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Talked to  
Danforth  
3/27



UNITED STATES SENATE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

AC/ER

240055  
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JOHN C. DANFORTH  
MISSOURI

March 7, 1991

Honorable John H. Sununu  
Chief of Staff to the President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C. 20500

THE CHIEF of STAFF  
has seen & discussed  
with POTTS/  
Scowcroft

Dear John:

As you requested, this is to set out what I did in Cambodia and Africa with the view that a similar approach might be used in Iraq.

1. Cambodia - 1979. At the request of the majority and minority leaders, Senators Sasser, Baucus and I went to the border of Thailand and then to Phnom Penh at a time of widespread starvation during the war between Vietnam and the Khmer Rouge. We were accompanied by Assistant Secretary of State Holbrooke. We witnessed the plight of the refugees and spoke with the foreign ministers of Vietnam and Thailand. Our focus was exclusively on the logistics of getting rice transported from Thailand to starving people regardless of their politics. In fact, we refused to be drawn into the political controversy between the factions. On our return to the United States, we made slide presentations to the President and to the Foreign Relations Committee. We attended a pledging conference at the United Nations. While the administration participated in providing food aid, the most dramatic consequences of the trip were the increased willingness of the Vietnamese to allow food shipments into the country and the splendid response of the American people to the needs of the Cambodians once those needs were known.

2. Africa - 1984. This trip was made to a number of basket case countries, including Somalia and Mozambique at a time of drought and, in the case of Mozambique, civil war. The trip was long and exceptionally arduous, and I was not successful in getting another Senator to go along. As with Cambodia, I made a slide presentation to the



President and then to various members of Congress on my return. Again, the purpose was to call attention to a pressing need. I enclose a copy of my report to Senator Baker submitted after the trip.

John, I am convinced that a similar mission in the case of Iraq would underscore two of the President's themes, as well as help to relieve human misery. First, the President has consistently distinguished between the people of Iraq and the government of Saddam Hussein. Second, the President was absolutely right last night when he told of the American soldier and the capture of four Iraqis. He said, "that scene says a lot about America."

That is precisely what I found when I returned from my trips. The government's rather modest contributions were not nearly as impressive as the check for \$23 I received from the fourth and fifth grade students at the St. Joseph Institute for the Deaf. They said that they had counted their own blessings, and wanted to help the children of Cambodia. Our country does define its own values in times like this.

Here, then, is my hope. I would like the President to ask me to go to Iraq to report back to him on an American initiative to relieve civilian suffering in that country. As an alternative, the President could ask Senators Mitchell and Dole to designate two or three Senators to do this. If the latter approach is taken, please tip me off in advance so that I can put in a word with Dole.

Thanks, John, for your consideration. Needless to say, I am anxious to have your reply.

Sincerely,



John C. Danforth

Enclosure

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM FOR SENATOR HOWARD BAKER

FROM SENATOR JOHN C. DANFORTH

JANUARY 30, 1984

RE: REPORT ON HUNGER CONDITIONS IN AFRICA

On January 4, 1984, I commenced a two week tour of Sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on the severe food shortages which are so prevalent on that continent. My itinerary included three regions where the problem of hunger is especially acute: the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and southern Africa. I visited a total of eight countries, with particular focus on Senegal, Somalia and Mozambique. In addition, I made brief stops in Niger, Chad, Sudan and South Africa, with a one day rest stop in Kenya. While a two week tour of that massive continent did not qualify me as an expert on either Africa or its agriculture, it did create a strong impression that there is a food shortage crisis in Africa and that the problem requires far more attention from the United States and the rest of the developed world.

I. The Extent of the Problem

Varying by country, one may describe conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa as a) existing starvation, b) immediately pending crisis and c) long-term dependency on donated food. In Mozambique, hunger is an existing tragedy. In Senegal, it is a crisis about to occur. Throughout the continent, it is a threat of seemingly endless duration, to be mitigated by donations from abroad until means are found to move the continent toward self-sufficiency in food production. Where starvation is an existing tragedy, we must act



instantly in response to it. Where it is a pending crisis, we have at most a few months to act. Where food dependency is a long-term condition, we should pursue a long-range strategy to foster greater self-sufficiency.

