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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Friday, May 29, 1998

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

DPB # 66

FRIDAY, MAY 29, 1998, 1:30 P.M.

(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

MR. RUBIN: Greetings. Welcome to the State Department briefing on this Friday.

Let me start by announcing that at the direction of President Clinton, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering plans to lead a senior-level delegation to Nigeria within the next two weeks. The purpose of the visit is to share our concerns about the transition program that's not happening there, and to discuss steps we think could lead to democratic civilian government in Nigeria.

The trip underscores the importance we attach to our relationship with Nigeria and to democracy and reform in Africa. Accompanying Under Secretary Pickering will be Assistant Secretary Susan Rice, NSC Senior Director for African Affairs Joe Wilson and Deputy Commander-in-Chief, European Command, General James Jamerson.

If there are any questions on that or any other subjects, let me turn the questioning over to George Gedda from The Associated Press.

QUESTION: I wanted to turn to Pakistan. Do you have any evaluation of the international response - the NATO allies, with one or two exceptions, don't seem too enthusiastic about the idea of sanctions. How do you see it?

MR. RUBIN: First of all, sanctions are not an end in themselves; sanctions are a tool. Obviously in this case, the sanctions did not deter the Indians or the Pakistanis from engaging in testing. So the task of the international community is not sanctions for sanctions' sake.

Let me say, on the other hand, I think the international community's response has been very much in line with the President's response and the Secretary's response; in particular, the North Atlantic Council, the Permanent Joint Council, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council - that means over 44 nations at meetings yesterday in Luxembourg -- all made clear their opposition to this test. So the international community is very united on its views.

What Secretary Albright has been doing in the last two days is trying to develop a more coordinated international response along the following lines: She had a

series of small meetings with Foreign Minister Primakov, with Foreign Minister
Cook, with Foreign Minister Vedrine, and she has been on the phone twice
with
the Chinese Foreign Minister, as a result of which the statement just
passed
the Security Council strongly deploring the Pakistani test. They also
have been
discussing, and she hopes to make it possible for the Permanent Five
members of
the Security Council to meet in the coming week at the ministerial level to
address this problem.

Clearly the situation in South Asia - the security situation has
deteriorated,
and so Secretary Albright has launched a process, beginning with a
ministerial-
level meeting that we hope to arrange as early as next week for
discussions on
the key issues that make the risk of conflict greater now in South Asia -
that
is, conflict both by miscalculation or intentional. So the purposes of
this
meeting and any subsequent meetings - and we would expect there to be a
larger
group that would begin to discuss this after that initial session - the
purposes
of this initial session would be to develop a coordinated, common approach
to
this grave situation. In particular, to see that there are no more nuclear

tests or escalations in the region; to reaffirm the world's commitment to the maintenance of the global non-proliferation regime; to find ways to engage India and Pakistan in a process that will lead to their signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban; support for the fissile material cut-off; ensuring that they don't take further escalatory steps in the ballistic missile area; and finally, to find ways to de-escalate the underlying tensions, including promoting dialogue between India and Pakistan both on the current security situation and on the underlying conflict in Kashmir so that the underlying dispute that has made it so worrying and so troublesome that they have both tested nuclear weapons and have gone to war with each other several times in recent decades can be addressed.

This is the beginning of a long and complicated process. It's evident, I think, as a result of the meetings that Secretary Albright has had and the decisions that Pakistan has made that the outside world's ability to have decisive influence in the area of nuclear testing was very limited, and that the key driving factors were the regional dynamic that was created by India's test and many of the events that preceded that, as well as the enormous political

pressure that Prime Minister Sharif was under.

So despite the limited leverage the outside world has, the concerns are so deep and the danger is sufficient so that we hope to arrange this initial meeting next week.

QUESTION: Where will it be and who will be invited?

MR. RUBIN: The meeting would be the permanent members of the Security Council at the ministerial level. We have not settled on a venue yet, but this is -- in real-time, it would be the five foreign ministers from the permanent members of the Security Council.

QUESTION: Have they agreed to come?

MR. RUBIN: As I said, we're hoping to arrange it. We've received, in a series of discussions, general support for this idea. Now we're nailing down the venue and timing and agenda. But the agenda that we would be looking toward would be the kind of objectives that I just set forth.

QUESTION: China has been criticized in the past for aiding Pakistan's nuclear

program. Without getting into great detail about that, how do you assess the role of China in the future in curbing a potential arms race on the sub-continent?

MR. RUBIN: Well, I think the fact the Chinese Foreign Minister agreed to attend this meeting is a signal that they want to be as supportive as they can to ensure that the troubling events in recent weeks in South Asia do not spin out of control. They were very much in sync with the United States in terms of trying to convince Pakistan not to test; in terms of their very strong response to India's initial test, in terms of their decision, despite their obvious close relationship with Pakistan, to allow this statement to go through just a few hours ago in New York, as a result of this conversation Secretary Albright had with the Chinese Foreign Minister.

That is not to say there are not serious concerns that we've had in the past about China's cooperation with Pakistan. But I think we all have to bear in mind the evolution that has occurred in China's policies, including a commitment that we believe they are honoring not to assist unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, especially those in Pakistan and other countries of concern.

So there's no question there were problems in the past. I think we've spoken to those very clearly. But one can either live in the past, or one can focus on what's happened in recent years in terms of their non-proliferation policy and what is evidently a desire on their part to work with the United States and the other leading countries. Let me say in that regard that President Yeltsin and President Clinton had a very important discussion about the need for cooperation along the lines of this kind of permanent member meeting in South Asia to deter the sides from taking further dangerous steps, and to try to see what the major powers can do collectively through their various diplomatic means and the different leverage they have on the different parties to prevent this situation from spinning out of control.

QUESTION: Jamie, Mike McCurry has talked about a strongly-worded diplomatic cable having been sent to both Islamabad and to New Delhi. Can you, without obviously going into the exact wording, characterize some of the concerns expressed in such a cable? And can you bring us up to date on whether or not Ambassador Simons is going to be recalled or not and Ambassador Celeste?

MR. RUBIN: Tentatively, it's my understanding the Secretary has decided not to recall Ambassador Simons, and Ambassador Celeste will be sent back to the region, to India, very shortly. We obviously have a lot of discussions that have to take place now in this situation. We think it's appropriate to have ambassadors in country to try to work with the governments involved so that the decisions they take in the coming days and weeks will turn around the troublesome, dangerous trend that we've seen in recent weeks.

With regard to our specific concerns, again, it would be difficult to say too much in public; other than to say we are concerned about the danger of additional action that would escalate the situation. A very strongly worded message was sent to Pakistan last night, urging them not to take any additional action that could further unravel the peace and stability that is currently in existence there. We are trying to turn around the trend, and it is a very difficult thing to do from outside when you have such an emotional national issue as the underlying dispute over Kashmir, and you have the cycle of action in tests of missiles and tests of nuclear weapons and counter-tests that are occurring, and the outside world's views are not as important as the feelings that exist in those countries.

Nevertheless, we're going to continue to stay in contact with them, and we hope

that as a result of the kind of meeting we're trying to arrange, that the various permanent members of the Council can bring to bear some leverage and

turn this process around before it's too late.

QUESTION: A follow up - you mentioned a strongly worded cable to Pakistan

- was

one not sent to New Delhi?

MR. RUBIN: It's my understanding there was one to both.

QUESTION: At this meeting of the Permanent Five, can you give us any insight

into what possible items might be on the agenda - the way in which, at least the

United States is thinking - is there any thought given to a mediation effort

between Pakistan and India?

MR. RUBIN: We've had a longstanding position that we would be prepared to be

helpful if the parties saw that as wise and wanted us to do that, and that is

our view.

I think the important point is that it's a meeting that hasn't yet taken place.

It's a meeting that is in the process of being arranged, and although I do like to be able to give you real-time information as much as I can, I'd hope you wouldn't expect us to be in a position a week in advance of a meeting to tell you exactly what we're going to do at that meeting before we've even had it and discussed it with the countries.

