

WASHINGTON SPECIAL ACTIONS GROUP MEETING

October 15, 1973

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14-082  
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Time and Place: 10:08 a.m. - 11:08 a.m., White House Situation Room

Subject: Middle East

Participants:

Chairman	Henry A. Kissinger	CIA	William Colby Sam Hoskinson
State	Kenneth Rush Joseph Sisco Robert McCloskey	Special Assistant to the President for Energy	
Defense	James Schlesinger William P. Clements, Jr.	Gov. John Love Charles DiBona	
JCS	Adm. Thomas H. Moorer V/Adm. John Weinel	NSC	Gen. Brent Scowcroft William Quandt Jeanne W. Davis

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

It was agreed that:

- 1) CIA will prepare an estimate as to the amount of advance knowledge the Soviets had of the Arab move against Israel.
- 2) Governor Love, in cooperation with Deputy Secretary Clements, will prepare by tomorrow a detailed implementing scenario for U.S. actions in the event of an Arab cut-off of oil from the U.S., to include public statements.
- 3) Defense, in cooperation with State, will prepare within twenty-four hours a package for the Congress requesting additional funds for foreign military assistance, to include Cambodia and other pressing requirements.
- 4) The State Department (Bob McCloskey) will take the lead on public statements on the resupply effort, which will be in a low key and will avoid super-criticism of the Soviets.
- 5) Defense will supply a list of all the equipment that the U.S. has moved or is moving to Israel.

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Secretary Kissinger: Bill (Colby), could we have your briefing, then we'll look at the oil picture.

Mr. Colby: briefed from the paper at Tab A. 2

Secretary Kissinger: What is the total number of Soviet supply flights?

Mr. Colby: 264.

Mr. Sisco: Did they send more to Syria yesterday than to Egypt? Has there been a shift?

Mr. Colby: Shipments were heavier to Iraq yesterday.

Secretary Kissinger: How does that work out in tonnage?

Mr. Colby: Roughly 3000 tons by yesterday. With an additional 178 flights, that may mean another 1000 tons. These are rough, -cut answers.

Secretary Kissinger: Tom (Moorer), what do you have?

Adm. Moorer: My military estimate is the same as yesterday. I think the Egyptians are clearly trying to establish a solid defense line east of Suez. They have begun to bring civilian construction people over now. They are also establishing permanent SA-2 and -3 missile sites in addition to the SA-6s. We believe Israeli ship losses have been about 1-6 in favor of the Israelis; aircraft losses, 1-3 in Israel's favor; but tank losses have been only 1-2 in Israel's favor. Also, our SR-71 photography shows that the Soviets are giving the Egyptians their very latest armored personnel carrier, with a 76 mm gun and with a wire-guided anti-tank capability.

Secretary Kissinger: They're giving it to them now or they have given it to them?

Adm. Moorer: It's on the dock in Alexandria. They are introducing it now; we haven't seen it before.

Mr. Clements: But they came in on ships.

Adm. Moorer: Which means the decision was made a month ago.

Secretary Kissinger: (to Colby) Could we now get an analysis of how far ahead the Soviets knew about this?

Mr. Colby: I'm not convinced they knew before October 3. Then I think there was a frantic reaction.

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Secretary Kissinger: Let's take a reading on it. Did you read Joe Alsop's column this morning, drawing a parallel to Korea? Do you think this is valid?

Mr. Colby: No, Korea was much more premeditated.

Secretary Kissinger: On what basis? Let's look at the question. Now, John (Love), let's turn to oil.

Mr. Colby: I have a little briefing on oil if you would like to have it now.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes.

Mr. Colby briefed on the paper at Tab B. /

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Secretary Kissinger: (commenting on the slow-down of oil flow through Tapline) Was this a decision of the companies?

Mr. Clements: No, the Israelis requested it.

Secretary Kissinger: Why?

Mr. Sisco: They were fearful that damage to the pipeline from the fighting might be such that a lot of their oil would be lost.

Mr. Clements: That was a valid point.

Mr. Kissinger: I don't question it.

Mr. Schlesinger: Are there any tankers going through the Gulf of Aqaba?

