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APPROVED FOR RELEASE - CIA INFO DATE: 31-Oct-2012

23062

WASHINGTON SPECIAL ACTIONS GROUP MEETING

October 7, 1973

Time and Place: 6:06 - 7:06 p.m., White House Situation Room

Subject: Middle East

Participants:

Chairman: Henry A. Kissinger

CIA: William Colby

State: Kenneth Rush  
Joseph Sisco

Treasury: William Simon

Defense: James Schlesinger  
William P. Clements, Jr.

NSC Staff: Brig. Gen. Brent Scowcroft  
William Quandt  
Lt. Col. Donald Stukel  
Jeanne W. Davis

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

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

It was agreed that:

- 1) Treasury would prepare by Tuesday evening (October 9) a contingency plan for US action in the event of an oil cut-off;
- 2) there should be no immediate movement of forces; however, the Kennedy task force in the North Sea should start easing toward Gibraltar toward the middle of the week when its current exercise is over; the Roosevelt carrier task force in Spain should go back to sea on its regular schedule at the end of the week and start easing eastward;
- 3) CIA and JCS will prepare by noon Monday (October 8) a judgment of the military situation, particularly what we can expect in the next day or two;
- 4) Secretary Kissinger will check with the President on provision
- 5) a U-2 mission will be flown on Monday, October 8.

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Secretary Kissinger: Bill, Could we have your briefing?

Mr. Colby briefed from the attached Situation Report. (Tab A) ✓

Secretary Kissinger: What do they mean when they say they have destroyed "most" of the bridges?

Mr. Colby: They have destroyed eight.

Mr. Schlesinger: They're down to one or zero.

Mr. Rush: (to Mr. Colby) You think it will last longer than you did yesterday?

Mr. Colby: Yes. The missing element yesterday was the non-mobilization of the Israelis. We didn't give that enough weight in our estimate. Normally, they have a 35,000-man force. They can increase in 48 hours to almost 300,000 and in seven days can have 450,000.

Secretary Kissinger: They've never had to fight from a defensive position before.

Adm. Moorer: It was the same pattern in 1967. They put most of their effort on the Golan Heights, then turned to the Egyptians.

Secretary Kissinger: No, they hit Egypt first.

Adm. Moorer: They secured the Heights first.

Secretary Kissinger: They secured the Heights last. That's what led to the break with the Soviets. They broke through in the Sinai, then jumped the Syrians on Friday or Saturday. Are the Arabs doing better or is this because the Israelis were unprepared?

Mr. Colby: The Syrians have a large force on the Heights -- three infantry and one armored division. They're doing better than 1967.

Adm. Moorer: During the Jordan crisis the Syrians weren't worth a damn. They have had a little experience now. They had to learn something if they're going to fight a war every two years.

Mr. Schlesinger: The Israelis say the Syrians are doing better -- that they're not behaving like Arabs.

Mr. Sisco: In the 1967 war the Syrians did well in the last 24 hours.

Mr. Rush: (to Mr. Colby) Why is Tel Aviv grim?

Mr. Colby: Because they have a real problem on the Golan Heights.

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Secretary Kissinger: And their casualties are heavier.

Mr. Colby: They're taking substantial casualties. Israel may fear a Syrian breakthrough.

Secretary Kissinger: (to Adm. Moorer) Tom, how do you read the situation?

Adm. Moorer: I agree with Bill (Colby). In one or two days Israel will settle things up north, then they will concentrate on Egypt.

(Secretary Kissinger left the room)

Mr. Schlesinger: Will the Israelis go around behind them, west to Mount Hermon? If they do, they're practically in Damascus.

Mr. Rush: That's what they did in 1967.

Mr. Colby: No, they stayed up on the Heights--took the high ground.

Mr. Schlesinger: The number of Egyptians across the Canal changed from 3,000 men and 60 tanks to 15,000 men and 400 tanks in the course of the day.