Nevertheless, the basic goal is, as I've said, to try to see how we can encourage the parties to take steps to reduce the possibility of escalation; to reduce the possibility of conflict in Kashmir; and to deal with the underlying dispute in Kashmir; and to promote a bilateral dialogue between them. Hopefully, with the major powers in the world having taken on this issue in this way, we will be in a position to urge them successfully to do more to see that their underlying dispute does not cause the kind of horrifying conflict that is now imaginable.

QUESTION: Jamie, yesterday Deputy Secretary Talbott said there were a series of meetings to figure out what exactly to do. Apart from the proposed P-5 meeting and the decision on the ambassadors and the strong telegram, is any other concrete action --

MR. RUBIN: Yes, there are concrete actions that we are considering.

QUESTION: What are they?

MR. RUBIN: Those are concrete actions that, when we're prepared to discuss publicly, we will. I just told you three things that were happening. I

know

your appetite is large, but I'm doing the best I can, Jim.

QUESTION: For example, let me ask a specific thing that has been proposed by

some experts around town. Has the United States followed through to set up a

hotline between India and Pakistan, for example?

MR. RUBIN: We're well aware of the value of better communication to avoid the

risk of unintended conflict. But at this point, we're a day into this process,

and we are pursuing what we think are the best initial steps and talking publicly about what we think are the best initial steps. They are to get the

permanent members of the Security Council together to try to bring to bear their

leverage for the agenda that I laid out.

Obviously, the concern about unintended escalation, as the countries increase

their military capabilities, is one of the problems. If we have anything further to say on tools to do that, we will do so.

QUESTION: Beyond the cable you mentioned, are there any other direct discussions between the US Government and either India or Pakistan going on now or planned for the weekend to discuss in any way the terms of a stand-down from the current situation -- any other contacts?

MR. RUBIN: I'm not aware of any particular steps that are being considered at this point, other than returning Ambassador Celeste, which I think is an important step, and making clear through our embassy our views. The President had, as you know, five separate phone calls with Prime Minister Sharif over the recent weeks. If there are additional telephone contacts that we have and choose to report, I'll be happy to do that for you.

We are aware that a delegation from Pakistan is expected here today. We expect them to have meetings in the coming weeks with senior American officials as well as members of Congress. That delegation, however, is led by the chairman of their foreign relations committee, but it would be a channel for some discussion. Any additional communication that we have, we will report as appropriate.

QUESTION: Are they coming here today or New York today?

MR. RUBIN: I believe they're arriving in the United States today. I don't

think there are any meetings scheduled here in the Department today. I think the meetings would begin next week.

QUESTION: You said, just in answer to Jim's question a few minutes ago, that we're a day into this process. But India tested over two-and-a-half weeks ago. Was any thought given to convening the Permanent Five after the Indian test, to possibly head off Pakistan?

MR. RUBIN: You mean you're asking me, did we consider an idea that we didn't implement?

QUESTION: Yes.

MR. RUBIN: We consider a lot of ideas.

QUESTION: No, I'm asking, why did you wait - (inaudible) --

MR. RUBIN: Right. The implication in your question is that the outside world was capable of stopping Pakistan from testing; and I think we've spoken to this quite clearly. We believe that the immense political pressure that the Prime Minister of Pakistan was under and the regional dynamic that was created by India's test and events that preceded that made it excruciatingly

difficult for

the Pakistani Prime Minister to do anything but what he did.

The President of the United States spoke to him five times in a series of lengthy phone calls; and we believe that we did what we can. And we hope that

as the American people and those who comment on American foreign policy examine

this issue, they bear in mind the fact that the United States is not in a position to control every event that occurs in the world. There will be bad

things that happen in this world that we have not been able to stop, regardless

of what we do. We have considered a lot of steps. As you know, Deputy Secretary Talbott went to see the Pakistanis. A number of ideas were put forward between the United States and Pakistan through the President's phone

calls with the Prime Minister. But at the end of the day, it was the political

pressures and the regional dynamic that were too overwhelming.

Now, that event having occurred, it seems appropriate for us to try a different

way to bring to bear pressure on both parties, not just on one -- which is obviously what the time now is ripe for. That is why we've decided to pursue

this particular meeting as a first step in the process.

QUESTION: Kosovo?

MR. RUBIN: Everyone finished with India-Pakistan?

QUESTION: No. The Japanese Government is afraid - they believe that the North

Koreans have supplied Pakistan with up to 12 of the Rodong II missiles.

And

they are afraid that this, perhaps, is going to lead to Pakistan sharing some

nuclear technology or weapons technology with the North Koreans. What is the

United States' concern on that?

MR. RUBIN: Like Japan, we are concerned about the possibility that nuclear technology could be shared with any country in the world. We have sanctioned

companies with regard to sales between North Korea and Pakistan; we're well aware of that. But we are not aware of any plan on the part of Pakistan to share their nuclear technology with North Korea.

Moreover, North Korea is under a very elaborate agreement, pursuant to the 1994

Nuclear Framework Agreement, that froze their nuclear weapons program and that

we believe is being honored by North Korea. Is there always an inherent risk

that nuclear weapons capabilities can be sold? Absolutely; that's one of the

reasons we thought it was so important to stop North Korea's program.

It's one

of the reasons we're trying to prevent Pakistan's and India's program from

growing. It's one of the reasons we've spent enormous sums of money and political and diplomatic leverage on trying to prevent material that may have

existed in the former Soviet Union to become available for sale. But do we have

any specific information about a specific sale? No.

QUESTION: Jamie, you mentioned the Chinese improved behavior. There's a new

report out today that a large shipment of special quality steel, stainless steel, went from China to Iran, similar to the shipment of 22 tons that was stopped from Russia recently. Do you know if that's true?

MR. RUBIN: I haven't seen any such report.

QUESTION: Can you check into it?

MR. RUBIN: Right, I will certainly check into a report; but I would bear in

mind that we don't always comment on every report. But we'll check into it.

QUESTION: Are we ready now?

MR. RUBIN: Yes.

QUESTION: Mr. Surroi, a member of the negotiating team of President - what's

his name --

MR. RUBIN: Rugova.

QUESTION: -- Rugova's team said today --

MR. RUBIN: You took all that time to prepare?

QUESTION: Well, sometimes it slips.

MR. RUBIN: Now you know what it's like up here.

(Laughter.)

QUESTION: He said today over at the National Press Club that the level of violence in Kosovo risks all-out war. In fact, he said that it was extremely dangerous now, they were at the first stage of war; and that situation made it so that further negotiation with the Serbs may not be possible. He said that first they had to stop the violence to keep these avenues of negotiation open. He also said that NATO was welcome to come into Kosovo, but he didn't think it would be much use on the borders with Albania or Macedonia. What, can you tell us, is the State Department's impression of the Rugova visit insofar as the substance is concerned?

MR. RUBIN: I spoke to Ambassador Gelbard an hour or so ago, and he said the meeting with the President went extremely well. Dr. Rugova met with the

Deputy

Secretary; he met with Ambassador Gelbard; he is expected to meet with the Secretary tomorrow morning. It's clear to us that this visit has gone extremely well.

Does that mean that the situation in Kosovo is going well? On the contrary.

The situation in Kosovo is a matter of deep concern to the United States, and

there's been recent increases in the violence there. The United States and its

NATO partners have made significant investment in the stability of Southeastern

Europe. We believe that both Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are vulnerable to spillover of this conflict. That is why the NATO

ministers took a series of measures designed to shore up the stability of the

states on the periphery of the former Republic of Yugoslavia, including a ship

visit to Albania in July; a decision to conduct an early Partnership for Peace

exercise with Albania; a decision to upgrade a planned exercise in the former

Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the study of the possible future use of a training center there for training of the Partnership for Peace; and announcement of an enhanced set of activities with the Partnership for Peace -

both with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania.

NATO is considering other measures designed to contribute to the stability of neighboring states, including study of possible preventive deployments in FYROM and Albania, as well as study of possible NATO support to the OSCE mission in Albania. NATO will continue to monitor the situation in Kosovo closely, and be prepared to take additional measures if that becomes necessary.

What I can say to you is that our view is that the best way that the problems of Kosovo can be resolved is through a process of open and unconditional dialogue. This is a problem that is best solved at the negotiating table. The more the battlefield grows, the harder it will be for the progress at the negotiating table to proceed.

