

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: 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 AND PLACE: April 24, 1991, 11:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. EST
 Cabinet Room

The President: May I say how much I have been looking forward to this visit? In our smaller session, I expressed to the President how much we appreciated Djibouti's support in the UN action in the Gulf. (U)

We didn't approach this war lightly. We didn't want to put our people in combat. We did a disproportionate share in the war. (U)

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I know that Djibouti's decision to take part was not easy. You had good relations with Iraq. But the bottom line which we appreciate is that you did the right thing. (C)

President Gouled raised Djibouti's financial needs with me. There are dire, he said. I didn't tell him about our problems. I didn't want to see him cry. Secretary Eagleburger will describe our efforts to help. (C)

We talked about Somalia some. (U)

You are among friends here, sir. (U)

President Gouled: Mr. President. It is good to be your guest here. I will be frank. I will speak from the heart. You earlier referred to the difficult events in the Gulf. We could not abide injustice. (C)

On the Middle East, there are two facets; the need for a lasting peace and the Palestinian problem is unresolved. A durable peace is needed between Iraq and Kuwait. We think everyone wants justice. (C)

On the Horn, in Ethiopia and Somalia we have two neighbors. Djibouti has been neutral and both have interfered with us. Both claim our territory. But we have maintained our integrity and dignity. We must struggle for peace in the region. Ethiopia and Somalia have people coming into Djibouti. During their wars, there have been repercussions which have added to our existing problems. (C)

We have a young population in Djibouti. They get heated up. There are no jobs. But stability is difficult to attain. (C)

Our most fervent hope is support for peace. (U)

People buy and sell arms like tomatoes in our country. (U)

The President: Who has these weapons? Are there armed groups. (C)

President Gouled: Ethiopian and Somali soldiers sell their weapons. They are just lying about. (C)

In 1977 we told them to lay down their weapons if they come into Djibouti. But there are weapons all over the place, AK-47s everywhere. (C)

We need dialogue to achieve peace. We value stability. We want dialogue. (C)

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Do you have any specific questions? (U)

The President: I do have questions. We are very interested in Ethiopia. We would love to hear your views. (C)

Will Mengistu remain in office? Will he be weakened? We don't have very good relations with Ethiopia. (C)

President Gouled: We believe a good neighborliness. (U)

We recognize that the situation in Ethiopia is very serious. We must have a round table format. (C)

As far as Somalia is concerned, there is no President. No one. No one leads the country. No one is consulted by the other factions. We are not condoning any of them. (C)

It comes as a shock to us, this region. The Horn of Africa is sick. We are becoming sick as a result. (C)

The President: What about your relations with Yemen. We started to improve our relations. Salih was here. We liked him. But he bet on the wrong horse. It finished last. Yet the country is doing interesting things now. But we cannot embrace him now. Our allies think he did a deal with Saddam for Saudi oil. (C)

Yemen is close to you. They have resources. We have kept our private investments there. But he went too far with Iraq to protect his own interests. (C)

President Gouled: Djibouti once averted a war between the two Yemens. Unity was achieved. There is a good relationship. We can say what we think. (C)

They didn't want to endorse the Arab League resolution. But we didn't cut off ties. Yemen cannot be left to its own devices. Future solutions must be brought to bear. Saudi Arabia has a role to play. (C)

The President: That is helpful. We have strained relations with Jordan and Yemen. (C)

Jordan is important on the Palestinian question. King Hussein went further out than he had to do. He bet on the wrong horse too. We will work our way back on this one. (C)

It is an important relationship because of their key role in the Palestinian situation. (C)

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Concerning Saddam, let me put some cards on the table. Because of his brutality to the Kuwaiti people, his rape of the environment which was ugly and mean, because of his brutality with the Kurds, there will never be any reconciliation with Saddam Hussein. We will never have normal relations with Saddam. I think the British, the French and the Saudis agree. (C)

We have good relations with a lot of countries whom we used to be cross wise with. But not with Saddam Hussein, so long as I am in this job. (C)

But I have no animosity to the people of Iraq. The tears run down my face when I see the pictures of the children in Baghdad. We have a problem with one man. And that position won't change. (C)

But we will keep on helping refugees. (U)

You know him. I don't. How will he react to pressure? He thought he would prevail. He thought he would have standoff in the desert. (C)

We want peace. We want your insights. (U)

President Gouled: I know Saddam. To trust him is another thing. I cannot give my friendship to Saddam. (C)

When the Cairo resolution was adopted, the Iraqis criticized us. (C)

In terms of humanitarian needs, we support what is being done, as we do in Djibouti on this issue. (C)

On the future of Iraq, we must let the dust settle to see if there is a viable solution. (C)

The priorities for us are Yemen and the Horn. If there are troops in Yemen, they are on our doorstep. (C)

I have met Saddam several times but I cannot advise you. I cannot tell you what goes on inside him (C)

The President: Do Saddam's neighbors think he will remain or will he go? (C)

President Gouled: It is a complicated question. In Washington technology can tell you whether a woman is going to have a boy or a girl. (U)

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Will he remain in power in Iraq? Djibouti does not have a vote on that issue. (S)

The President: I asked because I had General Schwarzkopf here yesterday, and he said most of the leaders in the region felt he wouldn't last. It makes a difference. (S)

I like the mystery of not knowing whether it will be a girl or a boy. But I don't like the mystery of not knowing whether Saddam will remain in power. (S)

President Gouled: The sum total of all of the factors is that not all believe he should exit. But his harm must be countered, such as what he did to the Kurds. But we haven't hit on a solution in the Arab league. (S)

Some people don't tell the truth at Arab League meetings. They kiss each other but they don't tell the truth. (S)

The President: Schwarzkopf said people in Basra are scared to death that Saddam will send in his tough guys to kill them. The Kurds are afraid of his goon squads, these police. There is terror up there. We feel a responsibility. It was never our intention to go in to get Saddam Hussein. (S)

World opinion sees this fear. Some are urging us to do more. I want to stop the death of babies. Saddam is making it difficult. (S)

We are helping the refugees. But it requires enormous amounts of money. We will do what is both human and right. That is the need. (U)

We are not talking about instant democracy in Baghdad, but an end to the suffering. (U)

Shall we go over to lunch now? (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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