Mr. Colby: That number sounds pretty high.

Adm. Moorer: That's inconsistent. They say they have all those tanks across but they say they didn't move much across last night. That means they were already there.

Mr. Schlesinger: The story has some inconsistencies. I don't know why the Israelis didn't attack.

Mr. Clements: How good is our information on the bridges?

Adm. Moorer: That's the Israeli story.

Mr. Schlesinger: We're completely dependent on the Israelis for our information.

Mr. Rush: [redacted]

Adm. Moorer: Not in that detail.

Mr. Rush: (to Mr. Schlesinger) Do you agree with Bill's (Colby) time assessment?

Mr. Schlesinger: Yes.

(Secretary Kissinger returned)

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Secretary Kissinger: That was the Egyptian Foreign Minister on the phone. There are demonstrations in front of the Egyptian Embassy in New York. All the windows are broken and the police are apparently just standing by. He sounded panicky. (to Gen. Scowcroft) Can we do anything? (Gen. Scowcroft left the room) Get me John Lindsay on the phone.

Adm. Moorer: I think the major effort by the Israelis will be in the north initially, then they will turn south. The way their mobilization works, [redacted]

Secretary Kissinger: (to Adm. Moorer) Do you think they will clean up Syria in two or three days?

Adm. Moorer: They won't be mobilized until Monday noon. It will be two or three days after that. We're talking about Tuesday for a full-scale effort.

Mr. Schlesinger: They're beginning to move forces today.

(General Scowcroft returned)

Gen. Scowcroft: I talked to Len Garment and he'll be in touch with the FBI.

Adm. Moorer: The Israeli public assumed they would be successful immediately.

Mr. Colby: "Grim" also refers to their feeling mean.

Secretary Kissinger: Even if they restore the situation, if it cost 500 casualties to get back to where they were, that's like 50,000 for us. Do you think they will wipe out Syria?

Adm. Moorer: They'll inflict heavy personnel and equipment casualties. They already have.

Mr. Schlesinger: The Syrians are backed up against the minefields. They have been going through them slowly, and they will have to go back through them.

Secretary Kissinger: Then how do you explain the cockiness of the Arabs? Why aren't they calling for a ceasefire?

Mr. Schlesinger: Euphoria has set in.

Mr. Colby: The Syrians think they're doing well. They're not looking at the long term. Egypt may have intended to make only a limited move across the Canal.

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Secretary Kissinger: Why aren't they clinching their gain? Every foreign ambassador who saw Sadat today was told that Egypt didn't want a ceasefire until they were at the Israeli border.

Mr. Schlesinger: You're being logical. You can't ascribe that kind of logic to them.

Mr. Rush: It's difficult to think Sadat would cross the Suez and just sit there.

Secretary Kissinger: My judgement is that he will cross the Suez and just sit there. I don't think he will penetrate further.

Mr. Clements: I agree, but it doesn't make much sense. Why would he do it?

Secretary Kissinger: Their reasoning was that the Israelis have been arguing that the situation is calm and there is no reason to do anything. They knew we wouldn't do anything unless things were stirred up. But they haven't thought through to five days later. They're just hoping something will happen.

Mr. Colby: We had an estimate a few months ago that they might create an issue so that the great powers would solve their problem for them.

Mr. Rush: And they want to inflict casualties on the Israeli forces.

Mr. Clements: What are the chances of a world-wide uproar, through the UN perhaps, so that a ceasefire would be forced on them?

Secretary Kissinger: They don't want to go to the UN. They're discouraging everyone from going to the UN.

Mr. Clements: Isn't that a trading position?

Secretary Kissinger: Trade for what?

Mr. Clements: They say "we're doing great, we don't need you." They're in the Heights and across the Canal, and have a stand-off.

Secretary Kissinger: But by Wednesday, they will be creamed on the Golan Heights.

Mr. Clements: I doubt that.