We have made that point very clear to President Milosevic that the unjustified extreme use of violence against Kosovar Albanians only makes it harder to negotiate a solution to this because it radicalizes the Kosovar Albanian population and undercuts the interlocutor we are trying - who may be in a position to avoid this conflict from spinning out of control.

With regard to the view that -- it's often a view that unless the outside world

intervenes directly, militarily, that nothing can happen. We haven't found that to be the case around the world; but we have made clear we're not ruling options out.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) - not ruling the option of direct intervention?

MR. RUBIN: We are not ruling any options out. We have made that quite clear; that is something I've said before. At the same time, one hopes that the parties involved understand the seriousness of the measures that we've now taken to consider deployments along the border to deal with potential spillover. That is a first and important step.

QUESTION: Just to follow, briefly, the President was reported to have said today that the United States would not permit this to become another Bosnia. Is that correct?

MR. RUBIN: Well, I wouldn't be in a position to quote the President from a private meeting. Maybe Mr. McCurry can offer you more information on that. But certainly, Secretary Albright has made clear that we've learned lessons about dealing with the situation in Bosnia - namely, the lesson of firm pressure on President Milosevic is the one lesson that is clear from the Bosnia

episode that

we will try to convince our allies and friends not to forget.

QUESTION: Jamie, have you heard any reports of fighting today in or around Kosovo or the border? And as a corollary to that, do you have any comment on

how concerned the Department is about elections in Montenegro this weekend?

MR. RUBIN: Well, with respect to Kosovo, yes, the fighting continues. We are

very concerned about the tactics being pursued by the Serbian authorities there.

The situation is increasing in danger. That is why we believe that President

Milosevic has to understand that the more violent the tactics that his security

forces use, the less likely it will be that a peaceful solution can be found.

Often leaders imagine that what they can do on the battlefield will increase

their leverage at the negotiating table. That's often considered one of the

primary rules of international diplomacy. In this case, the opposite is true.

The more extreme the measures taken on the battlefield, the weaker Dr. Rugova

will be in trying to negotiate; the stronger the extremists will be - the UCK in

Kosovo. Unfortunately President Milosevic seems to be acting like the

membership chairman of the UCK. With every step he takes, he increases support for the extremist forces he's trying to combat. If that isn't shooting oneself in the foot, I don't know what is.

With respect to the question of Montenegro, we do have deep concerns that we have expressed to the Serbian authorities that the United States is going to watch very closely what happens in Montenegro with the elections scheduled for Sunday. We are very concerned by the recent steps to dismiss Prime Minister Kontic, and there are OSCE observers on the ground. The elections must be free, fair and in keeping with democratic standards, and any attempt to intimidate the Montenegrin parties will be remembered.

We are hopeful that this election will be free and fair. And the more that President Milosevic uses the tactics of intimidation both in Montenegro and elsewhere, the less likely it is that the international community will ever come to a point where it seeks to reintegrate Serbia into the community of nations.

QUESTION: Is the Secretary still planning to attend the OAS meeting in Caracas on Monday?

MR. RUBIN: As far as I know, yes.

QUESTION: Same general area -- Colombia has an election on Sunday. I would imagine that is an issue of more than passing interest to this government. Do you have anything on that?

MR. RUBIN: Other than that we hope the election is free and fair, and that the electoral process yield a result that is deemed free and fair, we're not going to make any comment other than, obviously, our desire to continue to work with Colombia to fight drug trafficking.

QUESTION: Mr. Chubays is here today --

MR. RUBIN: Right.

QUESTION: -- apparently seeing Mr. Eizenstat and others. I wonder if you could talk about it at all and just say whether the United States believes that Russia needs another financial and economic support package, and if it asks for it, what would the response be?

MR. RUBIN: My understanding is that in his meeting with the

Administration, Mr.

Chubays did not ask for such an additional package. I believe the IMF officials

did release a statement welcoming the Russian Government's announcement yesterday of new measures to bring the fiscal situation under control -- that

is, to have strong economic decisions that were made there, and that they will

recommend the disbursing of the additional \$670 million of quarterly tranche of

Russia's existing loan.

We were encouraged by the developments we saw yesterday. We're going to closely

monitor the situation. Obviously, the United States, since the beginning of the

Clinton Administration and before, has been, overall, extremely supportive of

reform in Russia - economic reform, in particular. We continue to want to help.

But the key point is: What is Russia capable and willing to do? We saw some

encouraging signs yesterday.

But with respect to any further facility that I read reports about, all I can

say is that it wasn't raised; and if it were raised, we'd obviously take a look

at it.

QUESTION: Another Russia question - have you had any communications or any sense that the Duma is going to act any time soon on START II?

MR. RUBIN: There are a lot of conflicting reports from Russia as to what the Duma's intentions are and what the prospects for passing the START II ratification instrument. In our view, the key point is for the Russian Duma to understand that Russia benefits from passage of START II, and Russia loses from failure to pass START II, because the United States is in a better position in the absence of START II.

Many of the key Russian officials recognize this. And we certainly hope that Russian Duma members put their interest in Russia over their interest in somehow getting back at any political opponent. At the same time, I can say that President Clinton and Secretary Albright have been assured with a fair degree of vigor that the government in Moscow wants to see START II ratified. But when it will be ratified, just the way sometimes other countries take a look at our legislative body and are puzzled by its timing, we wish that the Duma would act faster in the interest of Russia and in the interest of the United States. And in this regard, I think it's important to understand that the United States and

Russia - the governments - have been engaged in recent years in a dramatic process of reducing the nuclear arsenals of Russia and the United States.

As part of the disarmament process, we've seen massive reductions in the numbers of nuclear weapon delivery systems and the number of deployed nuclear weapons,

which is part and parcel of the message we've been sending to the rest of the

world that having nuclear weapons is not the ticket to great power capabilities.

There are great powers in the world, like Germany and Japan, that do not have nuclear weapons, and the nuclear powers are reducing their nuclear systems.

So the sooner that the Duma gets START II ratified, the sooner we can get on

with movement to reduce further our systems under START III, the sooner we can

meet the desires of the non-nuclear weapons states that the nuclear weapons states keep the "disarmament train" moving, and hopefully that will deter others

from going nuclear. In other words, by failing to ratify START II, the Duma is

not doing any favor to the cause of non-proliferation.

QUESTION: Can I ask a question about Nigeria? There was a report today that

this meeting - this visit to - the delegation headed by Ambassador Pickering is

a change in policy - a change in direction of American policy toward

Nigeria.

Would you comment on that?

MR. RUBIN: We remain deeply concerned about the situation in Nigeria.

Tensions

are rising and the transition process is flawed and failing. We do not see how

the current process will lead to a democratically-elected civilian government.

We think it is important that we do our utmost to reduce the risk of heightened

insecurity in Nigeria, which is the most populous country in Africa.

The delegation's visit does not signify a shift in our policy, but rather an

intensification of our efforts to share our concern about the situation in Nigeria, and to urge swift movement toward a credible process leading to democratic civilian government. It is not a negotiating session or a bargaining

session, but an open discussion of concern between our two nations.

Obviously

we don't want to prejudge the outcome of this mission, other than to say that we

hope that we can and should make all efforts to prevent further deterioration in

Nigeria and that's why we're sending this delegation.

QUESTION: Is this the first high-level contact with the Nigerians in some time?

It seems to me that a couple of years ago, Don McHenry was a special envoy.

MR. RUBIN: That's correct. We will get you a list of the last contact with Nigeria after the briefing.

QUESTION: Do you know if we have an ambassador there?

MR. RUBIN: I will get you the current location of our Ambassador in Nigeria.

QUESTION: On that subject - isn't Reverend Jesse Jackson a special ambassador or emissary on Africa?

MR. RUBIN: The answer to that question is that I believe that Ambassador - our former Ambassador in Haiti is being considered for - Swing - is in the Senate nominating process. I don't know how far along he is. I believe he either has or will shortly be going there as President Clinton's envoy to Nigeria.

Was that your question?

QUESTION: Well it was going to be - and why isn't Reverend Jackson part of the Pickering delegation?