Mr. Colby: We don't know.

Adm. Moorer: No, there's an Egyptian submarine there.

Mr. Colby: Yes, it fired three torpedos at a tanker in the first days of the war and missed.

Secretary Kissinger: It's a good thing Governor Love has all of these problems solved.

Governor Love briefed from the paper at Tab C. /

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Secretary Kissinger: (referring to Governor Love's comment that a rationing program need not be announced at the time the other US actions are announced) But an announcement of what we are doing might induce the Arabs to call off any cut-off of oil. If we were licking the problem, they might have an incentive to resume shipments.

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Gov. Love: There may be a trade-off. But an announcement of rationing might bring on hoarding.

Mr. Clements: That's a political decision. It's for the President and you to decide.

Secretary Kissinger: How urgently is it needed?

Mr. Clements: It's a must.

Secretary Kissinger: But you believe it should not be announced with the other decisions? Suppose the Arabs cut off the supply tomorrow?

Gov. Love: Subject to your decision on the effect on the Gulf countries, I do not suggest announcing a rationing program now. But I would go ahead with the rest of the program.

Mr. Clements: We might hint at rationing.

Secretary Kissinger: Let me be sure I understand what you're saying. Incidentally, this paper is an amazing job considering the amount of time you had.

Gov. Love: Part of it is the Treasury paper that you had asked Bill Simon to do earlier.

Secretary Kissinger: You believe that, if there is an actual cut-off of oil, all of these things in the paper, except for rationing, should be done together?

Gov. Love: Yes.

Secretary Kissinger: I can't speak for the President, but I will talk to him right after this meeting. But, judging from the way the President has reacted, in the past, I would think he would think so too. He believes we pay the same price if we do a lot as if we do a little.

Mr. Clements: We could tell the public that rationing is the next step. This might be a rallying point and have a cohesive effect in getting people together.

Secretary Kissinger: And if these things fail, we would go to rationing. Are you saying rationing is inevitable? What would the President say?

Mr. DiBona: That we can lick the problem if everyone cooperates.

Secretary Kissinger: If everyone cooperates, we could avoid rationing?

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Mr. DiBona: Yes.

Secretary Kissinger: But if we threaten rationing, that might create hoarding. How would it be done?

Mr. Rush: By everyone keeping his tanks filled.

Mr. DiBona: There's a lot of secondary storage already full. People filled up in August.

Secretary Kissinger: Isn't that a good cushion?

Mr. DiBona: Yes.

Gov. Love: Our task force on the political implications of the effect on Japan and Western Europe of an Arab oil cut-off has considered the possibility of a sharing agreement of up to 5 million barrels per day. There would be no way out of this for the US without utter chaos.

Secretary Kissinger: The other paper indicates that there are two roads -- bilateral and multilateral. Do we have enough leverage with the oil companies to win the bilateral battle? Could we force them to divert to us?

Mr. Colby: It would be the other way around.

Mr. DiBona: There are two possibilities. One, the Arabs cut off oil supplies from the Arab sources to the US alone. We could handle this, with some strain. Second, a total cut-off of Arab oil to all recipients. If we should try to equalize the burden, this would mean the US would be shipping oil out to Western Europe and Japan. This would require 5 or 6 million barrels per day from the US -- one-third of the US consumption.

Mr. Rush: The economic impact in this country would be so striking that it couldn't be done.

Secretary Kissinger: What about the impact of a cut-off in Europe and Japan? They would go crazy.

Mr. DiBona: It would affect their attitude toward the war.

Secretary Kissinger: To say the least!

Adm. Moorer: They have already made their attitude clear. They expect the US to carry the entire burden.

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Secretary Kissinger: And they have been goddamned unhelpful in the diplomacy.

Mr. Sisco: The pressures would increase from Europe, but they haven't lifted a finger to help us with the Arabs as it is. It cuts both ways.

Gov. Love: You would see an almost automatic flow of French and German technicians to the Arab countries if there were an oil cut-off. We would lose out in the area.

Mr. Rush: It's unrealistic to think they would be willing to suffer economically for us.

Secretary Kissinger: How can they avoid it?