A) Mozambique -- Existing Starvation

Of Mozambique it may fairly be said that everything that can go wrong has gone wrong. Like much of Africa, Mozambique has been stricken by drought, and while there are signs that in parts of southern Africa the drought may be breaking, the corn crop I saw in rural sections of this country was truly pathetic. But drought is not all that has plagued Mozambique. Guerilla activity throughout much of the southern part of the country has disrupted normal farming activity. Even worse, the government of Mozambique, by its own admission, has adopted a political strategy which assures poor agricultural production.

Upon gaining independence in 1975, the political leadership of Mozambique adopted the Soviet model, abolishing private ownership and moving toward collective agriculture. I am told that before independence Mozambique was a thriving country. Today it is an economic disaster. It is a textbook example of a faulty political ideology running a country into the ground. Construction, commenced a decade ago, has halted, the scaffolding still in place. A once beautiful resort hotel is mildew infested and mostly empty. The principal market of Maputo is virtually abandoned except for the government operated bread line toward which hungry people shove their way. Recognizing that the government's policy of state control

has exacerbated the disaster, there has been a recent effort to allow farmers to produce on small plots of their own, but much damage has already been done.

I visited two different areas in rural Mozambique to examine the extent of the food shortage. In each area, conditions were similar to what I saw on the Thailand-Cambodia border in 1979. This was real starvation. All the classic symptoms were present: emaciated bodies, stick-like limbs and distended bellies. In a sense, it was worse than 1979. In Thailand, at least, international volunteers were on hand and the World Food Program was supplying food. In Mozambique, such assistance as had arrived was sporadic and there was no presence of international agencies. In one settlement, no outside food had arrived since November. The people were eating leaves from trees, roots and cashew nuts.

B) The Sahel -- A Pending Crisis

The Sahel is a vast tract of land cutting across a band of countries that lie on the southern edge of the great Sahara Desert. Today, the Sahelian country of Senegal is dependent on donations from the international community for approximately one-sixth of its total food requirements. A multi-party democracy with enlightened leadership, its problem is not political instability or counter-productive economic policies. Its problem is drought, coupled with a lack of natural resources. The drought is now in its third year, and without international assistance a now serious condition would become a disaster.

The remote community of Mafré in northern Senegal is not

reached by road. Driving through a barren landscape, nearly devoid of ground cover one barely makes out the village huts as they emerge from a thick haze of dust. I was told that a decade ago lions inhabited this land. Now it is difficult to understand how it can sustain any life at all. No rain has fallen for more than a year. No crop has been harvested. The people are herdsman by tradition, but they have long since sold their cattle and sheep. We saw the remains of those sheep which had died before they could be sold. Many former inhabitants had moved to Dakar or to France in search of jobs, and those who remain subsist on cash or in kind gifts sent to them by their relatives.

In the village of Geuli, a Peace Corps volunteer told me that the drought had forced a steady reduction in the daily diet of the people. The normal fare is breakfast of tea, lunch of millet and rice and dinner of millet. Eighty percent of the people have left the village for the cities.

Unlike Mozambique, there is a tradition of international assistance to Senegal. Organizations such as Catholic Relief Services are operating programs to feed the people, although inadequate supplies of donated food limit the number of those who can be served. While Mozambique has been largely ignored by the international community, Senegal has been helped. The USAID program is said to be one of the most successful undertakings of that agency. Clearly, though, the continuation of the drought will necessitate an increase in outside assistance. Even if rain were to come today, the next harvest is more than six months away.



It is difficult to imagine that the Sahel will ever be productive land, even with optimal dry land agricultural techniques. Indeed, Senegalese officials expressed the view that several years of adequate rainfall would be required to rebuild the land's capacity for crops. In the northern part of the country, the development of irrigation from the Senegal River offers the only real alternative to constant dependence on outside aid. Present plans are to extend irrigation from the river to an additional 2,000 hectares a year. According to one USAID official, the Sahel could become self-sufficient in food if one million hectares were irrigated. His estimated cost per hectare was \$2,000 which others believed was very low.

C) Somalia -- An Example of Long-Term Needs

Somalia has had a year of exceptionally dry weather. Its people are largely nomadic herdsmen, and the export of cattle, especially to Saudi Arabia, has been a significant source of revenue. Recently, however, Saudi Arabia has banned imports of Somalian cattle claiming that there is a danger of rinderpest. As a result of the Saudi embargo, an excess of cattle is putting pressure on drought-plagued range land. Since 1978, Somalia has had the additional burden of being host to a large number of ethnic Somali refugees from Ethiopia. In southern Somalia, the United States has pressured the government to open irrigated farmland to refugees, thus offering the hope that at least some can move from the camp to a more normal life. In northern Somalia, however, there is no good land to accommodate them, and there is the prospect of permanent and totally dependent communities of refugees.

