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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Luncheon Meeting with President Hassan Gouled  
of the Republic of Djibouti

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
Lawrence Eagleburger, Acting Secretary of  
State  
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President  
for National Security Affairs  
Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President  
and Deputy for National Security Affairs  
Robert Barrett, IV, U.S. Ambassador to  
Djibouti  
Irvin Hicks, Deputy Assistant Secretary of  
State for African Affairs  
Robert C. Frasure, Director for African  
Affairs, NSC (Notetaker)  
Eliza Burnham, Interpreter  
Carol Wolter, Interpreter  
  
Hassan Gouled Aptidon, President of Djibouti  
Moumin Bahdon Farah, Minister of Foreign  
Affairs  
Ismail Omar Guelleh, Chef de Cabinet  
Moussa Bouraleh, Minister of Finance  
Mohamed Moussa Chehem, Minister of  
Agriculture  
Roble Olhaye, Djibouti Ambassador to the U.S.  
General Ali Mehidal Waiss, Chief of Staff  
Gawad Farah, Head, Bilateral Relations, MFA

DATE, TIME April 24, 1991, 12:05 - 1:15 p.m. EST  
AND PLACE: Old Family Dining Room

The President: Tell us about your economic problems. You said  
there is high unemployment? (U)

President Gouled: We are suffering from the repercussions of  
war. There are refugees. We cannot send them back. (U)

The President: What are the numbers? (U)

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President Gouled: About a fourth of our population. (U)

The President: Do they work in Djibouti? (U)

President Gouled: Some do. But we have no natural boundaries. There are family ties especially with the Somalis. Some work in the capital. But housing is scarce. There is a lot of fallout from the war. (U)

In particular there are economic projects in our country which were curtailed because of lack of money from the Gulf, from Kuwait. We need to take up these projects again. (Ø)

We also need emergency assistance. (Ø)

The President: Is the UN helping? UNHCR? (U)

President Gouled: We have two types of refugees. For the Ethiopians, yes, the UN is helping. We signed a resettlement agreement in which 30,000 went home. About 1500 refused. (Ø)

But UN refugee resolutions are based on non-African conditions. The Somalis are not officially refugees. We are waiting for the situation to stabilize. The UN buys food and we distribute it. But Somalis cannot be distinguished from Djiboutians. It is the same language. They meld in easily. In the case of the Somalis, there are family ties. (Ø)

Acting Secretary of State Eagleburger: Have you approached the Saudis or others on these projects? For assistance? (Ø)

President Gouled: No. Everyone is moaning and groaning. I don't think they will do it until President Bush asks them to do it. I have no other way to answer your questions. (Ø)

General Scowcroft: On Ethiopia, do you see any way the conflict can be resolved and their territorial integrity maintained? (Ø)

President Gouled: I feel more comfortable talking about Somalia. We need a roundtable for Ethiopia. There must be a dialogue. (Ø)

The President: Is the next Arab League meeting in Cairo? (U)

President Gouled: Yes. (U)

The President: Is the agenda set? (U)

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President Gouled: All outstanding issues since the invasion of Kuwait. There is a need to restore the ties among Arab states.

(C)

Assistant to the President Gates: You said Africa is sick. What is the problem? Economics? (U)

President Gouled: Economics, politics, social problems. All of it. (U)

Assistant to the President Gates: What is the role of tribalism now? (C)

President Gouled: Not so much. It is rather the lack of resources, a lack of dialogue. (C)

We need to lay down our weapons. We need the support of friendly countries. (C)

Minister Farah: Population growth outweighs production. Everywhere it is over 3%. (U)

There is a gap between development and growth. Aside from climate problems, there is also poor management. (U)

Acting Secretary of State Eagleburger: How do you see the PLO? Have they been permanently damaged by their position on the Gulf War? (C)

President Gouled: We lose our appetite if we keep talking about the war! (U)

Acting Secretary of State Eagleburger: I have already finished eating. (U)

President Gouled: The Palestinian problem remains. It is intractable. Perhaps Arafat miscalculated. But the Palestinian people must be factored in. There is the problem of the substance of how to do that. (C)

General Scowcroft: Do you think Iraq will continue to divide the Arab League? Will there be a resolution on the Palestinian issue? (C)

Minister Farah: It's a very serious question, Iraq is not in a position to divide the Arab world. It's in the interest of the Iraqis to get in line.

General Scowcroft: Easier said than done. (U)

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Minister Farah: We need a lasting peace. We must find a solution to the Palestinian problem. (S)

Assistant to the President Gates: Have you had much contact with Qadhafi? (S)

President Gouled: Who is asking? (U)

I know him. He favors unity from the Horn to the Mediterranean. (S)

The President: With him in charge? (U)

President Gouled: Impossible. (U)

We told him we were willing to unite with our neighbors. But the Red Sea is a problem. Could he build a bridge for us? He said he would do it! (U)

The President: Mubarak says his contacts with Qadhafi make him believe he has moderated. (S)

President Gouled: I wouldn't trust him. (U)

The President: I agree. (U)

General Scowcroft: Can the Arab League help you with your economic problems? (S)

Minister Farah: The Arab league has no special funds. It must be done bilaterally. It is a grave problem with unemployment. (S)

General Scowcroft: They have provided special subsidies in the past, I recall. (U)

Minister Farah: I will be frank. We have a \$225 million shortfall. We have gotten \$40 million from the Arabs. (S)

Acting Secretary of State Eagleburger: I want to talk about the projects which were stopped. What can we do to get them restarted? (S)

President Gouled: We want the projects to put people to work, not just assistance. (S)

Minister Farah: We will give you more details. The \$225 million figure includes the projects. (S)

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Assistant to the President Gates: What are your views on developments in Iran? Do you have a dialogue with them? (C)

President Gouled: No. But we have not turned them down. I may be going there. (C)

Minister Farah: We would like to be on the list of countries that get developmental assistance from the U.S. (C)

The President: On Iran, our problem is still the hostages. But we are sending relief to the Kurds in Iran. (C)

The pace of improving relations is up to Iran. But they have problems with their radicals. (C)

But, if you go there, tell them President Bush wants better relations. There is no secret about that.

-- End of Conversation --

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