

Sarkozy sworn in as French president

by UPI

PARIS - Center-right leader Nicolas Sarkozy took office as president of France in ceremonies in Paris Wednesday and immediately departed for Berlin.

Sarkozy, 52, defeated his socialist rival Segolene Royal in a May 6 runoff with 53 percent of the vote, and replaced his former mentor, Jacques Chirac, who met with Sarkozy privately on Tuesday.

Among the information exchanged were France's nuclear launch codes, a BBC correspondent reported.

After military ceremonies with his family at his side, Sarkozy departed for Berlin to meet with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, demonstrating his desire to shore up European unity.

In his first national address as president, Sarkozy said France needs to lose its "fear of the future" and make progress.

"France needs to take risks and needs to take initiative," Sarkozy said.

He is expected to officially name his prime minister and Cabinet positions Thursday, and the International Herald Tribune said several senior Socialists who campaigned against him are likely to be given posts.

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