Secretary Kissinger: If Bill Colby's assessment is correct, by Wednesday evening, our time, they will be more or less wiped out.

Mr. Colby: Not wiped out, but in trouble.

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Secretary Kissinger: In deep trouble. Then they'll start making noise in the UN, but Israel won't stop until they have knocked them out.

To bring you up to date on our diplomatic activity. We have had active exchanges with the Soviets. They are leaning over backward not to get involved and to make it clear to us that they're not getting involved.

Mr. Schlesinger: They're moving their ships west, away from the action.

Secretary Kissinger: They don't want a confrontation with us at the UN, and they have made that clear to us. They told us they pulled their people out of the area against the advice of the local governments, but that must not be repeated. That creates a problem for them. If the Arabs do unexpectedly well, the Soviets are in deep trouble.

Mr. Colby: Their pull-out instructions were issued on October 3. They had something. They were either told there was going to be trouble, or at least they got a very hard tip.

Secretary Kissinger: They're now in the position that, if the Israelis lose, the Soviets are in trouble with the Arabs. If Israel wins--I almost believe the Soviets would prefer if the Arabs were taught a lesson. Now, at 5:00 p. m. today the President will say that we are going to the Security Council. No Department should say anything about our UN strategy. We will try to avoid a General Assembly meeting tomorrow. We can resist on procedural grounds.

(Secretary Kissinger left to take a call from Mayor Lindsay)

Mr. Sisco: I've heard Henry say that all the Soviet advisers are out, and I thought some were still there. We need a clarification of that.

Mr. Clements: Our briefing said there were still some in Syria.

Mr. Sisco: I know there are some in Syria. I'm talking about Egypt. I thought there was a residue of Soviet advisers still there.

Mr. Colby: They have some people working on the Helmand plant.

Mr. Sisco: I thought they still had some involved in radar and some training. We need a precise statement on this.

(Secretary Kissinger returned)

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Secretary Kissinger: It is imperative that no one speculates about the situation. The best thing we can do is to keep everyone calm and try to stop the fighting. I've talked to the Secretary General and the President of the Security Council and to Foreign Minister Zayyat. Egypt doesn't want a confrontation with us at the UN and the Soviets don't want a confrontation with us. Our general position will be a restoration of the ceasefire lines. The Arabs will scream that they are being deprived of their birthright, but by Thursday they will be on their knees begging us for a ceasefire. We have to take this position now. That's the strategy we're pursuing. We're trying to get this over with a limited amount of damage to our relations with the Arabs and the Soviets. If we can also put some money in the bank with the Israelis to draw on in later negotiations, well and good. But we should all try to be enigmatic. Everyone is positioned at the UN. Everyone is in a non-confrontation mood. We'll try to hold this until one party or the other wins. Our policy is to stop Israel at the ceasefire line, but not before Thursday.

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(Gen. Scowcroft left the room.)

Mr. Schlesinger: Or roll them back to the ceasefire line.

Secretary Kissinger: Or roll them back, but we mustn't tip our hand. In this phase, we have to get the fighting stopped. After the Israeli elections in three weeks, that will be the time to negotiate. In that sense, the Arabs have achieved something.

Mr. Clements: (to Adm. Moorer) I think Henry should be aware of the turn-around of the eight submarines in the Western Mediterranean.

Adm. Moorer: The Soviets were in the process of a normal relief of their diesel subs in the Mediterranean, so they have twice as many as normal there right now. It just happened.

Mr. Clements: I don't believe it just happened.

Adm. Moorer: We have twice as many amphibious forces in the Mediterranean now, and that just happened.

Secretary Kissinger: On the contingency plan on Libya, how do you propose to handle the problem that the airbase is 21 miles from town? How will you get the people to the airbase?

