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nations and our two great peoples march toward the future together, shaping those new horizons of hope and opportunity for France, for America and for the world.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:47 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Bernadette Chirac, wife of President Chirac.

The President's News Conference With President Chirac of France

February 1, 1996

President Clinton. Good afternoon. Please be seated.

President Chirac and I have just concluded a very good discussion. Let me begin by saying how much the United States appreciates the President's strong leadership and the vital role France is playing all around the world. This is a time for the world's great democracies to reach out, not retreat. Many of the problems we face, including terrorism, international organized crime and drugs, have no respect for borders. And the extraordinary opportunities we enjoy to shape a safer and more prosperous future for our people can be realized only if we stay engaged and if we work together.

France and the United States are doing that, building on our historic alliance to meet the challenges of this new era. NATO is a cornerstone of that alliance. The President and I spent a good deal of time discussing its present and its future. In Bosnia, all of us can see NATO's critical role in ending a terrible war and helping peace to take hold and restoring stability to the heart of Europe. President Chirac and I reviewed the impressive progress our troops are making. We agreed the mission in Bosnia is moving forward steadily, surely, and as safely as possible.

The Bosnia operation also demonstrates how well NATO can work with Europe's new democracies. Countries that were our Warsaw Pact adversaries less than a decade ago now are serving side by side with our troops for peace. This is a tribute to the decision that we made to reach out to them through the Partnership For Peace and by holding out the possibility of opening NATO's doors to new partners. We agreed that NATO must and will continue its steady progress toward enlargement and will strengthen its relationship with Russia.

Let me say again, I told President Chirac how pleased we in the United States are with France's recent decision to move closer to the military side of NATO, a move that will strengthen our alliance and a move that is very, very important to the United States. I also welcomed the French efforts to build a stronger European defense identity within NATO. This will allow our European allies to deal more effectively with future security problems and spread the costs and risks of our leadership for peace, while preserving the basic structure of NATO.

The Franco-American partnership extends well beyond NATO and, indeed, well beyond Europe: We've seen it in Cambodia, where our cooperation was vital to the success of democratic elections; we see it in Haiti, where French gendarmes are taking part in the international police force and playing a critical role; and in Africa, both our countries today are working to help people realize their tremendous economic and political potential. Today President Chirac and I agreed to work together on preventive diplomacy in Africa to begin to head off conflicts before they start.

Finally we focused on a series of new threats to the safety of our citizens that demand a coordinated response: the spread of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, international organized crime, drug trafficking, and of course, the threats to the global environment.

I welcome France's decision to end nuclear testing in the Pacific and its strong support for signing a zero-yield comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty this year. That is a project we can and we will work on together, and I believe we will succeed. As I said in the State of the Union, the comprehensive test ban treaty is one of my highest priorities as President. It will dramatically reduce the nuclear threat to every American and to people all over the world. Having France as a strong partner in this crusade significantly increases the prospects for success.

Let me add also that we greatly appreciate France's offer to join and contribute to the

Korean Peninsula Energy Development Corporation, the organization that will provide alternative energy to North Korea as it freezes and then dismantles its dangerous nuclear weapons programs.

This past year terrorists have taken lives of people in the very heart of Paris and in the very heart of America. The President and I agreed that our law enforcement officials can and must work even more closely together, sharing their experiences and their expertise until we succeed in defeating terrorism. We'll look at new ways to stop the flow of drugs to our streets and the spread of organized crime by backing down—cracking down harder on money laundering and making it easier to extradite criminals.

Finally let me say again to the President, I want to thank you for your long and consistent leadership in Bosnia, for the sacrifices made by the French there, especially the French soldiers. And I want to tell you how much it means to me and to all Americans that today you presented the Legion of Honor to the families of the three American diplomats who were killed there in the search—ultimately the successful search—for a peace agreement.

This is symbolic of the friendship that the United States has with France. You are our oldest ally. I thought it quite appropriate today that we had your welcoming ceremony on the lawn of the White House in full view of the Jefferson Memorial, where Thomas Jefferson was our first envoy—the symbol of our friendship, our alliance with France.

Now the United States has another forceful and energetic partner for peace and progress in President Chirac. Let me invite him to make a statement, welcome him again to the United States, and then we will take your questions.

Mr. President.

President Chirac. President Clinton has more or less said everything there was to be said—because, anyway, everything that we said he said wonderfully. It was all that.

