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MEMORANDUM

DIA review completed

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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INFORMATION

October 8, 1973

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MEMORANDUM FOR: SECRETARY KISSINGER

FROM: WILLIAM B. QUANDT *w.b.2.*

SUBJECT: Middle East Status Report -- 1 p.m., October 8

This memorandum provides a wrap up of current intelligence and a joint CIA-DIA estimate as to where the situation is headed. Issues which require early consideration are addressed in a final section.

Current Situation (1 p.m.) - [CIA Sitrep at Tab A]

The Israelis began counteroffensives this morning on both the Egyptian and Syrian fronts. Egyptian-held positions on the Suez Canal east bank are under attack, and the Israelis say their armored forces have crossed to the west bank. The Israelis have also launched a ground offensive in the Golan Heights and reportedly made air strikes this morning against five airfields in the Damascus area.

The Israelis have not made any public announcements about their casualties and have privately expressed concern that these have been heavy. Earlier they admitted to 35 aircraft lost in attacks on SAM sites in Syria, a surprisingly large number.

Jordan's Prime Minister Rifai believes King Hussein, who has been requested by Asad to enter the fighting, can hold off for another day or two, but he added that Israeli violations of Jordanian airspace are making this increasingly difficult to do. Other Arab countries have not made any new moves beyond Iraqi and Moroccan statements earlier today that they would send troops and, in the case of the Iraqis, aircraft.

Oil apparently continues to flow normally from the Middle East, with yesterday's Iraqi nationalizations of two U. S. concerns the only actions against U. S. companies. No attacks on American nationals have been reported, including in Libya. No soviet activity of concern has been noted.

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Intelligence Estimate

CIA and Defense have prepared an estimate (TabB) of how they see the current situation evolving over the short-term future. In short, they envisage heavy fighting over the next 2 - 3 days as the Israelis turn the tide on both fronts, followed possibly by several days of mopping-up operations.

The main points of the estimate are as follows:

--The outcome of the Israeli offensive, beginning today, on the Golan Heights should become clear today or by latest tomorrow (Tuesday) evening and last 2 - 3 days. The most likely outcome is a Syrian collapse and general retreat across ~~retreat across~~ the cease-fire lines. The Israelis are unlikely to want to increase the occupation burden by taking significantly more territory but may seek minor adjustments in the cease-fire line.

--The Israelis have clearly gone on the offensive on the Egyptian front and are likely to defeat the Egyptian forces in Sinai in 2 - 3 days. The Israelis say their forces are now crossing to the West Bank and the intelligence community is inclined to accept this; if true, three options appear open to the Israelis, the first being the most likely as involving the least risk: (1) Israeli forces on the west bank move along the canal inflicting as much damage as possible over a period of a day or so; this would bring about the collapse of the Egyptian troops in Sinai. (2) Israeli penetration deeper into Egypt (20 miles) to destroy SAM equipment and disrupt a large part of Egypt's army. This is more risky as the Israelis would be fighting inside Egypt proper for the first time and in an area where Egyptians troops are deployed in fortified positions. (3) Deep penetration of 30 miles or more to encircle and hold the area for a few days. The risk of heavy casualties and serious mistakes would be great. This is the least likely option.

--The Soviets will be more cautious than they were in 1967. They will probably render political support for the Arabs in such forums as the UN, but even if the military situation turns against the Arabs they will not become directly involved. Dependents have been primarily involved in the ongoing Soviet evacuation.

Issues

Virtually all accounts of Egyptian-Syrian strategic objectives in launching the October 6 attack indicate that Sadat had no illusions of victory, but did hope for psychological- diplomatic gains that might improve his future par-

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gaining position. The Arabs probably hope for a move fairly soon for a ceasefire in place. This will be an increasingly less desirable position as the Israeli counteroffensive develops, especially if Israeli forces can maintain a position to the west of the Canal.

The following issues present themselves for the immediate future:

--The development of our position on a ceasefire at the UN Security Council meeting.

Under what circumstances will we want to move from a fairly general position to a more specific one calling for a ceasefire and restoration of the status quo ante?

--A message to King Hussein urging that Jordan not become involved in the fighting.

--Consideration of Israeli requests for arms and intelligence cooperation.

~~As long as the Israelis seem to hold the upper hand militarily, we should not make major new commitments yet.~~

--Further movements of US forces or increased state of readiness.

In a longer term perspective, the Middle East situation in the aftermath of the fighting will have been significantly changed in ways that will affect our approach to the area. The most important developments are likely to be the following:

--Serious strains in Arab-Soviet relations, particularly if the Soviets are reluctant to resupply arms on a massive scale. There are reasons to expect the Soviets to be reluctant to go back in on the same scale as previously, particularly in light of their cautious role during the crisis. In addition, we know that Sadat has been thinking of shifting from Soviet to European arms sources, with King Faisal's blessing. This could be the appropriate time for such a shift.

--A great deal of military equipment is going to be destroyed in the fighting on all sides, and this will affect power relations in the area for some time to come. Before launching a massive resupply of Israel, we may want to explore the possibilities of enlisting the cooperation of the Soviets and other suppliers to restrict the flow of arms into the area.

--Both sides to the conflict have captured prisoners, and they are likely to become pawns in any future bargaining.

--If the flow of oil is disrupted, this may create an atmosphere in which the Europeans and Japanese will agree to a sharing - rationing - stockpiling formula, something we have only had limited success in discussing thus far.

The major unknown is whether in the aftermath of the fighting the US will still

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be in a position to play a role in promoting a negotiated settlement. Arguments can be made on both sides of the issue. Assuming that our relations with the Arabs are not too badly damaged, which assumes something less than an overwhelming Israeli victory, the Egyptians may feel they have made significant gains by demonstrating their willingness to fight and the fragility and danger of the status quo. The Egyptians can take some pride in having taken the world by surprise and in the credible performance of Arab forces in the first two days of fighting. If Israel recovers the territory it has lost without humiliating Sadat, a situation may exist in which prospects for serious peace negotiations in coming months still exist. On the other hand, if Arab losses are especially great and attacks on US interests occur, there may be little hope of moving toward negotiations for some time.

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Oct. 8

Henry -

This is the CIA/JCS  
estimate you requested  
at the last meeting.

(Our summary of the  
paper is on top.)

Bunt

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