Adm. Moorer: (referring to map) [redacted]

[redacted]

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The 82nd Airborne could land here (indicating an area to the south of Tripoli on map) out of range of any missiles and without a confrontation with the brigade defending Tripoli. One force can rescue the 800 Americans in the oil area, and the other can rescue the 1000 Americans in the other area. We're still looking at other options because I'm not satisfied we have the best plan. But if we use airborne, we should go into the Tripoli airport. If our objective is to rescue Americans, this has to happen awfully fast, since if the Marines get bogged down in fighting, this will give the mobs time to go after the Americans.

Secretary Kissinger: How long will it take to get the 82nd Airborne in?

Adm. Moorer: [REDACTED] from the 'go'.

Secretary Kissinger: How long before they start moving to the Americans?

Adm. Moorer: Right away. We would drop some Marines right on top of the Americans to defend them until the main force gets to them. It's just sand and olive trees where they are.

Mr. Schlesinger: We can get the forces in. The critical issue is that the Libyans have air at Wheelus. The plan calls for hosing down the Libyan Air Force, and that's a major step. We'd be shooting up an Arab country, with all that would mean.

Secretary Kissinger: But we won't do that unless American lives are in danger.

Adm. Moorer: Yes, but it would have a major effect in other countries. It would be better if we could take them out with helicopters.

Mr. Schlesinger: We don't want to put the 82nd Airborne in unless we want to take over Libya. If our design is limited to getting the Americans out, we don't want the 82nd Airborne.

Secretary Kissinger: We don't want to tie the 82nd down if we don't have to.

Adm. Moorer: We worked on this option because it is the most complex, but I'm not satisfied with it.

Mr. Clements: But we would have to hose down Wheelus to be sure the Libyan air doesn't get involved.

Adm. Moorer: We could just stand by. We would have heavy air cover, but we wouldn't shoot unless they made the first move. We should communicate with our State man there and see what his plans are for getting the Americans together.



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Mr. Clements: If we move into Libya, there will be overrun into other Arab countries.

Mr. Kissinger: We won't do it without overwhelming provocation.

(General Scowcroft returned)

Secretary Kissinger: They're getting us a Security Council meeting at 3:30 tomorrow afternoon.

Now, what about the oil situation?

Mr. Simon summarized briefly the oil papers at Tab B.

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(Secretary Kissinger left the room)

Mr. Simon: Our situation will be bad anyway. (referring to the papers at Tab B) As you see, we need an additional 350-700,000 barrels per day, depending on the severity of the winter. We should have been bringing in this much more during the past five or six weeks. So we're in a situation where, in the heating season, we have to play catch-up ball. The Europeans can't refine that much. They're probably sitting around discussing this just as we are, and saying that they will protect their supplies and they won't export to us. New England will be very cold this winter. We would have had problems even if this trouble hadn't happened.

(Secretary Kissinger returned)

Mr. Clements: No one is telling it like it is on the fuel oil shortage. We would have had a bad problem even without this.

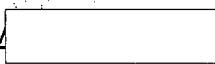
Secretary Kissinger: Some day I would like someone to explain to me how this happened. Can we develop a plan that, if there is a cut-off, what can we do? What does the President say on the day of the cut-off?

Mr. Simon: He institutes rationing. There will be a lot of argument, of course.

Secretary Kissinger: What is the argument against it?

Mr. Simon: Bureaucratic. The same as we had over the mandatory allocation. They talk about it's affecting the middle of the barrel, but I say you can't do that without affecting the whole barrel.

Secretary Kissinger: (indicating Messrs Simon and Clements) Does anyone here understand what these two are talking about?



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Mr. Rush: I have some faint understanding.

Mr. Simon: We should get together tomorrow and set up a contingency emergency program.

Mr. Kissinger: We need an emergency program. With regard to the Arabs, they have to learn what the limits are or they will nibble us to death. But this is a helluva time to teach them the limits.

Mr. Colby: Better now than later. We're less dependent on them for oil than we will be five years from now.

Mr. Rush: As the price goes up, their urge to produce goes down. We're killing the goose by raising prices.