I just have some brief remarks. First of all, a sentiment of gratitude for the way I've been welcomed here—and I deeply appreciated this—welcomed in the White House and in Congress. And secondly, there was a very fundamental agreement between us on most of the subjects that we talked about. And I think the most outstanding example is Bosnia, where the action undertaken by President Clinton has been decisive for a peace agreement that a few months before that, no one could really have imagined.

France was not absent, naturally, from this effort that led to this. And if the country manages to regain equilibrium in peace and come back to peace, this will be, to a large extent, due to the President of the United States.

And I also wanted to mention two problems here which, among others, I'm deeply concerned about. First of all, the question of the necessary reform of the organization of the Atlantic Alliance in order to adapt it to the needs of our time. We can, I think, expect the very best in terms of peace from that organization as long as the organization has adapted to the new circumstances, and secondly, my second point is the fact that we really must understand how absolutely essential it is that we should not disengage ourselves from development aid.

Many countries in the world are in the process of being excluded while they're precisely making very substantial efforts in order to try to move towards democracy and the market economy, so we must help them in that effort. Those were the two messages that I wish to express today to Congress, to the Congress.

Now lastly, I felt very deep emotion in awarding this morning to three wonderful women, wonderful ladies, the Legion of Honor in the name of the people of France and the Republic of France, the three widows of three great American diplomats who gave their very best efforts to help achieve peace and, alas, lost their life in that country of Bosnia.

Well, those are some thoughts I wanted to share with you, but now of course I'm ready to answer questions.

President Clinton. We'll call on an American journalist, and then President Chirac will call on a French journalist, and then we'll alternate back and forth until we run out of time.

Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International].

1996 Election and Sanctions on Iran and Iraq

Q. Mr. President, I have a question for each President. You have had a lot of trouble with the Republican Congress, and at the same time you seem to be telling the Democrats it's every man for himself, that you will not campaign for a Democratic Congress, that it's self-defeating. So I'd like you to comment on that.

And President Chirac, the U.N. says that a half million Iraqi babies have died of malnutrition since 1990. Are you trying to persuade President Clinton to speed up the sanctions on Iraq and Iran?

President Clinton. Let me answer my question first. First of all, who am I to criticize people who ask and report questions, but no one who was in the conversation thought that that's what I said. I made it very clear that I want more Democrats elected to Congress; I will work for them. I worked hard for Senator Wyden in Oregon. And I think you'd have to look a long time to find a President who's worked any harder to help his party's candidates for Congress than I have.

I was asked a very precise question. I was asked whether I would go to the American people in 1996 and say, "I cannot do anything as President, I cannot achieve anything as President unless you give me a Democratic Congress." And my answer to that is, was, and I will say again: We have had lots of experience with Presidents trying that argument. And it has never worked. Not ever. Not once.

The American people want arguments presented to them about their lives and the ideas and the principles at stake. Will I campaign for Democrats? Yes, I have, and yes, I will. And I have organized my affairs so that I will be able to do quite a bit of that. Do I want more Democrats to get elected to Congress? Of course, I do. How do I expect it to happen? Not by telling the American people I need it, but by saying, "Here's where we stand. Here's what the differences are. Here's what the future is. I hope you will choose the same choice that I'm making."

Q. You don't think you have coattails?

President Clinton. I didn't say that. I said the coattails that come will come because people agree that we have better ideas for them and their lives. That's why. That's the argument. And every time a President in the entire history of the country has tried to personalize the election and say, "I need this for me," it has never worked. The American people vote based on what they believe in is best for themselves and their families. They exercise their judgment. So you have to put forward a set of ideas.

When you put forward a set of ideas and all people say that they agree with these ideas, then you have a good chance to prevail. That's what happened in '92 in a way that I like. That's what happened in '94 in a way that I didn't like. And that's what I hope will happen in '96 in a way that I like. I was responding to the literal way I was asked the question, not to my fidelity to my party or my involvement with the campaign efforts.

Mr. President, you want to answer the question you were asked?

President Chirac. Well, I would simply like to say, my dear lady, that at least the children who—for me, children who die of hunger is something that is unbearable, whatever their nationality. It's something that we just cannot countenance. That being said, I never, never uttered the sentence that you attribute to me. I might have done that, but I didn't.

