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WASHINGTON SPECIAL ACTIONS GROUP MEETING

November 29, 1973

Time and Place: 2:39 p.m. - 3:20 p.m., White House Situation Room

Subject: Middle East and Indochina, (see separate minutes for Indochina portio

Participants:

Chairman: Secretary Henry A. Kissinger

State: Kenneth Rush  
Joseph Sisco

DOD: William Clements  
Robert C. Hill

JCS: Adm. Thomas H. Moorer  
Vice Adm. John P. Weinell

CIA: William Colby  
Samuel Hoskinson

NSC Staff: Major Gen. Brent Scowcroft  
Harold Saunders  
Jeanne W. Davis

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SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

It was agreed that:

... an SR-71 photo mission would be flown over the area from the U.S. next week; thereafter the flights would originate from the UK;

... the Defense Department should evaluate the present Egyptian and Syrian military equipment situation in relation to the October 6 level;

... Defense would review the latest Israeli requests for military equipment and prepare some options including various packages of equipment and rates of delivery.

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OCT 353/2

Secretary Kissinger: (Commenting on ticker item that the Egyptians had pulled out of the military talks with the Israelis at Kilometer 101) I think this will work out all right. The Israelis made a proposal they never should have made, then they pulled back from it. I think they will stagger along until the Geneva meeting is over.

Mr. Sisco: I agree. It won't be easy, but with the Secretary talking in the area and my contacts ...

Secretary Kissinger: The Egyptians will get in touch with me if they have a real axe to grind.

Let me review the diplomacy. (to Clements) Your Saudi Arabian friends were not as upset by my press conference as you were. The intensity of their correspondence with me has not slackened. I think things are on track for the December 18 meeting in Geneva at the Foreign Minister level. Both we and the Soviets have received substantially the same reply. There is agreement in principle but everyone is nit-picking. (Israeli Foreign Minister) Gazit is the worst. He is insisting that "contending parties" be mentioned one more time in the first paragraph when it is already mentioned six times. Joe (Sisco) is trying to put it in once more. The Egyptians have made what they call "suggestions". Dobrynin told me the Syrians had mumbled something about other countries participating. We had already heard this from the British. The Egyptians are violently opposed. So, unless Egypt and Israel blow up between now and December 18, things are on track. We have used Saudi Arabia as an intermediary with the Syrians. The Saudis wanted to play that role, but the Syrians won't answer us through the Saudis. They insist on coming back directly to us. We have pretty good contacts with the Syrians now. Incidentally, the Saudis are financing Syrian resupply and rebuilding.

On oil, there is more going on than the formal statements would indicate. I don't think Yamani had full instructions. He's coming over here next week. We'll have a fuller report once the conference is set. 2

On possible countermeasures, we should review when would be the time to implement them, if ever. Let me make clear our strategy on the oil embargo. We think if we yield to the embargo in the sense of bargaining with the Saudis on the specific terms for the conference, we will get ourselves on a hopeless wicket. It would take too long. It would make the Saudis responsible for every point and they would be driven by their radicals. The British and French would be given an incentive to leapfrog

~~TOP SECRET/NODIS~~

OCT 31/3

Every producing country would set up its own OPEC for the purpose of blackmailing us. Our position with the Saudis is that they have demonstrated their power. They have moved us off our position of letting things take their natural course. We have assumed a major responsibility for the negotiations, which they wanted. Now it is their turn to help. To take action which would inflict harm on segments of the American population before we have had an opportunity to develop something in the negotiations is unacceptable to us. They may have a monopoly on oil but we have a monopoly on political progress. They have already done everything to us that they can. On the basis of regular exchanges we are having with the Saudis, I'm confident this message is getting through. All of you should stick to this line. What we are going to have to do in the negotiations will be painful and difficult for some segments of the American public. If, on top of that, we have serious fuel shortages, it will make our position impossible. If we drop a hint now and then on what actions we might take in return, it might worry them a little. We're getting through; they are definitely thinking about what we might do. When Yamani comes over next week, we should stop commiserating with him on his problem and talk about our own. I really think we are going to make it. What do you think, Bill (Colby)? Joe(Sisco)?

