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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria

PARTICIPANTS:

U.S.

The President

James Baker III, Secretary of State

John Sununu, Chief of Staff

Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs

Max Marlin Fitzwater, Assistant to the
President for Press Relations

James A. Kelly, NSC, Notetaker

Nigeria

President Ibrahim Babangida

Ike Nwachukwu, Minister of External Affairs

Several others

DATE, TIME
AND PLACE: February 25, 1989, 11:50 a.m. - 12:09 p.m.
U.S. Ambassador's residence, Tokyo, Japan

President Bush, after greeting the President with warmth, commented on a pick-up in oil prices of the day before. He again thanked President Babangida for coming to call, noting that Japanese security had made moving about town difficult for him. After President Babangida responded by congratulating President Bush on his election, the President pointed out that he was an American president who is very interested in Africa. He has visited many African countries and hopes to visit more. America will not neglect her friends, the President said.

President Babangida expressed a growing optimism. He believes our relations will be excellent.

In response to the President's question about Nigeria's main problems in Babangida's view, President Babangida related that since coming to office in 1985, he had been working to restructure Nigeria's economy. There had been a "monoculture," he said, and when oil prices declined he realized that he had to diversify the economy and Nigeria's industrial base. Only in this way would he get Nigeria's economy on a path of sustained growth. He affirmed President Bush's question of concern for declining petroleum reserves, and stated his new emphasis would be on agricultural products, petrochemicals and finished goods as a take-off base.

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President Babangida responded to the President's question on population. He said it was a great problem, with 120 million Nigerians now and a growth rate of 3.2%. He thanked the President for U.S. help on population control.

President Bush also lauded the UN 's population education efforts as useful.

President Bush brought up one area for emphasis. He thanked President Babungida for help on narcotics. President Bush conceded that many viewed this as an American problem, but that it is spinning toward other countries. He asked for maximum cooperation on this scourge.

President Babangida said the cooperation was going well; his attorney general had traveled to the U.S. recently, and that the effort on detections was showing improved results.

President Bush asked how badly President Babangida assessed narcotics as a problem for Nigeria's younger generation.

President Babangida acknowledged a problem, even for school age children.

President Bush affirmed his intent to work to "clean our own nest," and emphasized the importance our Congress puts on the issue. He mentioned Mr. Bennett, who will have the tough job of coordinating all our efforts. He said that former Secretary Bennett will be seeking cooperation -- and will be willing to work cooperatively -- with other governments.

President Babangida said his government would continue to cooperate.

President Bush asked about Nigerian politics.

President Babangida described his plans -- a part of his commitment to democratic ideals, he said -- to transition a greater role for opposition parties. By the end of the quarter, he will lift the ban on partisan politics. Then, in next year's State election, he hopes for better participation by the opposition. In the November '90 elections, newly-elected governors and state legislatures would demonstrate the multi-party system. He also described the 1992 census and how it would be depoliticized.

President Bush then brought up Angola and his desire to see Luanda and UNITA talking together. The President said that Nigeria could be very important on that. The President also

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reminded President Babangida that, although some others may be less concerned, he believes that Qadhafi and Libya remain an unstable and dangerous combination. The President said his mind is not closed to new information, but his advice would be "beware."

President Babangida responded on Angola. He said he had tried to impress upon Dos Santos the wisdom of an international settlement with UNITA and the MPLA. He noted the healing process -- a very successful one -- that had occurred in his own country since Nigeria's civil war of 1967. He had urged a magnanimous solution, and the results were good.

President Bush thanked President Babangida and said Nigeria has a significant role to play. The U.S. will continue to support UNITA, but for an agreement, not conquest.

President Babangida said he would wait to hear more on this from Secretary Baker.

The meeting ended with a friendly exchange concerning a Nigerian mutual friend, Eddie Ogbu.

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