Now, I think concerning Iraq, because in fact that was what you wanted me to say something about. I think that there is an international organization or an international rule, if you like. There is Security Council and there are certain requirements that were laid down, in particular, Resolution 986. And my wish would be is that that resolution be implemented by Iraq. And if it is implemented by Iraq then, yes, I do hope that the sanctions will then be lifted so that there should be fewer small children lacking in the basic requirements.

NATO

Q. A question to President Chirac. Pending the necessary reform of NATO, can France take a new further step to work closer to the military committee of NATO, the military side, as has just been said, and then become a full member?

President Chirac. I don't know if everyone has understood or heard the question. I don't know if it has been translated.

No, for the moment, there's, not necessary for yet a further step, no. What's important now is that France should talk with its partners about the reform which, in our view, is essential, concerning the military organization of the alliance.

I'd like to say that from looking at that—I'm not talking about the past. I mean, the past is the past. It's behind us. But with some vision of the future, in the way we see the future. We—in fact are very close to the thinking of most of our great European partners, both concerning the diagnosis and how we should carry out the reforms. And today I was able to note that this viewpoint was to a very large extent shared by the Americans. And I said, "Well, I am delighted at that."

Budget Negotiations and the Debt Limit

Q. A few questions on the budget, sir. With little sign of life on the budget talks, are your agency heads drawing up plans to lay off or fire employees to grapple with a series of belt-tightening continuing resolutions for the rest of the year? And secondly, could there be a hint of breakthrough in the Speaker's comments today that he's considering a smaller, shorter lasting——

President Clinton. First, let me say the most hopeful thing that has happened is the statement by the Speaker and Mr. Armey and Senator Dole that they intend to seek an extension to the debt limit through the middle of March. And I applaud that. Secondly, there have been a number of statements made which make me believe that the situation is far from gone. I still believe that there is a good chance that if we keep working at it, we can get a balanced budget agreement. So I think the atmosphere is good. I think the attitude has been basically constructive, and I still am quite hopeful about it.

So the answer to your question is, no, I do not foresee there to be mass layoffs and draconian continuing resolutions.

President Chirac. Would there be a French lady, perhaps? Yes? We also have lady journalists. Please speak French. [*Laughter*]

Middle East Peace Process

Q. It's a question to President Clinton. I wanted to ask him if he thinks a peace agreement will take place between Syria and Israel before the summer, and do you share the opinion of President Chirac that Lebanon should not have to pay the price of peace? And did you talk about this, and how do you see the future of Lebanon after all of this?

President Clinton. Yes, I share the opinion of President Chirac that Lebanon should not be asked to pay the price of the peace agreement. I do not believe that the independence and future of Lebanon should be sacrificed, nor do I think it will be.

Now having said that, I believe that the only satisfactory resolution for Lebanon over the long run is, first, an agreement between Israel and Syria. I think a good peace agreement between Israel and Syria will make possible the right kind of future for Lebanon. As to when it will happen, I can't say. That is up to the parties and will be a function of developments within Israel and Syria, as well as the progress of the developments over some very difficult issues in the talks.

But I can tell you this: I believe that President Asad is genuinely committed to the right kind of peace. And I believe Prime Minister Peres is genuinely committed to the right kind of peace. And I see their military leaders talking. I see others reaching out, trying to work through the complex issues that are still left to be resolved. And so I'm quite hopeful. But the United States does not impose timetables on others, nor do we project them. All we try to do is to help the parties make peace. The timetable, like everything else, is up to them.

1996 Election

Q. Mr. President, your spokesman frequently tells us that you don't really feel yourself to be in a campaign mode, but yet tomorrow you're heading to New Hampshire. Are you trying to have it both ways?

President Clinton. Sure. Doesn't everyone? [*Laughter*]

Q. And which of these incarnations will we see in New Hampshire tomorrow? And will you answer Senator Dole and the other Republican leaders or candidates who have been saying since the State of the Union that

you've been talking from the right but governing to the left?

President Clinton. I think that's self-evidently not true. Of course, you know, sometimes I think it depends on how they define the left. I'm still a little to the left of Attila the Hun, I guess. It depends on how they define left and right. [*Laughter*]

But I believe that the most important thing I can do this year is to do my job. And I believe it is my first responsibility. I believe that I can present myself to the American people as a candidate without completely undermining my ability to do my job. And that's what I'm going to try to do. But it would be inappropriate for me not to go to New Hampshire and Iowa before the first caucus and the first primary, and to give an accounting to the people there in a more direct fashion. That's what I'm going to do. I don't know that the arguments I will make and the statements I will make to be that much different than I would if I were here in Washington, but I think they're entitled to see the President show up there, and I'm going to show up, try to convince them to be for me.