Mr. Simon: The Japanese are willing to pay the price. They are taking our market away from us.

Mr. Colby: 12% of our consumption comes from the Arab countries. In five years, it will be 35%.

Mr. Simon: But I think that, if we do our job, by 1980-81 it will tilt the other way.

Secretary Kissinger: What about this big research and development program?

Mr. Clements: Nothing is happening.

Secretary Kissinger: Who's in charge?

Mr. Clements: Whoever is in charge, absolutely nothing is happening.

Secretary Kissinger: (to Mr. Simon) Can you get us a program by Tuesday evening? The Arabs will be doing okay until Tuesday night. They won't do anything against us until they start losing. The President may ask for a program Wednesday or Thursday. ✓

Mr. Simon: Is there anything we can do without scaring the Europeans? Is there some way we could talk to them?

Secretary Kissinger: No, that would panic them. Let's get a program now of what we want to do.

Mr. Simon: If you want that, you should get hold of Governor Love and his staff tonight. I would be usurping his authority if I did anything.

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Secretary Kissinger: Let's get the program and the President will decide. (to Gen. Scowcroft) Will you get hold of the energy people. I'll square it with Governor Love.

Mr. Clements: You're talking about rationing.

Secretary Kissinger: (to Mr. Simon) That's why you're at this meeting. Let's get a concrete program. I'll talk to Governor Love on Tuesday, if necessary. Bill (Clements), can you help him? If Love gets involved, that will get Interior involved, and you might as well put it in the newspapers. Can your people keep it quiet?

Mr. Simon: I have a good, small group. I'm not worried about the Treasury and conversation.

Mr. Schlesinger: What about moving forces? We have that Task Force in the North Sea [redacted] from Gibraltar.

Secretary Kissinger: I see no reason to move anything. Where is that Task Force going?

Adm. Moorer: It's just fiddling around on an exercise.

Mr. Schlesinger: It could ease down toward Gibraltar.

Adm. Moorer: It will be making some port calls when the exercise is over.

Secretary Kissinger: When is the exercise over?

Adm. Weinel: This week.

Secretary Kissinger: Toward the middle of the week, when the exercise is over, let it start easing down. I'll talk to the President tonight; he's coming in about 10:00 p.m.

Mr. Schlesinger: And the Roosevelt stays in Spain.

Secretary Kissinger: For how long?

Adm. Moorer: It will go back to sea at the end of the week on its regular schedule.

Secretary Kissinger: Let's let it ease back, too. The major objective is not to

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get anyone excited. Were there any questions about the movement of the Athens Task Force?

Mr. Sisco: A few, as we expected. We handled it as we agreed, and it went very well.

Secretary Kissinger: (to Mr. Sisco) What do you think about moving forces?

Mr. Sisco: I think we should do nothing.

Secretary Kissinger: Shall we meet tomorrow afternoon? I may want to check with you all before the Security Council meeting. Could I have JCS and CIA's best judgements of the situation by noon, particularly, what we can expect in the next day or two. Then we can fine-tune what needs to be done at the Security Council in the light of the situation. I haven't seen an estimate of the losses. Can we get one?

Adm. Moorer: That's very hard to get.

Mr. Schlesinger: The Israelis admit 100 dead.

Secretary Kissinger: How many planes?

Mr. Schlesinger: 15 A-4s, but they're asking for 40 replacements.

Secretary Kissinger: How about the other side?

Mr. Schlesinger: Very substantial losses.

Adm. Moorer: 40-50 planes.

Secretary Kissinger: The Israeli Ambassador is coming in to see me. If I get anything from him, I'll let you know.

Mr. Colby: [redacted]

Secretary Kissinger: [redacted]

Mr. Colby: [redacted]

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Mr. Schlesinger: We might put a U-2 over.

Secretary Kissinger: Can we do it? Is there any objection?

Mr. Colby: We can fly one Monday if we have to.

Secretary Kissinger: Okay, let's do it.

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