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THE WHITE HOUSE
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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Plenary Meeting with President Denis Sassou-Nguesso of People's Republic of the Congo (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
Lawrence S. Eagleburger, Acting Secretary of State
John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff
Brent Scowcroft, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Robert M. Gates, Assistant to the President and Deputy for National Security Affairs
Herman J. Cohen, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs
Leonard Shurtleff, U.S. Ambassador to Congo
John M. Ordway, Director, African Affairs, NSC Staff (Notetaker)
Alec Toumayan, Interpreter
Mary Carol Wolter, Interpreter

President Denis Sassou-Nguesso
Pierre Moussa, Minister of State, Planning and Economy
Antoine Ndinga-Oba, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Aime-Emmanuel Yoka, Minister of Mining and Energy
Edouard Gakosso, Minister of Finance and Budget
Basile Ikouebe, Minister, Director of the Presidential Cabinet
Pascal Gayama, Minister and Secretary for Cooperation
Benjamin Bounkoulou, Ambassador to the U.S.

DATE, TIME February 12, 1990, 11:05 a.m. - 11:40 a.m.
PLACE: Cabinet Room

The President: Mr. President, once again welcome to the White House. This is the Cabinet Room, where I meet with the Cabinet to discuss matters of importance to the U.S. It is fitting that this meeting is held here, since I meant what I said to you earlier: we have great respect for you. You have taken difficult decisions in respect of the economy. You had a key role in achieving independence for Namibia and getting Cuban troops out of Angola. This gives you special standing as a leader who can take pride in the end of colonialism on the African continent. With your colleagues here, I encourage you to

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stay the course, and provide leadership on national reconciliation in Angola. I salute Congolese diplomacy and the positive role you are playing there. I hope we can get a ceasefire and have direct negotiations. That's the key to it. We have seen you play an extraordinarily constructive role.

The President and I had a chance to discuss Angola in the Oval Office. I would like to hear from you about your meeting with Presidents Mobutu, Bongo, and Biya. (U)

A quick word on the economy. You have our support in the World Bank and IMF. You will be meeting later with the Vice President, who can go into more detail. I feel badly when foreign guests come here and tell about their economic problems, because the we have problems, too. Although we have a big economy, there are constraints on the Administration created by the law. However, we want to be helpful in supporting the Congo on the road to economic reform. (P)

We want to encourage you to open up your political system, opening it up to other members of society. I know this is not easy, but we salute you for the steps you have taken. (P)

I'd like to turn the floor over to you. Please raise any subject on your mind. At the end of the day, we will have a state dinner, but before that we will have another opportunity to discuss things in private. (U)

President Sassou: Thank you, Mr. President. I would like first of all on behalf of the people of the Congo, and my delegation, to thank you for this welcome you are extending at the White House, and for the kind words you have addressed to us. I would like to extend recognition to all of your personal efforts on behalf of peace in the world, your efforts to save the environment, and to fight drug trafficking and terrorism. All these efforts go in the direction of obtaining a world of peace and development for all people. In the area of peace, your efforts are beginning to yield results. I would like to thank you for all the support you have extended to us in this difficult task. (U)

I see Ambassador Cohen here. Together with Chester Crocker they have spent many sleepless nights in Brazzaville to achieve what many people in 1987 thought would be impossible. They worked to secure Cuban troop withdrawal, South African troop withdrawal from Angola, implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435 and a start to negotiations on Angola. Many people in 1987 did not believe this was possible or easy. The Cubans, Angolans and

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Soviets did not believe this would come to pass. Now we can congratulate ourselves, thanks to your efforts. (Z)

We have a date for Namibian independence set. We have a negotiating process begun in Angola, despite difficulties. Today, Nelson Mandela is a free man, and we can be more optimistic as we look at South Africa. The U.S. Government has made a priceless contribution. In Brazzaville, we sometimes met late at night with Crocker and Cohen, who were constantly on the go, even to the point of suffering physically. They were flying to Brazzaville, to Abidjan, to Lisbon, to Geneva, to New York, to Washington. They were like globetrotters. I want to praise U.S. diplomacy and your role. (Z)