Mr. Rush: By staying with the Arabs and keeping the oil flowing.

Secretary Kissinger: If they do this, they would be doing us a favor. What more could they do for the Arabs than they have already done? There is a limit beyond which they can't push us without losing their NATO relationship. There are two alternatives: (1) the Arabs may cut off oil to the US only; there would be some resolutions in the Security Council we would have to veto, but we wouldn't be that badly hurt; (2) the Arabs cut off oil to Europe. The Europeans would gain nothing, and they couldn't be doing anything worse to us than they are already doing. And if the Europeans try to do to us what we did to them at Suez, we could do more to them in retaliation. They can't afford to go into open opposition to us. Is that a fair statement?

All agreed.

Gov. Love: Any approach to rational thinking on the part of the Saudis will show them that a complete cut-off is not in their self-interest.

Secretary Kissinger: We have had no indication up to now that they intend a cut-off. They have been extremely circumspect. They have never threatened an oil cut-off in any official channel. Officially, they have taken exactly the opposite tack.

Mr. Colby: We have an indication that the Saudis are being very cautious about this oil country meeting tomorrow.

Secretary Kissinger: I sent them a letter yesterday telling them about our sending supplies to Israel. They replied that we should keep it in a low key and blame it on the Soviets.

Mr. Sisco: This was not from the King, but we think it is official.

Secretary Kissinger: I've been dealing with the oil guy. We have no indication that there will be a cut-off. But if there is, I think the President will go

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for the whole program, minus rationing. That would be the best way to bring maximum pressure on the Arabs. John (Love), will you develop implementing programs for these things? Bill (Clements), will you work with him? Work out who does what and when, from D-Day plus. Also what we say publicly -- the whole scenario.

Mr. Rush: We don't have Governor Love's memo.

Mr. DiBona handed out copies of the memorandum at Tab C, without the attachments.

Secretary Kissinger: We need a contingency plan now for D-Day plus. Now, it would be in our interests to make the Soviets pay for this. I have seen in one paper, possibly an internal State paper, some of the pressures we have available, such as holding back some wheat shipments. If we get into a test of this kind, we have to win it.

Mr. Clements: We are all in agreement that there are some mechanical and technical things we could do, but it would require an all-out effort with the oil companies and the pipeline companies. The first thing we would have to do is to get that Prudo Bay pipeline immediately. We could get another one million barrels a day if we go all-out, but we can't dilly-dally.

Secretary Kissinger: We have some real problems. The events of this summer have led to a belief all around the world that our authority has been weakened. If we get into a confrontation, we have to show that we are a giant! We have to win! I don't expect us to get into a confrontation, but we should look at everything we could do if we did. It may help us next time. Let's get that implementation plan for tomorrow's WSAG meeting. What each agency can do, including the public statements.

Gov. Love: But the President wouldn't move short of an Arab move to cut off oil?

Secretary Kissinger: No, and we haven't been threatened. No Arab radio has picked up what we're actually doing. We'll keep it in a low key. We shouldn't hypo it but we should be ready if someone else does.

Mr. Schlesinger: It will be hypoed today when they see US planes coming over every half-hour.

Gov. Love: I was scheduled for a Press Club appearance tomorrow, but I will cancel it so I don't fumble around.

Secretary Kissinger: You won't fumble around. You can just say we don't expect an oil cut-off but we have contingency planning ready if there is one.

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You should be restrained but very confident. I think it would be a mistake to cancel your appearance. You should make no reference to the Middle East, but if you are asked, just say we are working on it and we can handle it. We'll meet again tomorrow; we'll let you know the time.

(Governor Love and Mr. DiBona left the meeting.)

Secretary Kissinger: In the area of diplomacy, the most noteworthy aspect has been the total Arab restraint. It has gone on longer than I thought possible. It's close to the end of the working day there. They must know by now what we're doing. We've told the Saudis and Egyptians.

Adm. Moorer: We've got 14 Phantoms in, without counting the airlift.