Mr. Colby: I agree, on the basis of the messages I have seen.

Mr. Sisco: So do I.

Secretary Kissinger: We're really making progress.

Mr. Sisco: Despite what some people may believe, I think this thing will work out.

Mr. Clements: (to Secretary Kissinger) I have great confidence in what you're trying to do. But I can't agree, as Bill (Colby) can, on the basis of messages that I haven't seen. I think there is one thing missing from your equation, and it is very difficult to understand unless you have been deeply involved in all these questions of dislocation, redistribution, etc. I can't emphasize how important the next five weeks are for the well-being and security of the United States.

Secretary Kissinger: But there is nothing we can do in five weeks to get Israel back to her 1967 borders.

Mr. Clements: I don't agree. I think we must make some responsible move toward an attempt to get that valve cracked open. If we do not have a new line of communication opened with some oil flowing to us before Christmas, that 17% short-fall the President talks about will be 23%.

OCT 353/4

Secretary Kissinger: What would be a responsible move?

Mr. Clements: Send someone over there who can look (King) Faisal in the eye and talk to him. Yamani is a ribbon clerk compared to Faisal, Fahd and Sultan.

Secretary Kissinger: Those are the people we are in touch with. What would you tell them?

Mr. Clements: Tell them that we're hurt. Tell them: You've made your point, but there is a point beyond which you can't push us without its being counterproductive. You've proved your point; that's reflected in Wall Street. Just look at the Saudi investment in relation to six weeks ago. Say, as a matter of good grace, and in your position, you should restore relations with the U.S. It is unbecoming and unproductive for you to pursue this line. You need to assume a larger stance and open the valve. From a technical standpoint, your position will be just as good a year from now, if you want to close it again.

Secretary Kissinger: I agree with that strategy. That gives me no problem.

Mr. Clements: But he can be told that this week. Nothing will be lost. And it can't be done in one hour or even in one day. You would have to give Faisal time to consult with Fahd and Sultan and mull it over in his own mind. It could be done on a very low key basis, with no advertising. We could use a cover story, and Tom (Moorer), Bob (Hill) and I have a perfect reason for being in Saudi Arabia. We've got \$2 billion worth of equipment for their Navy and National Guard on the rocks over there. We're trying to get over there to see if we could get things moving. We could play the whole thing in a very low key. If we were successful, then you (Kissinger) could come over for the closing bit. You could be the hero.

Secretary Kissinger: Now you're speaking my language!

Mr. Clements: It should be the Secretary of State who does it. If we fall, we can just ugly off into the desert. No one will ever know and there will be no embarrassment. At least we will have accomplished something on our other problem. If we don't do something on that, we will just foul up on the \$2 billion we have been trying to use as a bridge to the royal family.

Secretary Kissinger: What \$2 billion?

Mr. Clements: We've got a \$700 million Navy modernization program. Also a modernization program for the Saudi National Guard--the outfit that protects the King. These programs have been underway for more than a year and they

TOP SECRET/NODIS [redacted]

OCT 353/5

have never really gotten off dead center. The Saudis are beginning to think we're not serious about them. They're beginning to flirt with the French. The French Defense Minister has been over there and the French are busting a gut to take over from us in Saudi Arabia. If we're successful on the oil issue, we will have cracked the valve and that feared shutdown, which would cut the flow to the Eastern seaboard by 50% until February or March, won't happen. We have a responsibility to do everything we can as quickly as we can to alleviate this situation.

Secretary Kissinger: I have heard this same line in Japan. Everyone who is in a jam says we must do something. But the question is whether certain actions are more likely to get it done or not. We'd be nuts to send a mission to Saudi Arabia before our talks with the various emissaries who are coming over here. After those talks, we can sit down and discuss what to do next.