MR. RUBIN: I don't understand the question. He's not the Assistant Secretary

for Africa, and she is part of the delegation.

QUESTION: I understand.

MR. RUBIN: He is a special envoy who pursues missions as we all think best.

But it certainly shouldn't be thought of as strange that he's not on every trip that the Administration takes to Africa.

QUESTION: I didn't use the word "strange."

MR. RUBIN: But it shouldn't be even noteworthy.

QUESTION: Thank you.

(The briefing concluded at 2:00 P.M.)

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TO: Andrew J. Mayock (CN=Andrew J. Mayock/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

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TO: Mindy E. Myers (CN=Mindy E. Myers/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])

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TO: Nicole R. Rabner (CN=Nicole R. Rabner/OU=WHO/O=EOP [WHO])
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TO: TCSmith (TCSmith@dol.gov [UNKNOWN])
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TO: tingen-terri (tingen-terri@dol.gov [UNKNOWN])
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TO: usia01 (usia01@access.digex.com [UNKNOWN])
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TO: usnwire (usnwire@access.digex.com [UNKNOWN])
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TEXT:
Message Creation Date was at 18-MAR-1999 17:02:00

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 18,

1999

PRESS BRIEFING

BY JOE LOCKHART

1:15 P.M. EST

MR. LOCKHART: Good afternoon, everyone. One quick logistical announcement.

All seats for tomorrow's press conference -- I'm serious, it's real -- must be reserved. Requests for seating must be in to Heather Riley by 9:00 a.m. tomorrow. For those of you who are looking for a hard start time, we're looking at 2:01 p.m. Eastern time.

Q These reserved seats, including regular organizations who cover the White House, do we need to go to Heather?

MR. LOCKHART: Can't hurt. I assume you'll all be there.

Q Is that your announcement?

MR. LOCKHART: That's my announcement.

Q On Kosovo, the Kosovars --

MR. LOCKHART: No. Can we hold on a second? Got it?

Q Okay, we got it back.

Q Joe, can we expect a statement from the President today on the developments in Kosovo?

MR. LOCKHART: Hold on. Hold on. Let me come to Sam, because I cut him off while I was waiting for this to come on. And I'll come to you next.

Q The Kosovars appear to have signed the agreement. The Serbs are making it plain, so far, they're not going to sign the agreement. What happens now, and when?

MR. LOCKHART: Well, as you all remember, there was some skepticism some weeks ago that this time period, while the Kosovars went back and consulted --

Q No mult.

MR. LOCKHART: Okay.

Q Back now.

Q What's happening? (Laughter.)

MR. LOCKHART: I don't know. Hold on.

Q With all due respect to my business, you can continue the briefing,
even if
it's not on television.

MR. LOCKHART: Okay. I thought this was pretty important stuff, though.

Q It is.

MR. LOCKHART: Can you hear me back there?

Q Yes, go ahead, Joe.

MR. LOCKHART: Okay. Sam, your question again?

Q In case the question wasn't heard, the Kosovars appear to have signed
the
agreement. The Serbs are making it plain, so far, they're not going to
sign
the agreement. What happens next, and when?

MR. LOCKHART: You know, I think we've entered a decisive phase here. One
side has come forward and said that they can accept the elements of this
political settlement and have signed. President Milosevic and the Serbs
have

remained in their position of not accepting the conditions of the political settlement. And, as we know in the past, from our past dealings with President Milosevic, he often doesn't act until he feels he has to.

This is a decisive phase, as I've said, because the Kosovar Albanians have signed and he faces a choice. He faces a choice of moving down a path that can bring peace, the end to repression of the Kosovar Albanians and autonomy for the Kosovar Albanians. Or he can go down a path that will, by necessity, be a path of further bloodshed.

Q But Milosevic, you say, doesn't act often until he has to. When does he have to?

MR. LOCKHART: Well, I'm not going to get into a timetable here of what might be done or what might not be done. But I will remind you that the ACTORD remains in effect, that NATO Secretary General Solana has the authority to move forward, and that the military planning is complete.

Q Can we expect to hear from the President today, Joe, on this?

MR. LOCKHART: I wouldn't expect to hear from the President today on this.

Q There are new reports out of Paris saying that next Wednesday, this coming

Wednesday is the deadline. Is that accurate?

MR. LOCKHART: No, there are no deadlines, as far as I know.

Q -- to be suspended. Is he going to be given another bit of time to reflect on the --

MR. LOCKHART: My understanding of the talks is the cochairs, the Foreign Ministers Cook and Vendrine, will be talking with the negotiators, talking with both sides to try to come to some conclusion whether there's any real purpose to continue these talks. That, I expect, to go on this afternoon into this evening, Paris time, and we will await their decision on that announcement.

But, again, I'm not aware that there's any fixed time that's going to be given at this point for President Milosevic to come forward and make a decision.

Q Is there a possibility that a deadline will eventually be set?

MR. LOCKHART: That's a hypothetical I don't know the answer to.

Q You've changed from this morning. This morning you clearly said that if the Serbs prove to be intransigent in this matter or if they attack in some large-scale sense, the Kosovars, NATO will act.

MR. LOCKHART: I have not changed. You've asked --

Q You gave every indication if this conference breaks up without the Serbs signing, that was the intransigence you were talking about.

MR. LOCKHART: I gave no such indication on the second point. If President Milosevic and the Serbs cannot come forward and agree in a peaceful, political way, NATO will act. If they launch some sort of offensive action against the Kosovar Albanians, then they face the very real threat that NATO has laid on the table.

Q They're currently engaged in offensive action against the Kosovars.

MR. LOCKHART: Well, we have made our views on that subject well known to them. We are aware of some movement, some troop movements, and we have indicated to them in no uncertain terms that any new offensive against the Kosovar Albanians will be a grave mistake.

Q And what was their reply to that, Joe, when we made that statement to them yesterday?

MR. LOCKHART: I'm not familiar with their exact reply, but I know that our views were made known.

Q But their continued shelling doesn't constitute a new offensive?

MR. LOCKHART: What we're looking for here is to find a way to get to a peace,
just get a way that both sides can find a political settlement that restores
autonomy to the Kosovar Albanians. We are aware that there has been some moving of troops, which indicate there may be some thought of a new offensive,
and we've made it very clear that we think that would be a grave mistake.

Q I'm not asking about a new offensive. I'm just saying, if they continue to
shell the Kosovar Albanians, forcing refugees to flee, as is happening right
now, that doesn't constitute a "new offensive"?

MR. LOCKHART: Listen, I'm not going to get into a detailing here on all the
particulars of what -- because I think the Belgrade authorities, President Milosevic understands our view completely and I'm going to leave it there.

Q How would you rate the chances for achieving a peace at this point?

MR. LOCKHART: I'm not going to get into speculating about what President Milosevic might or might not do. I will say that we've reached a decisive point in this process and he clearly knows the choices he faces, and he clearly
knows that he can choose one of two paths. And it's very much in his interest
to choose the path of peace.

Q Joe, are you saying that NATO will strike against the Serbs if they don't sign the peace agreement, or only if they launch a new offensive in Kosovo?

MR. LOCKHART: I'm saying there are -- the criteria for NATO action involves both the intransigence on the political settlement and on President Milosevic's actions as far as launching an offensive on the Serbs -- excuse me, on the Kosovar Albanians.

Q If they refrain from launching a new offensive but still don't sign the peace agreement, you're saying they're still going to get hit?

MR. LOCKHART: I'm not saying that. I'm saying that he faces some tough choices, and he's going to need to make them. And we've reached a decisive point in this process.

Q I think Mara's question is if they simply fail to sign the agreement but do not launch a new offensive, they're fine, they don't get hit?

MR. LOCKHART: No, I didn't give an affirmative answer to that.

Q They're not doing anything today that you consider a new offensive?

MR. LOCKHART: I'm not aware that they've launched a major new offensive in the region.

Q But failure to sign is intransigence, as you define it; is it not?

MR. LOCKHART: It certainly is. It certainly is. And while I'm not going to put a timetable on this, I'm certainly not willing to say that there's an unlimited amount of time.