Somalia has resources which Senegal lacks. A team from the University of Wyoming told me that much of the land is good, and that with very minimal rainfall it can be productive. The team estimated that by relatively minor changes in farming methods, rainfed agricultural production could be doubled. In fact, they displayed a healthy field of sorghum ready for harvest that had received only three inches of rain during the growing season.

Southern Somalia has two rivers, the Juba and the Shebele. In the 1920's, Italy commenced an irrigation project on the Shebele, the results of which are striking. Large banana plantations thrive in what would otherwise be minimally producing land. I am told that over the years the efficiency of the irrigation system has deteriorated. Dr. Mohamed Abdi Nur, Vice Minister of Agriculture, estimated that through repairing and improving irrigation in this area, productivity could be increased by 50 percent.

Flying over the two rivers at low altitude, it appeared to me that they hold the potential of significantly increased productivity. The river valleys are green and almost completely undeveloped. A very large area is swamp which, if drained, might prove productive. President Siad has pressed hard for U.S. financing of a dam on the Juba. In my view, expert advice should be sought to determine whether improved irrigation, drainage and development of the river valleys would be a wiser investment of resources than investment in a high cost dam.

## II. Suggestions for Future Action

### A) Mozambique

The first step must be the designation of one or more private voluntary organizations to determine the extent of the



crisis and to coordinate the delivery of food aid. I have stated this view to President Reagan, and such a designation is being made. As of now, no one is in charge and next to nothing is being done. At a meeting with President Samora Machel, I asked if a) he would approve the designation of a coordinating agency, b) he would provide security for the agency's people while they are in the country and c) he would provide transportation assistance. His answer to each question was affirmative.

B) The Pending Crisis

The pending food crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa is fueled by several factors. Africa is the only region left in the world with declining per capita food production. It is in the midst of a terrible drought. It is plagued by internal conflicts, political instability and large unproductive refugee populations. It is deeply in debt and the recent worldwide recession is causing a steadily worsening economic climate.

For the foreseeable future, the need for food aid to Sub-Saharan Africa will increase. This means that the cost of providing this aid will increase as well. There is already wide discussion about how much additional aid will be necessary and how much it will cost. The Administration will request a supplemental appropriation to meet this need. It is my hope that Congress will treat the request on a priority basis, and authorize whatever amounts are necessary to avert disaster. America has a tradition of leading the way in efforts to combat world hunger. We are leading the way today in Africa, and we must continue our tradition of doing what is necessary to save people from starvation. Where



food aid is concerned, the policy of our country is and should be that the ideology of the recipient is irrelevant. That was our position in Cambodia and Ethiopia. That is our position in Mozambique. And that must continue to be our position in response to the pending crisis throughout Africa. A starving child has no ideology.

C) Long-Term Development Assistance

Where possible, Africa should not be kept on the permanent dole, forever dependent on outside assistance in order to survive on a hand to mouth basis. The goal should be to move the continent closer to agricultural self-sufficiency.

During my trip, I received a number of suggestions on how the United States could encourage greater food production in Africa. These suggestions included: research leading to the development of drought resistant seeds, research in better methods of dry land agriculture, creation of agricultural education institutions in Africa on the model of our land grant colleges, development of extension services in Africa, irrigation and the construction of dams. None of these would be free. Some would cost significant sums of money.

We would be heartened if the cheapest alternative were the best path to food self-sufficiency throughout Africa. That is not the case. In the Sahel, there is no good alternative to very expensive irrigation if the region is to escape permanent dependence on outside donors. Yet our own resources are limited. We must fight our own battle of the budget, and there are practical restraints on what we can do for Africa.

If expensive methods of development cannot always be ruled out without abandoning whole regions of the continent, then our selection of development strategies should be made not only on the basis of method but on the likelihood that the recipient will translate developmental investment into increased production.

As a matter of principle, the United States does not base the offer of food aid on the political or economic philosophy of the recipient country. But I do not believe that same principle should be applied to developmental assistance. It is possible for a country to adopt an economic policy which would render any amount of developmental assistance next to useless. To offer developmental aid to countries whose economic policies discourage production is to squander our own limited resources.