Secretary Kissinger: Also, without going into detail, the diplomacy opened up again last night, so let's mute our anti-Soviet statements. We can refer to the Soviet airlift and its size, but there should be no reference to our diplomacy and no super-criticism of the Soviets. I believe they are making an effort with the Arabs. We are working with the Arabs, too. I will see the Egyptian Foreign Minister tomorrow and the President will be meeting with various Arab leaders on Wednesday. These things aren't to be trumpeted about. The next three or four days are crucial. Bill Clements is the greatest diplomat of all time. He has arranged this airlift for the greatest possible diplomatic effect. What about our air supply?

Mr. Schlesinger: We have 3000 tons plus on the way.

Secretary Kissinger: Already?

Adm. Moorer: Loaded out from the US.

Mr. Schlesinger: 1800 tons have arrived.

Secretary Kissinger: Not that it's earned us any gratitude.

Mr. Schlesinger: We can do more.

Secretary Kissinger: It doesn't matter what the Israelis think about it. If the Soviets see that we can get material in to Israel, which can still fight, they will see that it would be better for them to get the thing wrapped up.

Adm. Moorer: We have eight Phantoms in the Azores.

Mr. Schlesinger: We'll get six more in tomorrow, which will make 20.

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Adm. Moorer: And the C-130s are arriving. Also we have four C-5s and 12 C-141s every 24 hours.

Mr. Schlesinger: I hope we are looking at the tank shipments as largely symbolic. It's like moving platinum to fly them in.

Secretary Kissinger: We're doing it just to show we can. We can stop after that. What about Skyhawks?

Mr. Schlesinger: They will start to move on the 20th (of October). They can leapfrog from carrier, to Lajes, to carrier, to carrier -- right down the Mediterranean.

Secretary Kissinger: I must say when you want to work, you're terrific. You are equally awe-inspiring when you don't.

Mr. Schlesinger: We follow our directions in either case. We will have all the Skyhawks in on October 25 or 26. We can hold some back from the Israelis as a piece of capital if you wish.

Secretary Kissinger: Let's give them our plan, then we can use actual deliveries as a ploy if we need to.

Mr. Schlesinger: We're giving them more Phantoms than they have lost.

Secretary Kissinger: They say they need Phantoms to replace Skyhawks.

Mr. Schlesinger: Some of the Phantoms will replace Mirages and Mysteres that have been lost.

Adm. Moorer: If we ship A-4s by ship, they have to be preserved and de-preserved at the other end. The Egyptians might just torpedo the ship.

Secretary Kissinger: In ten days they will have everything.

Mr. Schlesinger: If there is a ceasefire and Israel is disinclined to go along, we can terminate the deliveries.

Secretary Kissinger: Exactly. We'll just hold out.

Mr. Schlesinger: The Army plan shows that it takes 21 days to prepare a tank for shipment, but we compressed that time to 36 hours for the four M-6s.

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Secretary Kissinger: What is your assessment now? Can the Israelis knock off the Egyptians at the Canal? I assume they can't do it quickly. Not this week, no matter what we do.

Adm. Moorer: No. It will take them three or four days once they turn them back, and they haven't done that yet.

Mr. Schlesinger: Our level of confidence in how quickly Israel can move should be limited. It depends on the ability of the Egyptians to stand up against pressure. We're moving TOWs in tomorrow or the next day. If one sector of the front collapses, things might change.

Adm. Moorer: But the Egyptians have 100,000 men across the Canal.

Mr. Schlesinger: But they can retreat fast, too. They lost 250 tanks yesterday.

Secretary Kissinger: Do you believe that figure? Has anyone seen the 800 Syrian tanks reportedly knocked out? The photography doesn't confirm it.

Adm. Moorer: The figures are probably inflated.

Mr. Schlesinger: Israel is asking for bridging equipment.

Secretary Kissinger: Let's wait a couple of days, to put it mildly!

Mr. Colby: [redacted]  
[redacted]

Mr. Sisco: [redacted]

Secretary Kissinger: [redacted]

Mr. Colby: [redacted]

Secretary Kissinger: [redacted]

Mr. Schlesinger: State has been saying we fly worldwide reconnaissance missions. This could mean the USSR and the PRC. It would be better to say "selectively worldwide."

Mr. Sisco: That's a good point. We'll watch that.