Q Joe, it sounds like you're saying some thought is being given to sending someone back to Belgrade. Is that true?

MR. LOCKHART: I'm not saying that.

Q Joe, in the final days of the Dayton negotiations, the Bosnian Serbs stepped up their offensive, and did sort of a last-minute land grab. Isn't that what we're witnessing again here? We know the peace negotiations are coming to a head, and the Serbs in Yugoslavia are doing the same thing.

MR. LOCKHART: I don't see that, no.

Q Joe, given that this effort to bring peace hasn't worked, and you still want peace, what does the President plan to do now to bring it towards peace? Is there some other strategy?

MR. LOCKHART: We're in a part of this process now where President Milosevic

has to decide which direction he wants to take his country. And, again, with the risk of repeating myself, he has a stark choice between --

Q You must have given him a deadline.

MR. LOCKHART: -- between a path of peace or a path of further violence.

Q You must have given him a deadline.

MR. LOCKHART: No, we must not have, Helen.

Q Well, you say it's a decisive moment.

MR. LOCKHART: Yes.

Q What does that mean?

MR. LOCKHART: It means we have reached the final and decisive phase. I'll remind you all that we sat here three weeks ago, and most of you in this room were very skeptical that, because the Kosovar Albanians walked away from the process and did not sign, that somehow there was no prospect of them signing. We sit here today with them having signed the agreement. And that's an important step in this process.

Q So are you saying there's hope?

MR. LOCKHART: I'm saying that we wouldn't be involved in the process if we didn't think there was hope of moving this forward to a peaceful settlement. But where this decision rests now is squarely and alone with President Milosevic and the Serbs.

Q The Kosovars have signed the agreement, yes; but you don't expect them to begin fulfilling their end of the agreement before Milosevic signs?

MR. LOCKHART: I think most agreements like this are agreements when both parties have signed.

Q Hey, Joe, is there anything in the activation order that would confine a NATO air action to Kosovo itself?

MR. LOCKHART: Let me answer that broadly, which is that as far as the activation order goes, as far as any military planning, I'm not going to get into the operational details.

Q Joe, is there some cause for optimism in the fact that Milosevic doesn't act until he has to?

MR. LOCKHART: I think we're at the point really -- it's pointless to speculate on optimism and pessimism. President Milosevic knows what he needs

to do and it's time for him to make his decision.

Q Change the subject? What about on budget matters? Does the administration believe that the budget caps should be dispensed with?

MR. LOCKHART: No. I think the budget we've put forward works within the caps, the spending caps, and the investments we've made are paid for and represent and reflect the fiscal discipline that we've brought back to Washington over the last seven years that have brought us out of an era of deficit spending into an era of surpluses.

Q But, Joe, it only works within the caps next year; after that, it doesn't.

MR. LOCKHART: For FY 2000, we certainly respect them. Beyond -- and in the out-years beyond that, I'm not certain of the numbers.

Barry reminds me that there are some additional investments we've made with the surplus. Remember we have -- on the 100 percent of the surplus, it's divided up roughly 77 percent for Medicare and Social Security, 12 percent for the USA accounts and then about an additional 10 percent on some additional investments.

Q Vice President Gore said today that the Republicans are planning to -- that the only way to make their numbers add up is to cut deeply, really deeply

into
everything from education to health care. Does the administration believe
that
they are just spending money in the wrong places, or that they're taking
money
away from these? What is the point the administration is trying to make?

MR. LOCKHART: I think the point we're trying to make is, if you look at
the
budget, we've been here before. Look at the promises that are being made
here. We can cut taxes, increase military spending significantly and still
balance the budget. Well, we quadrupled the national debt the last time we
brought into a promise like that, and the fiscal discipline that we've
brought
and the credibility that we've brought by balancing the budget -- not just
talking about, not just having a balanced budget amendment, but by
balancing
the budget, brings a certain credibility that allows us to argue that we
don't
need to go down this road again.

We've got more gimmicks that are not in our national economic interest.

Q I thought you want to cut taxes, increase the military spending and
balance
the budget.

MR. LOCKHART: All within the context of what we can pay for. And we've
got
USA accounts, which we think will provide relief for people and help them

save

for retirement, we've got military spending that we can pay for, and we don't

have the kind of large tax cut that you can't pay for.

Q Wait a second. Doesn't the Republican plan only cut taxes as the surplus comes in, the general revenue surplus?

MR. LOCKHART: If you look at how they add it up, it's hard to see how they're going to make the broad, across-the-board -- if they want to stand up and say, here are our cuts, here is how we pay for it, we can have a different debate. But until they do, it sounds like the gimmick of the '80s or a faint sound of the '80s and I don't think it's a road we want to go down.

Q Speaking of the budget, the President -- \$956 million for emergency aid to Central America, plus aid to Jordan and some other programs. Republicans are --

MR. LOCKHART: Agriculture.

Q Right. Republicans are saying in order to approve them, they will cut other domestic programs the President wants. Is the White House ready to veto if it

comes down that way?

MR. LOCKHART: We hope we don't have to go down that route. I think there's very -- there are very few cases that meet the classic test of emergency spending than this Central American aid. This is aid that's needed immediately, it certainly couldn't be planned for, and is non-recurring.

We think it's time to get the politics out of this, move forward, do this on an emergency basis on the time-honored budget rules that we've followed. And you can see the results of sticking to the budget rules.

And I think if you look at some of the areas that they're looking at cuts, it's difficult to understand why we'd want to take money out of things like embassy security, Y2K, and other programs in order to address this problem. We think it should be done on an emergency basis, and we should do it soon.

Q Joe, speaking of the "v" word, will the President veto that GOP budget as it comes down?

MR. LOCKHART: Well, we certainly look forward to seeing what the details of it are. Right now the numbers don't seem to add up, don't seem to make sense. But we're very early in the process.

Q Joe, back on the emergency aid package. The President said in Central

America that, when he got back to the States, he wanted to talk to the Speaker

and the Republican leaders about the status of it and how to move it forward.

Has he ever done that?

MR. LOCKHART: I don't know that the President has spoken to the Speaker about that. Both our legislative people -- Jack Lew at OMB have been working very closely with the relevant committees up on the Hill. And we're hoping that we can find some way to get this report out quickly, but done on an emergency basis.

Q Joe, on Social Security, the Vice President said that the administration, of course, is putting Social Security first, but that the Republican budget does not extend Social Security by a single day.

MR. LOCKHART: Correct.

Q As I understand it, the Republicans are setting aside more money for Social Security than the administration is.

MR. LOCKHART: Well, there's nothing as far as, if you look at the way the actuaries look at this, ours is extended it out to 2055. But they have done

nothing. They've sort of said, well, we'll put it aside for Social Security,
but they've done nothing to lock in those savings.

MR. TOIV: They haven't devoted it to the Trust Fund and actuary --

MR. LOCKHART: Yes. So none of it is locked in, or goes over to the Trust Fund. And if you look at it -- I mean, this isn't just me saying this. If you look at the actuaries, our plan extends it out to 2055, and theirs does not extend it a day.

Q So, Joe, you're saying that Republicans are playing fast and loose with Social Security?

MR. LOCKHART: I'm saying that the President has put forward a comprehensive framework for how to do this and how to lock in the savings by paying down the national debt, and the Republicans haven't taken all of the steps. They've moved -- I will grant them this. They have moved from their position of last year, toward the idea that Social Security needs to be saved, the Trust Fund needs to be extended. But they haven't taken many of the steps the President has, and we're going to have to work with them to make sure that this money goes into the Trust Fund, so that Social Security can be extended.

Q Joe, does --

Q Joe, can I ask one more on the budget before we get to something dramatically different? (Laughter.)

Q How do you know it's going to be dramatically different?

MR. LOCKHART: Wait a second. I'm in a dramatic mood. (Laughter.)

Q I will yield to the question.

Q The Republican budget contemplates, over the next decade, living within the caps. And White House officials, such as Yellen, have said that they would negotiate lifting the caps. Is that still the White House position after next year, that you would talk about lifting the caps?

MR. LOCKHART: Well, we're going to have to -- I mean, we think once you reserve the bulk of the surplus for Social Security and Medicare, and for the USA accounts -- you have some flexibility. But they have to be locked in. This can't be something that you can walk away from the next year.