Unfortunately, some African countries, such as Mozambique, have adopted the Marxist scheme of state farms, tight governmental controls and little if any private production of food. To my knowledge, such a strategy has never worked where it has been tried, and it cannot be made to work by any amount of developmental assistance. There is no reason Mozambique cannot become self-sufficient in food. But it will never be self-sufficient if the responsibility for farming is vested not in farmers but in the state. I believe that the interests of Africa and the interests of a prosperous and stable world are served by developmental assistance. But I believe that such assistance should be conditioned on policies within the recipient country which encourage rather than discourage production.

### III. Some Miscellaneous Thoughts

#### A. South Africa

The aim of South Africa's "Homelands" policy is to uproot



the country's blacks from their own homes and resettle them in segregated territories, some of which have been proclaimed to be independent states. Under this program, half of South Africa's blacks, or 40 percent of its total population, have been stuffed into 13 percent of its territory. With much self-congratulation, the government of South Africa claims that its subsidies have helped compensate for the naturally ensuing food shortages in these homelands. However, the world community has also been called upon to send food aid for South Africa's blacks, and this year the United States has contributed \$225,000 to this end.

While the developed world's effort to assist the abused blacks of South Africa is understandable, and perhaps desirable, I am concerned that it amounts to an international subsidy of an unconscionably racist policy. South Africa is not a poor country, and I doubt that it should receive the support of the United States as it pushes its black population into segregated compounds. Perhaps the practical alternative to our present aid effort is even worse: that innocent people go hungry. However, I believe that our food aid to South Africa should at least be reviewed, and if it is offered it should be joined with the strongest moral condemnation of the homelands program.

#### B. Refugees

The focus of my trip was food not refugees, yet the two problems are related. I visited one camp in Sudan and three in Somalia, all of which were accommodating the large number of refugees who have fled Ethiopia. The government of Somalia claims that people in its camps are receiving less than their daily



nutritional requirements. Our Embassy believes that Somalia's refugee count is inflated. I saw a few infants in two of the Somali camps who were emaciated and clearly at grave risk. However, a physician who was associated with a voluntary organization said that he believed the cause of their appearance was chronic diarrhea or some other illness rather than a lack of food. In any event, acute hunger did not appear to be a problem at the refugee camps I visited. Generally, the refugee children appeared healthy and energetic.

When a refugee camp is established, food is soon made available by international donors. As refugees arrive at a camp, they are often in desperate condition. However, if they survive their journey, they do receive sustenance after their arrival. The concern is whether they will ever graduate from refugee status.

As a rule, there is insufficient land to make them self-sustaining. There are few opportunities for employment. Years after their arrival in the camp, they sit by the thousands with nothing meaningful to do, waiting for the next distribution of food. They are hopeless, permanent wards of the international donors.

In Somalia, our Ambassador, Robert Oakley, has urged that every effort be made to resettle refugees on productive farm land and to reduce their dependence on donated food. That is a difficult objective to attain. Clearly, we should not cut helpless people off from their only means of survival in the name of integrating them into society at large. Yet I do not believe we should be satisfied with the creation of permanent communities of international wards. I do not have an answer to this problem. I merely note it

as an appropriate subject for our attention.

#### IV. A Mission for America

I am convinced that the people of our country would respond enthusiastically to a clear call to save Africa from starvation. America's reverence for human values, its "can do" spirit, its problem solving ability and its capacity to produce food, all would be involved in an effort to meet the crisis in Africa.

When I returned from my 1979 trip to Thailand and Cambodia I saw the remarkable response of the American people to a pressing need. They wanted to help, and they did help -- especially our young people. School children held bake sales and car washes to raise funds for the people of Cambodia. College students asked my assistance to go to the Cambodian border in the hope that they could lend a hand. That same spirit exists today in Peace Corps volunteers living in huts in remote African villages. I think it is a dominant strain in the American soul. Americans believe deeply in their country, and they believe that solving problems such as starvation in Africa is what their country is supposed to stand for.

We in government should provide the clear call to action. We should commit the government to a long-term program of food aid and development assistance for Africa, and beyond that we should encourage active participation by the private sector and by the American people themselves. When our constituents ask, "What can we do?", we should have some concrete answer in mind.

Development of a specific, easily understandable and not  
overly complex program to save Africa from starvation -- a program  
with a definite role for our private sector and our people -- deserves  
the immediate attention of the President and the Congress.