President Chirac. I'd like to add something of this particular issue, if I may. If I've understood carefully, if the interpretation has been correct—and I have no doubt about that—President Clinton has said that he was to the left to Attila. Well, I didn't feel that this was aimed at me, quite honestly—[*laughter*]—whatever certain French journalists may feel about the subject.

President Clinton. I'm not at all sure I'm to the left of President Chirac. [*Laughter*] That was good. [*Laughter*] That was good. Thanks.

Q. I have a question for both Presidents. My first question to you, Mr. President. It seems—in English for President; and then French, President Chirac. [*Laughter*]

President Clinton. Are you trying to have it both ways? [*Laughter*]

President Chirac. Yes, all your friends already know you speak English, so now you speak French, right? [*Laughter*]

Isolationism

Q. Mr. President, it would appear that your understanding, agreement with President Chirac, it seems that you get on with him much more than Mr. Chirac can get on with the Republicans in the Congress who tend to be isolationists. Would you agree with that, and would President Chirac agree with that statement?

President Clinton. Well, I hope he wouldn't agree with that statement, because it would not be in France's interest to get involved in our domestic politics. But let me say the United States, throughout our history, because of our relative geographic isolation from the turbulence that has gripped Europe in the 20th Century, that gripped Asia in the 20th Century and before, has often had periods of isolationism. We departed from that at the end of World War II, to wage with you in partnership the cold war.

So it should not surprise anyone that, at the end of the cold war, when the imminent threat of a standoff with a nuclear superpower has lessened, that the historic isolationist impulses have reasserted themselves. I think the more important thing is that there is a struggle within both parties not to let that happen.

As President, I can speak with one voice; even though the Republicans may vote together almost all of the time in the Congress, that is not possible for them or even for my Democratic allies in the Congress. So I believe one of my most important jobs is to try to persuade Americans of both parties not to return to isolationism, not to abandon our responsibilities to international development, something the President called on the Congress to meet today, and I would like to see this become America's commitment, and not a partisan one.

I will say, I have received a lot of support from Republicans for my foreign policy initiatives, even though most of them oppose what we were trying to do in Bosnia, for example. I don't want this to become a partisan issue. I want America to be Europe's partner for peace and democracy and freedom without regard to which party is dominating our politics here.

We are building a new consensus for that, and our building job is not over. But I don't think that it should become a part of France's concern in terms of the internal politics of the United States.

President Chirac. Yes, I certainly wouldn't wish to interfere in any way in domestic policy of the United States. While I can say that I get on very well with Bill Clinton, I say that I also got on very well with George Bush. So you can draw whatever conclusions you like from that.

Flat Tax

Q. Mr. President, a lot of people are probably interested in your opinion of the Malcolm Forbes success in the polls, at least, and specifically, how do you see his flat tax? Is this something that you're looking at and something that you would endorse, because it certainly appears to have a following out there?

President Clinton. First of all, I don't know because I can't answer the question of why he's doing well, except that I know only what all of you tell me, you know, through the media I read about it. But I think that he has obviously been able to have a commanding financial lead in advertising his positions, and they're sharply formed and clear.

And I think the flat tax has a lot of appeal to a lot of Americans for two reasons. Number one, it seems to be simple, and a lot of people find the tax code complex. It gives them a headache to think about. And number two, it has a superficial fairness, and even if it's not fair, people say the system we've got is not fair. So maybe I would trade one unfair system for another one just for more simplicity. And of course there are some, thirdly, who believe that it would actually promote greater economic growth. I think that's a relatively small number of people.

My problem with the flat tax is twofold. Number one, I think that every one I have seen—every one I have seen—is projected to run a huge deficit for the United States Government. And when you close the gaps that would be necessary to avoid running a deficit to make it revenue neutral, every one I have seen raises taxes on Americans with incomes under $100,000. That is a level of unfairness I think is inappropriate.

Now should we do things to simplify the tax code? I think we should. We now have, oh, 57 percent of our filers file the standard deduction at 15 percent. We're trying to get millions more people filing their Federal, State, and local taxes together. We're trying to offer more people the opportunity to file electronically, file over the telephone. There may be other things we can do to make the system both fair and simpler.