So we look forward to engaging on this as we move forward over the next couple months, but we're going to continue to make our case that you have to lock in these savings.

Q But aren't they being more fiscally responsible in saying that they

won't

lift the caps, and the White House is saying that they --

MR. LOCKHART: You know, it is hard to describe a proposal as fiscally responsible that makes the claims that this one does, which is, you know, we're

going to follow our smoke and mirrors, and cut taxes, raise spending and somehow balance the budget. But we're not going to tell you the spending we're

going to cut. This is 1980 all over again.

Q Joe, one of the things that --

MR. LOCKHART: I promised Lester.

Q Two-part, Joe. Does the President believe that Kazan should be receiving a special Oscar or not? (Laughter.) It's been in the news, Joe.

MR. LOCKHART: I know. What's the controversy?

Q He turned them all in --

MR. LOCKHART: I saw a headline. I don't know what it is.

Q He turned them all in

MR. LOCKHART: Oh, he turned them all in. (Laughter.)

Q He turned in people that he believed were sympathetic to the communists.

MR. LOCKHART: I still don't know.

Q Can you find out?

MR. LOCKHART: You know, if it comes up in conversation, I'll ask him and I'll repeat it, but I'm not going to make a special effort on that.

Q Does the President regard Paul Sarbanes of Maryland as a Senator of many good accomplishments, or not?

MR. LOCKHART: What's the trick here? (Laughter.) What did he say?

That would be a total, unqualified yes. Now, your follow-up?

Q The Chairman of -- (laughter.) I wondered if you could tell us what good accomplishment? Do you have any in mind? Because the Chairman of the Maryland Democratic Party, when asked about this, said, let me get back to you, I'm not familiar with the Senator's record. And that led to talk that Mrs. Clinton may run for Senate from Maryland, rather than in New York, where the latest polls have Giuliani 10 points ahead, and where the New York press corps are really savage. How about this, Joe?

MR. LOCKHART: I think Senators --

Q Is she thinking about Maryland?

MR. LOCKHART: Let me answer the first part first, and then use the first answer to figure out what I'm going to say to the second part.

Senator Sarbanes has had a distinguished career over the last several decades. He's been a leader on the Banking Committee, as far as modernizing our financial institutions in this country, and he's been a strong voice in the field of foreign policy, as far as the importance of America engaging around the world.

I don't have the slightest idea on the Maryland to New York to back to Maryland.

Q See, now you wish you'd called on me, don't you? (Laughter.)

MR. LOCKHART: I don't know. This hasn't been bad.

Q Can you assure us -- just to wind this up, can you assure us that --

MR. LOCKHART: You are winding me up, here.

Q Can you assure us there are no plans to make Sarbanes the Ambassador to Greece or a federal judge? He's known as the Senator from Athens, now.

MR. LOCKHART: Yes. It would be news to Ambassador Burns, who's doing a fine

job there. I haven't heard either of those things speculated about.

Q Will Mr. Stephanopoulous become the Ambassador to Greece? (Laughter.)

Q Tee ball.

MR. LOCKHART: It's high and outside. I took that one.

Q On Africa, the ministerial is concluding today. On Capitol Hill, there are

concerns being expressed -- Phil Crane this morning said both Jesses, with regard to the Hope for Africa Act, there's concern that the special envoy to

Africa -- Jesse Jackson Senior -- may not be fully on board with the administration, in light of the legislation of the Hope for Africa Act sponsored by Representative Jesse Jackson Junior.

MR. LOCKHART: Right.

Q Is the President confident that his special envoy is fully behind the administration's position on the --

MR. LOCKHART: I have heard nothing that would indicate to me otherwise, to the contrary on that.

Q One more on Africa. Does the President have any plans to go to Nigeria for

Obasango's inauguration?

MR. LOCKHART: I think we have received an invitation to attend the inauguration. I think the President is honored to get it. The President and the U.S. government has been very involved in facilitating the shift from military to civilian rule. I'm certain that a high-level and appropriate delegation will attend, but I know of no decision on whether the President himself will attend.

Q Jimmy Carter went the last time Obasango was President in Nigeria.

MR. LOCKHART: He did.

Q Do you have any reaction to the decision about the families of the downed Cuban pilots?

MR. LOCKHART: I actually just heard about that as I was walking out. We have not had a chance to review and I'm going to withhold any comment until the appropriate people have had a chance to review the decision.

Q Would you have something tomorrow or --

MR. LOCKHART: Yes, I would expect so.

Q Back to Capitol Hill. House Resolution 35 condemns the CCC and urges members of the House of Representatives not to support or endorse the group.

Would this action cause some repercussions, especially since some federal

lawmakers over there thought to be a part of the group even --

MR. LOCKHART: I'm personally not familiar with the actual language in the resolution. But from what's been told to me, it's a resolution designed to speak out against racism and bigotry and I can't imagine that there's a single member in either the House or the Senate who wouldn't want to speak out on that subject.

Q Also, Minister Louis Farrakhan is said to be gravely ill. What is the White House's reaction to Minister Farrakhan and all of his years of work? Do you consider him a world leader?

MR. LOCKHART: I'm certain that this is a difficult time, if these reports are accurate about his illness, for himself and his family. But as far as his position as a world leader, I think the White House and many others view many of his statements as disqualifying for a true position as a world leader.

Q Joe, on Africa, The London Economist reported prior to the President's trip to Africa that there may be a motivation both in going to Uganda and because of Minister Farrakhan's influence in Sudan and in Libya and that region, and I think The Economist reported quite

bluntly that the President's motivation for going to Africa might be to blunt the growing influence of Minister Farrakhan in Africa. So is he disqualified from importance in Africa, as well as importance --

MR. LOCKHART: If the article asserted that, the article would be inaccurate.

Q Joe, can I ask one more question about Social Security? The Vice President's remarks suggested today that the administration is going to launch a new attack on Republicans over budget issues, particularly over entitlement matters, Social Security and Medicare. And one of the things he said was that Republicans were putting Social Security last. Is it your view that that's what the Republicans are doing?

MR. LOCKHART: I think what they're doing is putting tax cuts first and refusing to lock in how you can dedicate the savings to Social Security. They're not even mentioning Medicare. And talking about increasing spending without talking about how they'll pay -- excuse me, increasing spending on some things and balancing the budget without talking about what areas they might cut in. So I think the debate in some ways has moved from last year, but in some ways, it hasn't, which is tax cuts first and we'll worry about all the

other

problems later.

Q Isn't this a dangerous political tactic? Because the fear all along on Republicans has been that Democrats, if they committed themselves to anything,

the Democrats would go after them over Social Security and Medicare.

Doesn't

this suggest and throw out a warning that the administration may well do that,

that Vice President Gore may well do that?

MR. LOCKHART: No, I think we have reason to believe we can make progress on

Social Security, but what we need to do is start making hard decisions and making commitments. And what we don't need is vague budget outlines that don't

add up, that are more of a political statement than a statement about how we're

going to keep this economy expanding into the next century.

Q Joe, you said earlier that once the money is locked in for Social Security

and for Medicare then you have some flexibility with the rest of the budget.

But my recollection was that the President had also added another condition,

which was the long-term Social Security program reform. Is that still a precondition before any additional spending, that there be long-term --

MR. LOCKHART: We clearly have some decisions to make as we move through this year, and this will all move concurrently with the way the budget process works. But there are some issues we're going to have to face as far as Social Security and probably more immediately, Medicare. So, no, I don't think that's changed.

Q On China, yesterday Gary Samore at the NSC acknowledged that the White House never briefed the International Relations or the Foreign Relations Committees in 1997 on the Los Alamos investigation as they were negotiating to certify that China was no longer was a nuclear proliferation risk. Is that to say that the theft of nuclear secrets from the weapons labs is not considered a proliferation issue?

MR. LOCKHART: No. I don't think it says that, but I think what it does say is that the appropriate committee to brief on intelligence matters are the Intelligence Committees.

Q But the International Relations Committee says that, in order to get certified for the U.S.-China nuclear cooperation agreement, the International Relations Committee was supposed to be briefed on all aspects of proliferation policy, to get signed off.

