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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

3714

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Conversation between the President and Sir Dawda Jawara, President of The Gambia

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Lawrence S. Eagleburger, Acting Secretary of State  
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President  
for National Security Affairs  
Herbert E. Horowitz, U.S. Ambassador to The Gambia  
David C. Miller, Jr., NSC (notetaker)

President Sir Dawda Jawara  
Ousman A. Sallah, Gambian Ambassador to the United States  
Omar Sey, Minister of External Affairs  
Abdou Janha, Secretary General of the President's Office

DATE, TIME, AND PLACE May 15, 1989, 10:00 - 10:10 am  
Oval Office

The President welcomed President Jawara to the Oval Office. While the press corps was in attendance, the President kept the conversation on the weather and asked President Jawara about his talk on agricultural affairs at Cornell. President Jawara indicated that he spoke for about 50 minutes not only on issues of veterinary medicine but on broader issues affecting Africa. President Jawara pointed out to the President that The Gambia has a center for agricultural and veterinarian research.

After the departure of the press, the President took the opportunity to welcome President Jawara to the White House and indicated his great personal support for the President's leadership of The Gambia. The President indicated he was particularly proud of President Jawara's principled stands on many issues, in particular human rights, which had made a profound effect on us. The President indicated that due to his own background and travels he had a sympathetic feeling for Africa.

The President then asked President Jawara how The Gambia was handling the refugee overflow from the current Senegal/Mauritania disturbances. President Jawara indicated that the situation was

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stabilizing. It had however created a real problem with the massive issues of repatriation. The President wondered if the countries were recalling their citizens or whether they were fleeing. President Jawara indicated that they were fleeing due to acts of violence committed by both sides.

President Jawara indicated that it was truly a tragic situation. President Jawara pointed out that the two countries really have citizens of mixed ethnic background with ethnic Senegalese holding Mauritanian passports and vice versa. The President then asked if indeed people were not being uprooted from their homes and family ties and neighbors. President Jawara indicated that was the case. The President then inquired as to whether The Gambia's role as a haven for these refugees was producing any strain in The Gambia's bilateral relations with either country. President Jawara indicated that: no, The Gambia was viewed as an honest broker and was working well with both sides. President Jawara pointed out that the Chairman of ECOWAS had become involved and that indeed the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS was currently touring the States to see if there was not some way to resolve the situation.

The President inquired as to how the situation began. Assistant Secretary Cohen replied that it was a situation of long historical animosity. President Jawara indicated that the real problem is an ill-defined border. The Mauritanian/Senegalese border is defined by a river and there is some confusion as to who has what grazing rights where. The murder of two Senegalese herdsmen was the incident that kicked off the current round of violence. Assistant Secretary Cohen pointed out that individuals of Senegalese background has been consistently discriminated against in Mauritania. President Jawara indicated that Mauritanians are black like Gambians while Senegalese are not and President Jawara pointed out that the Senegalese are of a different ethnic group.

President Jawara then began his talking points to the President. He expressed his appreciation to the President for the invitation to the White House indicating that it was a great honor. He congratulated the President on his election

President Jawara then indicated that he had one or two points he would like to make to the President. (U)

First, he wished to express his appreciation for the help he received from the U.S. on The Gambia's economic recovery program, specifically the 1985 IMF/World Bank program. The Gambia had taken the necessary economic steps to comply with the program and the upshot was that The Gambia's economy has really turned

around. President Jawara stated that in the most recent negotiations with the IMF and the Bank, that The Gambia has been singled out as a "star performer." President Jawara indicated that The Gambia is convinced that it is on the right course but indicated that the American balance-of-payments support had been a critical component of its recovery. He pointed out in particular that the grant it had received from the African Economic Policy Reform Program (\$6 million per annum for 3 years) and the PL 480 commodities shipment had been vitally important. As PL 480 is now in the process of being phased out, he would like to request an increase in the funding from the AEPRP increasing from \$6 to \$15 million per annum over the next three years. This is very important so that The Gambia could do its structural adjustment program.

President Jawara indicated that his second point related to the support that The Gambia had received from the U.S. on defense and security matters. He pointed out that the international military education program had provided a very valuable opportunity for The Gambia's officers to receive training in the States. He also indicated that the African coastal defense program had been very helpful not only to protect The Gambia's fishing rights but for the defense of its territory. This program also allowed The Gambia to fulfill its territorial obligations with Senegal to protect their joint maritime rights.

President Jawara then requested that we consider non-lethal military assistance, specifically clothing and equipment that might be excess in our inventory but would be very helpful to The Gambia.

President Jawara went on to point out that it was important for The Gambia to maintain its defense preparedness. He referred to the 1981 attempted coup financed by the Libyans with the attendant loss of life. President Jawara reported that the Libyans had not given up and that indeed only last year The Gambia apprehended 15 young people who were to be taken to Libya for training with the objective of infiltrating them back into The Gambia.

The President asked why there was a problem with regard to continuing PL 480. Ambassador Horowitz said that PL 480 was approaching the end of a program and that the Embassy and the State Department were simply exploring other opportunities that might be more appropriate than PL 480.

The President responded that we would try to work something out and respond to President Jawara's request. -On the military side, the President indicated that we should take a look at surplus equipment to see if something might be done.

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With regard to economic support, the President indicated that it was wonderful to have somebody visit the Oval Office who was an example of a successful IMF/World Bank program. The President made it clear that we should work out some way to provide the increased economic support so that The Gambia would continue to be a showcase for economic reform.

The President then went on to discuss Libya and its leader Mu' ammar Qadhafi. The President reported that while some newspapers indicate that Qadhafi wants better relations "this is highly unlikely if not impossible" as things stand now. The President indicated that we "will not surprise our friends" by changing positions and "there is no possibility of improved relations with this man."

The President then went out of his way to thank President Jawara for taking the time out of his schedule to come lecture to college students in the U.S. He was sure that this would have big impact on the students who hard the speed. The President then indicated that he did not want to be a President who was accused of ignoring Africa.

President Jawara closed by inviting the President or members of his family or the Vice President to come to The Gambia for a visit. The President responded that President Jawara should be careful about such an invitation because had so many children who enjoyed travelling and who had been doing a good job of representing the U.S. (The general tenor of the remarks indicated that the President might seriously consider having a family member visit The Gambia.)

The meeting then broke up with President Jawara and the President walking to the globe in the office behind the President's desk for a few minutes of informal conversation before the party left the Oval Office.

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