But I have seen no flat tax proposal which I could support, because I can't support going back to the early years of the eighties where we have some supply side theory that explodes the deficit. That's what we're paying for now. And I can't, in good conscience, support a system that would raise taxes on all Americans with incomes under $100,000.

Foreign Aid

Q. You said that it's important that—it's a bad thing if the developed countries reduce their aid to the underdeveloped countries. You said this, President Chirac. Do you think that President Clinton understood and heard your message?

President Chirac. Yes, I did have the feeling that he really got the message. I didn't at all feel that I was preaching in the desert.

President Clinton. I agree with him entirely. I am opposed to the reduction of United States support for the IDA. Most Americans, when the Congress does that, they are playing to a popular feeling in the country that the United States spends a fortune on foreign aid. In fact, the United States only spends about one percent of its budget on foreign aid. There is no other rich country in the world that spends a smaller percent of its budget on foreign aid than we do.

Now, we can justify being a little below other countries because we spend a higher percentage of our income on defense with global defense commitments in Europe, in Japan and Korea and elsewhere in ways that benefit the whole world, and south of our border. So we could be forgiven, perhaps, for not spending the same percentage of our income and our budget on foreign aid as other countries because of what we do for global defense.

But we shouldn't be going lower. And I agree. I agree with President Chirac on that. And then, to go back to the question we were asked about isolationism, it seems to me that the biggest short-term danger we have in isolationism is on the question of not contributing that small amount of money in assistance

programs, which will prevent problems from occurring. I have received the support I needed from the United States Congress and from the American people to move in Haiti, to move in Bosnia, to be active in the Middle East and in Northern Ireland, to do what had to be done, even in crises times, in other places.

But the problem is that even in this time of balancing the budget, this is such a small part of our budget. President Chirac is absolutely right in emphasizing this to all the developed countries in the world.

Whitewater

Q. Mr. President, just a short time ago, Susan MacDougal's attorney told me that he has filed a request today to have you subpoenaed to testify. And that would be to substantiate Susan MacDougal's claims regarding David Hale and the loan. What do you think of this request, and would you want to testify on this matter if it comes to a subpoena?

President Clinton. I can't comment on it, because I don't know what the facts are. I'm sorry.

You want not ask one more question?

Q. He has issued it, though.

Bosnia

Q. This is a question to both Presidents. It was said that the military American presence in Bosnia would be limited to one year. And you certainly talked about this. So what would be advisable? What should one do at the end of one year?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, before I said that to the American people, there was a peace agreement in Dayton with a military annex that set forth precisely what the mission would be. And if I might compliment the Presidents of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia, they actually involved NATO's military leaders in developing this annex. And they said, here is what we want the military mission to be, not the economic development mission, not the civilian police mission, not the political mission—the military mission. We want you to separate the forces. We want you to maintain free movement within the country. We want you to help, insofar as you can, to facilitate that movement, and to give the parties time to let peace take hold.

And the judgment of the military commanders was that this particular mission, the military mission, should go on for no more than a year, that after a year people should be able to worry about the other things, the political, the economic, the civilian law enforcement, police-type work that had to be done. And so I believe the world community will have to find mechanisms to do that.

But at the end of the—we said about a year, the military mission, as defined in the Dayton talks and ratified in the Paris peace signing, can be completed. That's what our military people said. So all I did was to reflect the military opinion of our generals and NATO's generals.

Q. Thank you Mr. President.

President Clinton. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's 114th news conference began at 5:12 p.m., in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. President Chirac and the French journalists spoke in French, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. In his remarks, he referred to President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria, President Shimon Peres of Israel, President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia, and President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia.

Statement on Passage of the Telecommunications Reform Act of 1995

February 1, 1996

I wish to congratulate the Congress for passing the Telecommunications Reform Act of 1995. As I stated in my State of the Union Address, America needs this legislation and this kind of bipartisanship to build our economy for the 21st century, to bring educational technology into every classroom, and to help families exercise control over how the media influences their children.

For the past 3 years, my administration has promoted the enactment of a telecommunications reform bill to stimulate investment, promote competition, provide open access for all citizens to the information superhighway, strengthen and improve universal service, and provide families with technologies to help them control what kind of programs come into their homes over tele-