MR. LOCKHART: Well, again, I think it's our view that the appropriate places to do these intelligence-matter briefings is with the Intelligence Committee.

Q What was the President's reaction to Senator Lott's claim that while he was in Congress he invented the paper clip?

MR. LOCKHART: What was his reaction?

Q And other claims made by other former members of the Senate?

MR. LOCKHART: He thought it was a real knee-slapper. (Laughter.)

Q Speaking of knee-slapper, what did the President think of the Vice President's claim to have invented the Internet, Joe? Was he encouraged by that? Stimulated? Has he had any discussions about this?

MR. LOCKHART: Not that I know of.

Q You mean he treated it with a cold silence, Joe?

MR. LOCKHART: I haven't discussed it with him.

Q Joe, on the medicinal marijuana report from yesterday. I know you had a discussion about the scientific aspects of it, but somehow the way part of it has been reported, it just gets out to the American public that medicinal marijuana

that

this message will undermine your advertising campaign to cut back on pot?

MR. LOCKHART: Well, we certainly hope not. And I would hope that those who

do the reporting would take some care with this. I mean, this is a scientific

issue. And I -- looking at some of the headlines, you would take the wrong impression from the report.

The report, I thought, was clear about the medicinal value of some of the compounds in marijuana. It talked about the need for further research to find

some delivery system that was effective, because they didn't believe that smoking marijuana was an effective delivery system. And that's how this important issue should be debated, based on the science.

Q Joe, some Congressmen oppose the exhibition game between the Cuban national

team and the Orioles. This morning, you said the White House sees no problems

anymore?

MR. LOCKHART: I think there were some difficult issues that had to be worked

out, to make sure that this was truly what we call people-to-people contact,

that somehow the Cuban government didn't benefit from the proceeds of this game; those were worked out and I think the U.S. government looks forward to

the games taking place.

Q Joe, some Republicans have said the Chinese espionage scandal is at least partially responsible for President Clinton and congressional Democrats reversing course on the issue of missile defense. How do you respond to that, and if that's not the case, explain why not?

MR. LOCKHART: It's not. That is an example of the kind of partisan shot that I was talking about the other day. I think Mr. Steinberg here laid out yesterday why we could come to some agreement on national missile defense based on the position we've had and the position that the Cochran bill took. There were several important amendments passed that met our concerns, and there's no evidence that there's any connection between the two and it's part of the game playing that may seem fun to some, but may also have a destructive course on a very important foreign policy issue.

Q We had a record trade deficit in January. Are you concerned that the rising -- could put any drag on the economy?

MR. LOCKHART: Well, obviously, when you have trade numbers like we have, like

we saw this month, they're worth spending time on and trying to understand. I think in large part, the numbers reflect the combination of the strength of the American economy -- there's strong consumer spending going on in our country -- and the weakness around the world, from Asia to Latin America.

I think it brings into focus the President's call for a new international financial architecture that he talked about in his Council on Foreign Relations

speech last year, and also the call that's come from the President and the Secretary of the Treasury for countries like Japan and countries in the European Union to do more on stimulating domestic growth.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END 1:47 P.M. EST

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TEXT:

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

September 28, 1999

As Prepared for Delivery

REMARKS BY SAMUEL R. BERGER

ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

AFRICARE DINNER

WASHINGTON, DC

September 27, 1999

Let me begin by thanking C. Payne Lucas for bringing us together tonight and for all Africare does to help African communities stand on their feet. Africare's approach - listening to local needs, responding to local initiatives, complementing, rather than preempting local efforts, has become America's approach to Africa in the last several years - but you've been at it for almost 30 years. Rev. Tutu, Mrs. Machel, Secretary Herman, Brady Anderson, Ambassador Young, Ambassador McHenry, Al Freeman, members of the diplomatic community, members of Congress:

A year and a half ago, during his trip to Africa, the President went to a school outside of Kampala. Surrounded by African children and teachers and community leaders - he said it was time for America to see Africa with new eyes . . . to build a relationship based on mutual respect and mutual interest. I would like to take this opportunity, surrounded by African friends and friends of Africa, to speak about what we are doing to give life to those words.

Let me begin by talking about where we've been. As the President also said in Uganda last year, America has not, throughout history, always done right by Africa.

Let's look just at this century. During the Cold War, America's choice of friends in Africa was too often determined almost exclusively by the strength of their opposition to communism, and not by their commitment to democracy and development. Much of Africa became a battleground -- between tyrants pretending to be anti-communists to receive our aid and tyrants pretending to be Marxists to receive Soviet aid. We did far too little to help develop the potential of Africa's people and Africa's economies.

You could argue that we really didn't have an Africa policy then. We had a global policy of containing communism that saw the entire continent through East-West eyes, not through U.S.-African eyes. It did little to advance our interests in Africa or the interests of Africans.

This President has set out to change the lens through which we see Africa, to change the very contours of our relationship. He has encouraged Americans to view Africa in all its diversity: to face squarely the continuing tragedies of famine and conflict and genocide, but also to see the progress most Africans are making toward freedom and peace, and the promise it represents. We have sought to build a partnership with the agents of that progress -- not to do something 'for' them, but to work with them to advance the interests we share.

Our interests are clear. As the bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi made clear, the battle against terrorism must be waged in and with Africa. The same is true for the fight against proliferation -- both Sudan and Libya have tried to obtain weapons of mass destruction - and for the struggle to protect the global environment. Few Americans are aware that we now obtain between 12 and 14 percent of our oil from Africa, and that this could increase to 20 percent over the next decade. Africa is also home to over 700 million producers and consumers -- we have been missing out on their contributions for too long and should seize every opportunity to bring them into the global mainstream. Finally, let's remember that our country is trusted to lead in the world in part because we are trusted to do right by others. We cannot maintain our influence or our strength if we cynically shut our eyes to the problems and promise of an entire continent.

It was to advance these interests that the President traveled last year to

Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, Botswana, and Senegal. That extraordinary journey addressed virtually every issue on our agenda with Africa, from promoting trade and investment, to defending human rights and democracy, to advancing economic development, to preventing conflict and genocide.

You may have heard recently that some members of Congress have criticized that trip as a waste of money. Let me say loud and clear that the most comprehensive and serious trip to Africa of any sitting President in history was one of the best investments America could make. It was all the more successful because we took with us members of the cabinet and Congress who are working with Africans to help realize the continent's economic promise, and leaders from the private sector who are now investing in Africa's future.

If the complaint is that our Administration made Africa more than just a refueling stop on the way to someplace else, I am proud to say we are guilty as charged. I wouldn't be at all surprised if we do it again.

This is a moment when our engagement with Africa can make a difference. In the last decade, more than half of Africa's nations have embarked on transitions to democracy, none more hopeful than this year's transition in Nigeria. Economies that were shrinking in the 1980's are now growing at rates of 4 percent or more. More Africans than ever have the opportunity to improve their lives, the power to shape their destiny and the right to hold their leaders accountable. But Africa's new democracies still face enormous obstacles, many inherited from a past when their development was arrested by external design and internal failures. What are those obstacles, and what can we do, in partnership with Africans, to help overcome them?

First, let's recognize that barriers to trade are barriers to advancement for Africans who risk being left behind by the global economy. That's why the President launched a Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity, and why he has worked with the Congress to urge passage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

Will trade and investment alone eliminate poverty in Africa? Of course not. But without it, Africans will never have what the people of virtually every other region in the world increasingly depend upon: a chance to market the products of their labor and creativity beyond their borders. That is what Africans have told us they want and need. By passing the Growth and Opportunity Act, this Congress can make clear that, just like with the rest of the world, America wants and needs a deeper trade relationship with Africa.

A second obstacle to Africa's progress is the burden of debt. That's why we and our G-7 partners have adopted a plan to reduce by up to 70 percent the outstanding debt of the world's poorest countries in a way that will free resources for education and health. Enough pledges have already been made to allow the first group of nations to start seizing the benefits of this program now.

A third obstacle is the lack of access to education and to the technology that unlocks the door to the information economy. That's why we have launched an Education Initiative, to support primary schools in Africa, to improve the prospects of women and girls, to link African and American educational institutions, and to improve access to the Internet.

