

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

31053

~~SECRET~~

VERY URGENT ACTION

August 2, 1971

OSD, State Dept. & NSC  
reviews completed

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Helmut Sonnenfeldt *HS*

SUBJECT: Mintoff Moves Against NATO and UK Flags on Malta

State has informed us that this morning Mintoff instructed the UK commander in Malta -- Admiral Ashmore, NATO's Acting NAVSOUTH Commander -- that as of tomorrow morning (August 3) he does not want either the British or the NATO flag flown on Malta.

This information arrived at NATO while the NAC was meeting on the subject of Malta. The NAC reached the decision that NATO should reply to Mintoff through the UK Commander to the effect that:

-- This is the sort of issue that NATO's representative (Acting Secretary General Kastl) can discuss with you when he visits Malta later this month, and we would hope you can wait until those discussions;

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-- However, if you are adamant we will not fly the flags.

In response to any press inquiries, NATO would say only: We are not flying the flag because the Prime Minister of Malta has so requested.

This response to Mintoff would put the ball back in his court and hopefully cause him to delay taking action on the flag issue. There would appear to be little more that NATO as an organization can do. However, it is probable that Mintoff will not change his mind based on this response alone. There is not enough that is positive in it. I recommend that we contact Mintoff [redacted] that such action stands only to damage NATO and UK negotiations at a time when such negotiations may well produce the financial results he desires -- and urge as persuasively as possible that Mintoff not move on the flags. He should point out that NATO's response is logical and just, and that NATO is addressing the issue of assistance for Malta in good faith. We will have to act quickly if we are to get this message to Mintoff before he moves against the flags tomorrow.

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