent on this issue because you haven't paid your dues? You will win re-election overwhelmingly anyway. (S)

The President: Put aside my election. The problem is that we'll continue to have trouble supporting the UN if Boutros-Ghali is still there. But, we do not have to agree on this now. (S)

President Chirac: OK. Let me think about it. We can talk at our next meeting. (S)

The President: As I said, I haven't talked to anyone about this, and I would ask you not to. (S)

President Chirac: Agreed. I do not have aides or even a translator here. (S)

The President: Good. Well, good-bye then. (U)

President Chirac: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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