A fourth obstacle to development is chronic disease. Over the next 10

years in Africa, AIDS is expected to kill more people than all the wars of the 20th century, combined. Each year, diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, and pneumonia leave millions of children without parents and millions of parents without children. Yet today, only 2% of all global biomedical research is devoted to the major killers of the developing world. This is both an injustice and an economic calamity for Africa, for no nation can defeat poverty if it is overwhelmed by the needs of the ill.

That's why we have asked the Congress for an additional \$100 million to fight, with Africa, the epidemic of AIDS. And in his address to the UN last Tuesday, the President committed the United States to a concerted effort to accelerate the development and delivery of vaccines for diseases like malaria, AIDS, and TB, working with the private sector to create incentives for medical research that will save lives, and liberate nations from this crippling burden.

But the greatest obstacle to Africa's progress may well be the persistence of conflict, including in Sierra Leone, the Congo, Sudan, Angola and between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

These wars have different causes, but common features. They have brought into stark relief the need for stronger institutions in Africa to ensure that disputes are resolved by peaceful means. Unregulated borders are vulnerable to the spread of small arms and illegal trade; judicial institutions are often too weak to settle grievances and satisfy claims for justice; the regional organizations necessary to guarantee collective security are only now coming into their own.

But something new and promising has also begun to emerge from the horror of these conflicts. In each case, African nations have taken the lead to work

for peace. And their leadership has allowed us to address these conflicts in partnership with African leaders and institutions. Instead of facing a choice between abdicating America's responsibility and imposing America's solutions, we have a golden opportunity to support African efforts to stop wars and save lives.

In seizing that opportunity, our first step has been to work with Africans to help strengthen their capacity to unite for peace. For example, we have launched the African Crisis Response Initiative, which has already trained over 4000 African peacekeepers, some of whom have been deployed to Sierra Leone. And we have launched the Great Lakes Justice Initiative, to help strengthen legal institutions and to counter the culture of impunity that has plagued that region.

We have also tried to play an active supporting role when African nations have taken responsibility to end conflicts on their continent.

In Sierra Leone, for example, West African nations took the lead when their peacekeeping organization, ECOMOG, intervened and its leaders finally forged a peace agreement. But I am proud that throughout the process, the United States played a helpful role. Over the last decade, we have provided over \$100 million to ECOMOG. Our Special Envoy for Africa Rev. Jesse Jackson, with Ambassador Howard Jeter, facilitated the signing of a cease fire without preconditions, paving the way for the agreement the regional countries forged in July.

In the Congo, the parties to the conflict forged a cease fire, under the leadership of President Chiluba of Zambia, and with the involvement of Presidents Mbeki of South Africa, Mkapa of Tanzania and Chissano of Mozambique. But here too, I am pleased with the role we played.

For the last year, former Congressman and now Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Howard Wolpe, has flown more than 20 missions in the region, trying to keep the nations talking about common interests, even as they fought over their differences. For the last several months, quietly and behind the scenes, we have facilitated a dialogue between opponents in this tragic war.

Within days of the clashes last month between Ugandan and Rwandan forces in the Congo, a US team worked with those countries to reach a cease fire and an agreement on securing rebel signatures to the Congo-wide peace agreement. And that agreement reflects the dialogue we've had with the region since last fall about the need for a new regional security arrangement in Central Africa, and for greater citizen participation in shaping Congo's future.

The OAU has taken the lead to resolve the deadly conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and thanks to their efforts peace is closer today than at any time in the last fifteen months. My predecessor Tony Lake has made a half dozen trips to the region on our behalf to support this process. The President has actively engaged President Isaias and Prime Minister Meles.

On Thursday, we will be holding the first session of the US-Angolan Consultative Commission, which will address among other things that country's continuing conflict. We are working with the UN to strengthen enforcement of multilateral sanctions against UNITA, and to find ways to cut off the illegal trade in diamonds that has fueled this and other African wars.

Finally, in Sudan, we have taken the lead, working with our European and

African partners, to revitalize the regional peace process led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. We recently appointed a Special Envoy, Harry Johnston, to redouble our engagement.

In each of these cases, our role has been to help Africans find African solutions to African conflicts, and, perhaps as important, to do so in a way that strengthens the regional capacity to prevent conflicts in the future. I know many of you are asking if, in the wake of Kosovo and East Timor, America and others should intervene more directly in Africa's conflicts. Let me try to provide an answer.

First of all, I do not believe that the international community's actions in Kosovo and East Timor shift our attention from Africa's conflicts. On the contrary. They have focused the whole world's attention on the need to strengthen our collective capacity to respond to death and suffering on a massive scale - wherever it may happen. This was the main subject of debate at the UN General Assembly last week. And everyone engaged in that debate understands one of the main challenges we face lies in Africa.

Let's be clear about what that challenge is. Africans are not asking us to respond to conflicts such as those in Sierra Leone, or the Congo, or Ethiopia-Eritrea, with NATO bombing, or by doing the job for them.

Africans are asking us to recognize that their crises are not merely African problems -- any more than Kosovo was purely a European problem or East Timor was purely an Asian problem. Africans are asking the international community to lend tangible support when they take appropriate action to address these crises, or keep the peace. Africans are asking for help in building the institutional capacity to sustain the leadership they are willing to provide. And they are asking the United States in

particular whether we are prepared to provide a share of the resources needed to back up the peace we help broker.

The President is deeply committed to meeting this challenge. In his speech last week to the UN, he made clear that neither America nor any other country can do everything, or be everywhere. But he also said: "Simply because we have different interests in different parts of the world does not mean we can be indifferent to the destruction of innocents in any part of the world." He said that "when we are faced with deliberate, organized campaigns to murder whole peoples, or expel them from their land, the care of victims violence."

That's why we supported the deployment of additional observers to Sierra Leone in July. It is why we are actively engaged in shaping a peacekeeping mission in that country, a mission that must include ECOMOG, the African force that took the lead when it was time to intervene, and the United Nations, which can mobilize the support of the whole world.

It's why we supported UN Secretary-General Annan in July when he swiftly deployed military liaison officers to the Congo. We will work with the region to consolidate the Congo agreement, which provides not only a cease fire but a blueprint for the region's long-term collective security.

When we reach an agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia ? and we must, because the consequences of another round of war would be tragic and devastating -- the United States will directly support the planned OAU mission to keep the peace.

We can and must do more to meet these challenges, and to do that we must pose a challenge to ourselves.

First, we need leadership. I can assure you that President Clinton's commitment to a new relationship between the United States and Africa is strong and deep-rooted.

Second, our Congress must recognize that it is in our national interest to invest in Africa's future, and to provide the resources necessary to keep the peace and prevent the wars.

Congress has been willing to fund aid to the victims of conflict and famine in Africa. Right now, our spending on humanitarian assistance for a handful of African crises is twice as high as our spending on development for the entire continent. It is more than 10 times as high as our spending on peacekeeping. And this year's spending bill for foreign operations cuts our request for development assistance to Africa by more than 40 percent. We will fight that, because we'd save money as well as lives if we invested more in prevention.

Third, we need the continuing commitment of the American people to their own partnership with the people of Africa. The friends of Africa gathered here tonight, as individuals and as participants in the National Summit on Africa, the Constituency for Africa, and the untiring campaign of C. Payne Lucas and Africare, are key to our collective success.

I've described to you our efforts to make good on the promise of a new partnership with Africa. We are headed in the right direction on a long road. I ask for your continuing support and leadership in keeping us moving down that road.

History provides no guarantees, but neither does it place artificial

barriers on what we can achieve. The last decade of this century has seen so many hard earned miracles, from the end of the Cold War, to the spread of democracy to more than half the world's people, to the birth of freedom in South Africa and Nigeria. Surely, if all this is possible, Africa can overcome its difficulties and find its way into the global mainstream -- with peace and rising prosperity for all its people.

We are united here today not just by our hope, but by our belief that this will happen if we seize the opportunities before us. And we are united by our conviction that working with Africans to reach that goal is not only right, but right for us.

Thank you.

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