Today we can remain optimistic. My contacts with Angolan President dos Santos show he is working for peace through negotiations, despite the events at Mavinga. I sent my foreign minister to Luanda on Friday to meet with dos Santos. He came back late Friday. We talked, and he said dos Santos still wants a negotiated solution. Soon we will have peace in Namibia and South Africa and it would be senseless to have war in Angola. (Z)

What I propose is that in our own modest way, we maintain support with the U.S. to see whether there is another way, a more flexible and discreet diplomacy in the Angola peace process. As I told Ambassador Cohen in Brazzaville, perhaps it would be possible to have a more flexible, a more discreet diplomacy. We are prepared to offer our own modest contribution so we can pursue the task of peace. I think we can continue to find a negotiated solution, and that is what President dos Santos wants. (Z)

The President: Can you repeat what you asked in the Oval Office meeting about Savimbi recognizing the authority of dos Santos. I think our experts would be very interested. (Z)

President Sassou: When we initiated the Namibia peace process, Ambassador Cohen and Chester Crocker told me we could not go toward a conclusion unless we knew what would happen in Angola.

President dos Santos made a solemn statement, accepting negotiations based on African realities, initiated at the meetings in Luanda and Gbadolite. Even before Gbadolite I talked to Mobutu, and met with King Hassan twice on this. I received the foreign minister of Cote d'Ivoire, Mr. Ake. The issue then was that Savimbi would recognize the authority of President dos Santos. The question that arises today: will the government in Luanda have to stop being the government, since there is a government in Luanda that is the government of Angola.

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Must dos Santos stop being President of Angola in order to have negotiations? There is a government, and a president. It is hare to set up this process. Is it reasonable to say that Angola must stop having a government before negotiations. Would it not be legitimate to recognize the authority of the president in office, and then have talks to get a peaceful solution. This is not to say that Savimbi should be exiled -- your government did not agree with that. There is a certain sense of frustration in Luanda that the government must not be the government. At one time Savimbi said he was not challenging the authority of dos Santos. Perhaps he could return to this. (S)

The President: I said in the Oval Office that I felt if discussions got going, this would certainly be on the table. (S)

President Sassou: We believe that there is a real prospect for progress in South Africa. Trends in South Africa show the beginning of a process of negotiations. The South African government wants to get this underway. De Klerk's efforts deserve to be supported. We are told there are right-wing factions trying hamper such a solution.

If negotiations are on the way in South Africa, how can Angola ignore such a development and continue to pursue war? The present international context is beginning to yield results. In my meetings in Portugal, the Prime Minister and President Soares had indicated they could help, as could the U.S. and Congo. These forces can act in cutting back as much as possible on military tensions, and pushing forward the negotiating effort. Dos Santos has conveyed through my foreign minister that he does not want to pursue the war. (S)

Regarding the meeting with Mobutu. We talked about Angola. I went to tell him he was the mediator. In Africa, when there is a situation like this, even a quarrel in a village, there was someone who steps in to separate the fighters. I said I wanted to encourage him to continue his mediation, and not stand idly by. He said he would send an envoy to Luanda to resume contact with dos Santos, and I understand this has been done.

My information was that Savimbi had contacted President Biya of Cameroon to get him involved, and this was why he had been invited to the summit.

We could well say that now in Angola we could act to insure that the current offensive toward Mavinga and Jamba is called off. I believe we could possibly make a joint demarche. On the other side, we could get from Savimbi certain flexibility. He has to

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give some reciprocity. If Savimbi could recognize the authority of dos Santos, this could act to get an end to the fighting. This is an assumption I could put on the table -- some ideas. In our region, these are ideas that are possible. (S)

Regarding Africa in general, the situation is catastrophic. Most African leaders are very anxious. They believe the world is looking toward Eastern Europe. We were surprised with the speed with which the U.S. and the Europeans had set up a bank for reconstruction and development in Eastern Europe. In Africa, it had been five years since the UN adopted an economic recovery program for Africa. At the end of the year, it will be the end of the plan and implementation has not even begun. African countries are sinking even deeper into poverty. There appears to be no way out of the debt problem. I had my Finance Minister do some research. Since 1987 Congo has paid \$63,000,000 to the Bank and Fund, and we have received zero in return. In brief, that is Africa's plight today. We expect a gesture from the G-7. (S)

