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July 2, 1976

PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR.VOLUNTEER:

The President met this morning with His Excellency, Habib Bourguiba, Jr. of Tunisia in the Oval Office at 10:15 a.m. for 30 minutes. Also in attendance were [Brent Scowcroft, Secretary Kissinger] on the American side, and [Ambassador Ali Hedda] on the Tunisian side. Mr. Bourguiba is the son of President Bourguiba Tunisia, and this meeting afford the President and Mr. Bourguiba the opportunity to review our bilateral relations in the spirit of the close and friendly relations which exist between the United States and Tunis. The President also thanked Mr. Bourguiba for Tunisia's participation in honor of our Bicentennial.

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Q. Was this just a courtesy call for the Bicentennial or did the two discuss substance?

A. As I indicated, they reviewed matters of interest in our bilateral relations, (and the President expressed our determination to continue an active role in the Arab-Israeli negotiations as well as rendering all appropriate assistance to help encourage a political solution).

Q. Why has Bourguiba, Jr., come to Washington? Do we invite him?

A. It is my understanding that this visit has taken place at Tunisia's initiative. Mr. Bourguiba is here as a Special Envoy of President Bourguiba. He has met with the Vice President and will be meeting with Secretary Kissinger, AID Administrator Parker, OPIC President Marshall Mays, and other senior officials as well, with some members of the Congress.

Q. What are the Tunisians doing for our Bicentennial?

A. The Tunisians have sent an exhibition of ancient Roman mosaics which are on display at the Kennedy Center, and are also giving a gold statue of an olive tree.

Q. Why weren't we told about this meeting in advance?

A. We had not been able to pin down a final time until yesterday (Thursday), so we did not have time to announce it in advance.

## Q + A on Tunisia Announcement

Q: Why is the Prime Minister coming instead of Tunisia's President Bourguiba? Constitutionally, Nouria will succeed Bourguiba as president.

A: As far as an invitation to President Bourguiba, President Ford has renewed the invitation to this long-standing friend who is always welcome to our country, but no date has been set. (This invitation was first extended by President Nixon). It was mutually agreed that Prime Minister Nouria would make an Official Visit at this time in the context of our close relations. Further questions can be directed to the Tunisians.

[Confidential FYI: Do not go beyond. The Tunisians prefer this formulation and will answer further questions. In fact, Bourguiba was scheduled to make the May 1 visit but had to regret for health reasons and expressly desired that Nouria come in his place. We do not wish to get into the health issue.

Q: Why is Nouria coming at this time? Does his visit relate to the US Middle East reassessment and will Nouria press Bourguiba's Mid East peace plan of returning to the 1947 partition plan for Palestine?

A: The US and Tunisia have a long history of close and friendly relations and the visit of a high level Tunisian official has been under discussion for some time. This will be Prime Minister Nouria's first visit as Prime Minister, and the President's first chance to meet personally with him to

discuss all matters of common interest in the context of our close relations. His visit has been under discussion for a long time and was not planned in relation to our reassessment.

Q: Do we have a Joint Commission with Tunisia and will the Joint Commission meet during the Prime Minister's visit?

A: I have nothing to give you on that at this time.

Q: Will there be a major White House dinner?

A: The President is hosting a stag working dinner.

Q: Is Mrs. Nouria accompanying the Prime Minister?

A: We understand that Mrs. Nouria may accompany the Prime Minister but check with State.

Q: Whatever happened to plans for a Tunisian-Libyan merger?

A: That is a matter between those two states but you may wish to check with State.