Mr. Clements: We've already wasted too much time.

Secretary Kissinger: Before the Arab summit meeting, we might have done it but it would have made no difference at all. The Saudi Arabian problem was to align itself with enough other Arab countries so it wasn't out in front. After that, it's a matter of tactics.

Mr. Sisco: And they did that through the Arab summit meeting.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes. Let's wait and see what the emissaries bring us. After that, we may decide that a mission to Saudi Arabia is important.

Mr. Clements: I can't say any more.

Secretary Kissinger: But you can't say we have wasted two weeks.

Mr. Colby: I'd like to raise the question of photo coverage. We would like to have periodic coverage, either SR-71 or U-2, although the latter is not good. We have the satellite photography and there is no urgent requirement for an SR-71 flight at the moment, but it would help.

Secretary Kissinger: What is the situation on neighborhood basing?

Mr. Colby: [redacted]

Secretary Kissinger: What about the British?

Adm. Moorer: We're beginning to move the fuel into Mildenhall on January 1. Meanwhile, the U.S. is the only place they can fly from, and that costs about

TOP SECRET/NODIS [redacted]

OCT 30/6

\$500,000 and uses 230,000 gallons of fuel.

Mr. Colby: I can't honestly say there is an urgent need. But, all other things being equal, it would be good to have periodic coverage.

Secretary Kissinger: After January, we can fly out of the UK. [redacted]  
[redacted] I don't care if we fly out of the U.S. except for the money.

Adm. Moorer: [redacted]

Secretary Kissinger: How would we get in?

Adm. Moorer: Over Turkey.

Secretary Kissinger: Would they let us?

Adm. Moorer: [redacted]  
[redacted]

Mr. Colby: We would go around the Persian Gulf and up the Red Sea.

Adm. Weinell: We would fly over Turkey.

Secretary Kissinger: Would we have to get permission?

Adm. Moorer: We asked the Turks at the outset.

Mr. Colby: [redacted]  
[redacted]

Adm. Moorer: [redacted]

Mr. Colby: [redacted] in Turkey, would they let us fly over?

Mr. Rush: The same considerations (Egyptian and Israeli agreement) would pertain to flying over [redacted].

Secretary Kissinger: [redacted]

Mr. Sisco: We shouldn't ask them.

Adm. Moorer: The last flight was November 18.

Secretary Kissinger: We told them about that, but they didn't protest. We shouldn't get in the habit of telling them about the flights.

~~TOP SECRET/NODIS~~

OCT 353/7

Adm. Moorer: (to Mr. Colby) How many flights do you want?

Mr. Colby: One about every three weeks. We'd like to have one next week. Our satellite photos will be down on December 18 or 20. Thereafter, we'd like a flight in January.

Secretary Kissinger: In January we can fly out of the UK.

Adm. Moorer: The tanker still has to go to Turkey. That's the only place we have the fuel. We're using it for other flights. We could run one SR-71 flight next week from the U.S.; after that, from the UK.

Secretary Kissinger: Why not do it that way.

Mr. Colby: If the money is no great problem.

Adm. Moorer: It's just the equivalent of two flights instead of one.

Mr. Colby: I'd like to run one from the U.S. next week.

Secretary Kissinger: Okay, let's do it.

Mr. Clements: We need to talk about where we are going with regard to the resupply of Israel. We have a DIA report that says that, at this point, they think, plus or minus a little, the Israelis are where they were as of October 6. But the gut issue is the position of the Egyptians and Syrians with relation to where they were on October 6.

Secretary Kissinger: That's right.

Mr. Clements: We're not at the point of a professional military evaluation that says the Syrians and Egyptians are back at the October 6 level. We need to get that evaluation next. Then we can determine where we are in the balance.

Secretary Kissinger: I agree. We should make an evaluation of where the Syrians and Egyptians are in relation to October 6. That would be extremely helpful.