With respect to the Congo, it is among the intermediate income countries, so we do not enjoy advantages from AID, have no debt forgiveness, no support from the World Bank for economic reform--only endless talks with the Bank with no conclusion. I believe that during this trip, with our U.S. friends we could get more support -- support in the negotiations with the Bank and Fund so those organizations could support us. Could we get support for economic progress in agriculture, so agricultural development could help us save the forests and the environment. We could cut down our forests, but could the U.S. Government help? On debt, could the U.S. make a gesture? We are not asking for the same gesture as Mexico, but something more modest. We owe \$18,000,000 to the U.S. Can the U.S. Government forgive us that debt as a friendly gesture? A friendly government should be in a position to wipe out an \$18,000,000 debt. Can you help us in the economic and financial area, so we can continue to play an important role. (S)

Regarding private sector investment, we proposed signing an investment treaty. U.S. oil companies are established in the Congo. They have permits for oil prospecting -- six of them. CONOCO has discovered deposits and will produce oil this year. This is encouraging for trade between our two countries. In such a promising environment, can we get support from the U.S. Government for private sector initiatives in the Congo? We have initiated a major reform of the economy with more emphasis on private investment. (U)

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There are other areas, terrorism and drug trafficking. We in the Congo were hit full blast by terrorism by the attack on the UTA flight in which 50 Congolese died. We are asking friendly governments to help bolster our airport security system. We also want help controlling drug trafficking. Southern African airports are being used increasingly for drug trafficking. We know the U.S. can help with equipment and training. This could be of substantial help for us. Another area you could help us with is re-forestation programs. . (Ø)

These are the bilateral issues. We believe the level of diplomatic relations and cooperation could be followed by consistent action on economic and commercial relations. This would give substance to high-level contacts. This would be the crowning touch to this visit. (Ø)

Thank you very much again for your warm welcome, Mr. President.

The President: You have appropriately placed on the table issues which I want Secretary Eagleburger and the Vice President to discuss with you in detail. I know the meeting was scheduled to end at 11:30, and that you have to get over to the State Department where they are waiting for you for lunch. But let me add just a few things, and respond briefly to some of your points. (U)

I listened very carefully to what you said. On the IMF and World Bank, the U.S. does support you there. On the issues of agriculture and debt forgiveness, Secretary Eagleburger can discuss that. We think an investment treaty could be helpful in attracting private investment.

There are other programs which could help relations, as well. The Peace Corps is one. The Peace Corps helps build good relations, and other countries where we have programs are very enthusiastic. There is IMET, our military training program, where we get your officers exposed to the U.S. (Ø)

On international terrorism, I am please to hear from you on that. We want to help. I know Congo took a pounding on that airplane, and I believe Americans had lost their lives as well. But most of our problems are with other countries. Some of them don't have much of a program at all. I just wanted to mentioned Khaddafi. Some might think we go overboard on this, but we think he is a menace. He has been training rebels against Liberia, and is still trying to subvert Chad. We are very suspicious about his meddling in Africa. This leopard won't change its spots. We

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feel very strongly on the issue. To the extent Libya stays isolated, this would help peace in Africa. (X)

Regarding the private sector, many of our investors frequently look at a country's role in the UN. I urge you to take a look at your UN voting. You don't have to agree with us all the time. We certainly don't expect that. But he we are always on the opposite side, this sends the wrong signal. (X)

We're pleased with your policy on oil. Investment in the oil sector is not exploitation, but will be successful for your country as well as the U.S. investors. We salute the way you are moving with your economy, but the more investment the better.

Regarding the situation in Eastern Europe, we have not yet agreed to participate in the proposed Bank -- although we probably will. However, there will be no money going into Eastern Europe until they change to emphasize the private sector, like had occurred in the Congo. It is not true that the U.S. is just interested in Eastern Europe. However, with all the excitement about countries with new commitments to freedom and democracy, which is now moving like a tidal wave, there is movement toward freedom, democracy and free markets in that region. This could help Africa if it became an engine of market incentives and investment.

I get some criticism in this hemisphere, including from President Carlos Andres Perez of Venezuela. He has really made a good impression on me.

Mr. President, discussion can continue elsewhere on these agenda items. You and I will have another opportunity to discuss them before the state dinner tonight.

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