

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

INFORMATION

WASHINGTON

DOS REVIEWED 07-Mar-2011: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

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March 18, 1975

REFER TO DOS

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

BRENT SCOWCROFT 

Secretary Kissinger asked that I pass you the following report...

"The negotiation has reached a critical stage with the strong possibility that the talks could fail in the next 48 hours. I met with President Sadat for about two hours this evening, and I outlined the position which the Israelis authorized me to convey to him in as positive light as possible. I stressed that Rabin wanted an agreement, but faced an extremely difficult domestic situation.

"I stressed also that if Rabin was to get a proposal calling for Israeli withdrawal out of the passes and oil fields through the Knesset, he had to get something substantial in return on the political side. I reported again Israeli insistence for a formulation which the Israelis had given me which reads as follows:

Quote: Egypt and Israel hereby undertake in the relations between themselves not to resort to the use of force and to resolve all disputes between them by negotiations and other peaceful means.

They will refrain from permitting, encouraging assisting, or participating in any military, paramilitary or hostile actions, from any warlike or hostile acts and any other form of warfare or hostile activity against the other party anywhere.
Unquote.

"Sadat's reaction was very much as I expected. He was calm, sober, and determined. He felt the Israeli formulation was an insult in the context of a partial withdrawal, and expressed deep disappointment. Sadat said that the Israeli proposal went beyond nonbelligerency, forcing him to make peace while his territory was occupied. He said he agreed not to use force but if he went further he would be finished. After further discussion and a quiet hour with him alone, I was able to get him to agree to review his own position, and to provide me with something more to permit me to make a last ditch effort with Israel upon my

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return tomorrow. He agreed to provide me with some additional proposals as a final Egyptian position. He said no matter what happens in the negotiation, it is not their intention to impair U.S.-Egyptian relations. I believe he means this, but I doubt that he will be able to sustain such a position over a period of time if our efforts fail. He will be violently attacked by the radical Arabs and the Soviet Union.

"About an hour after I completed my meeting with Sadat, I received an urgent call to meet with Fahmi and General Gamasy. Fahmi said President Sadat had reacted very badly to what I had brought back from Israel, that Israel was demanding more than Sadat could give. Fahmi expressed great concern that tomorrow after his meeting with me, Sadat would say something publicly which would take him on an irrevocable course. He urged me to talk to Sadat to discourage such a statement in order to allow time for one more effort with Israel. During the course of this meeting, Fahmi showed me some new Egyptian positions which he is going to recommend to President Sadat tomorrow -- all of which are helpful, and go further than any previous Arab position. They are prepared to declare:

- (A) That the agreement is a major step towards peace,
- (B) To renounce the use of force unconditionally,
- (C) To have the agreement last in effect indefinitely ("unless superseded by another agreement"),
- (D) To extend UNEF automatically every year.

In addition they are willing to lift the boycott selectively. But it is practically certain that Israel will refuse on the ground that it wants a legal statement of nonbelligerency and a formal permanent status of UNEF. This Sadat could not do if he wanted. It would mean that he would make peace while Israel is still 100 miles inside Egyptian territory; that he would publicly separate from joint Arab projects like the boycott. Sadat is conceding more than I ever thought possible, but if he goes beyond a certain point he will be destroyed. Sadat is operating within certain political limits.

"I intend to make one more all-out effort tomorrow night with the Israeli negotiating team but with little hope of success. In this connection, you should know since last July we have made it endlessly clear to Allon, Peres, and Rabin on more than a dozen occasions that a formal statement of nonbelligerency is politically impossible. The Israelis heard this during the Allon talks in Washington in July, December, and January; They were told this during the missions in October and November;

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it was reiterated during the negotiations which I undertook a few weeks ago at their behest to help prepare the cabinet to move towards the necessary decisions. I regret to say that either by neglect or design the Israeli government strongly encouraged us to engage our full prestige in this exercise and led us to believe that a formula less than non-belligerency would be acceptable to Israel. It was on this assumption that my latest mission was undertaken. Yet I have discovered that Rabin, as well as Peres and Allon and the entire cabinet are strongly committed, for internal political reasons, to getting nonbelligerency from Egypt.

"The impact on our international situation could not be more serious. From the Shah to Western Europe, from the Soviet Union to Japan it will be hard to explain why the United States failed to move a country of less than three million totally dependent on it in the face of Egyptian proposals which will seem extremely generous to them. It will be considered a sign of U.S. decline and impotence compounding events in Cambodia, South Vietnam, Turkey, and Portugal. Sooner or later a multiplier effect will set in.

"My plan for Tuesday evening's meeting with the Israelis is to try once again to make clear to them the most serious consequences which would result from failure. I intend to make the following points, subject to your approval. Taking as strong a line as I believe will be necessary is likely to have domestic repercussions and I cannot proceed without your approval. But the repercussions of failing for our interests, as well as Israel's, are too great not to do so. The key points I propose to include are as follows:

"A. I have reported fully to President Ford on the details of our last meeting and the position taken by the Israeli government.

"B. The consequences of failure are so serious for both Israel and the U.S. that it is essential that Israel reconsider its position in light of the latest concrete ideas which Egypt has asked me to convey to you. Failure to achieve a second-stage Egyptian-Israeli agreement, four months of arduous preparatory discussions in which the U.S. has been so directly involved, affects the vital interests of the U.S. and of Israel. In the Middle East, there going to be a sharp swing away from the West and moderation, with radicalism and the USSR the only beneficiaries. The hopeful shift towards peace, even in Syria, will be lost. This will touch such countries as Saudi Arabia. Western Europe, to protect its position in the Arab world, will dissociate from us. Iran will accelerate its own cause. The Soviet Union will re-emerge in an increasingly strong position. There will be a

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very great risk of a costly war of attrition between Israel and its Arab neighbors. I am convinced, after my talks in Syria, Egypt, and Jordan that this is the case.

"C. Failure of these negotiations will also have an adverse influence going well beyond the Middle East. The economic repercussions for the West could be disastrous, as well as the ensuing political shifts in Western Europe. We are being asked to (garbled) a stalemate threatening our interests in all parts of the world.

"D. All of this is the result because Israel either accidentally or deliberately misled the U.S. and even the moderate Arab states.

"D. Israel's inability to be more responsive to achieve a successful negotiation cannot but have far-reaching repercussions in the U.S. failure of these negotiations will require an overall reassessment of the policies of the U.S. that has brought us to this point.

"F. I have been asked to make these points with the full authority and approval of President Ford.

"I would appreciate your response by NLT 1100 March 18. If it could include a sentence or two of support that could be read to the cabinet, it would help."

Warm Regards.

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