Adm. Moorer: We have taken a gross look. In terms of tonnage, so far we have shipped 102,000 tons for Israel and we estimate the Soviets have shipped 109,000 tons. So we're about even on tonnage.

Secretary Kissinger: But we would have to look at the distribution of the Soviet tonnage. I talked to Jim (Schlesinger) at lunch today about that \$2.2 billion figure and what we should do about (Congressman) Mahon. The only thing I can say about that figure is that it exists. I don't know how it was arrived at.

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OCT 353/8

But we've already paid the price with the Arabs for it, and it would be worse to cut it back now and have to go back two months later for \$500 million more. Whatever you may say about a peace settlement, it will mean a substantial Israeli withdrawal. I don't want to spook them before the real pressure starts. We may have to pay them off in equipment for territory. (to Mr. Clements) If it helps you, that's my attitude toward equipment for Israel. We need the study of where Egypt and Syria are. I think Jim (Schlesinger) has a solution that he can talk to (Congressman) Mahon about.

Adm. Moorer: He's talking to Mahon this afternoon.

Mr. Rush: I'd better find out what happened before I go up before the Appropriations Committee tomorrow morning.

Secretary Kissinger: When I was up with the House Foreign Affairs Committee, they weren't enthusiastic, but they were asking the wrong questions. Cutting down the figure won't help, since it will hurt us more with the Arabs if we have to go up for more later. I think Jim Schlesinger's formula is a good one: \$1.7 billion and \$500 million in discretionary authority for the President. That will give us some real leverage on the negotiations.

Adm. Moorer: They may insist on a line-item treatment.

Mr. Rush: That's (Congressman) Passman. He's the one who developed that \$1.7 billion figure.

Secretary Kissinger: (to Mr. Clements) You should go ahead and have active talks with the Israelis. We shouldn't give them the sense that we are slowing down. By February we will be in a real brawl with the Israelis. I don't want to excite their supporters in this country in December when we have nothing on the table for them. I know that's a very cynical attitude.

Mr. Clements: We should consider what needs to be done currently. We're getting lists and conversation at the lower levels every day. Some of the things they want would really enhance their capability, but some of the things are marginal.

Secretary Kissinger: Let's give them the morale builders quickly.

Mr. Colby: (Defense Minister) Dayan will be here next week.

Secretary Kissinger: Don't give anything to Dayan. He's moving to the right of the Prime Minister. If you're going to give them anything, give it to (Israeli Ambassador) Dinitz. Don't let Dayan come out of his talks here as a hero. In 1971 he was a dove; now he's a super-hawk.

Mr. Clements: It's a question of how much and when.



OCT 353/9

Secretary Kissinger: Can you give us some options; various packages and the rate of delivery.

Mr. Clements: This has nothing to do with capability.

Secretary Kissinger: (Ambassador) Dinitz gave me a list, and it would be helpful to me if I could get him something from that list. I have no judgment at all about the items. I asked Brent (Scowcroft) to send the list to Defense; why don't you (Clements) get together with him and go through the list. I'll take the credit with Dinitz for springing some things, but you (Clements) should be the one to give him the particular items. This was a special request from the Prime Minister. I have said that I would look at the list, and now I will say that you (Clements) have the action.

Mr. Clements: We've been playing this very close hold. We have not been responsive to their lists at all.

Mr. Colby: (to Secretary Kissinger) Bill (Clements) has really been very good on this.

Secretary Kissinger: I know; he has got us exactly what we wanted. We wanted Golda (Prime Minister Meir) to come to the President.

Adm. Moorer: In the matter of tonnage, the Syrians and Egyptians lost, either destroyed or captured, more than the Israelis did, so the balance now is a little more in favor of the Israelis. We counted 873 Egyptian tanks and 659 Israeli tanks in the Suez. The Israelis began with around 1500 tanks and they lost some 900.

(The discussion of the Middle East ended, and the meeting turned to the Indochina topic, which is covered in a separate set of minutes.)

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