Adm. Moorer: Do you want the [redacted] to go tomorrow?

Secretary Kissinger: I don't think so. What would we get out of it that would make it worthwhile?

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Adm. Moorer: An update.

Mr. Clements: [redacted]

Secretary Kissinger: How late can we let you know?

Mr. Schlesinger: We can cancel it up to the last minute.

Adm. Moorer: After take-off, if you wish.

Secretary Kissinger: Let's keep the flight on standby and see what happens today. It would take off when?

Adm. Moorer: About 2:00 a.m. tomorrow. We're also considering moving two destroyers east to monitor the Soviet supply planes coming in. The [redacted] the other carrier is in the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Kennedy is moving down toward Gibraltar, but it will stay in the Atlantic near Rota.

Secretary Kissinger: Good!

(Secretary Schlesinger and Adm. Moorer left the meeting to attend the Medal of Honor ceremony.)

Mr. Colby: [redacted]

Secretary Kissinger: [redacted]

Mr. Colby: [redacted]

Mr. Clements: Is anyone thinking about quote foreign military sales unquote? What are we going to do about this volume.

Mr. Rush: We have a serious problem.

Mr. Clements: We will need a supplemental.

Secretary Kissinger: Let's get the Jewish lobby to get us the money. And let's wrap some other things in it too. Go see (Senator) Ribicoff.

Mr. Sisco: Let's get a Congressional package and get it moving in the next 24 hours.

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Secretary Kissinger: Yes, and don't be modest. They have been screaming for it -- let (Senator) Jackson put it through. And get Cambodia taken care of in the package. It's an absurdity that we have to lose our war. If we had put one F-4 into Cambodia they would have screamed bloody murder.

Mr. Sisco: (to Clements) Curtis Tarr and Sy Weiss will work with you on this.

Secretary Kissinger: Let's get it today.

Mr. Rush: I'll get it started as soon as I get back.

Secretary Kissinger: On the public relations side, Bob McCloskey will take the lead. We'll keep the anti-Soviet remarks low key. Say 280 Soviet planes have flown in with 4000 tons of equipment. We waited for four days while we attempted to get the supply flow shut off through diplomacy. When this failed, we had no choice except to begin resupplying Israel. We have offered to stop if there is a ceasefire and if the Soviets stop. We urge all parties to show restraint and to move toward a settlement as rapidly as possible. Bill (Clements), you keep your people down on the scale of our effort. The Soviets will pick it up anyway.

Mr. Colby: Absolutely.

Secretary Kissinger: In 24 hours we have put as much material in as they have done in four days?

Mr. Clements: More.

Mr. Colby: But don't say that. Let the Soviets figure it out.

Mr. Rush: Don't let's get into a public race.

Mr. Clements: They will lose any race.

Secretary Kissinger: And our clients can use the equipment better.

Mr. Clements: We're putting in 50 tons per hour. There has never been an airlift like this one.

Secretary Kissinger: It is awe-inspiring.

Mr. Clements: We could double it within 24 hours if the airfields were there at the other end.

Secretary Kissinger: Don't tell (Senator) Ribicoff that. Is everything going in to Tel Aviv airport? Is there no other airfield?

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Mr. Clements: No.

Secretary Kissinger: What about the military airfield south of Tel Aviv?

Mr. Clements: I'm told Tel Aviv is the only one now, without moving in a lot of air control and other equipment. If we want to open up the tap further, we'll move in the equipment and open up another airfield.

Secretary Kissinger: Our strategy is to convince the Arabs and the Soviets that they will be pushed against the wall and that time is on our side. What the Israelis want is less important.

Mr. Sisco: They can't absorb any more.

Mr. Clements: Do you want to move any tanks out of Europe? We have a great stockpile of tanks there -- 105s and 155s, which are critical to the Israelis. We could move them quickly to Rotterdam. The Dutch wouldn't mind. That would cut our shipping time in half. Should we do it?

Secretary Kissinger: Yes. Could you give us today a list of everything that is moving. We want to have as much on the ships as possible, in case we decide to cut back on the airlift.

Mr. Clements: There are 11 ships [redacted] that are either in US ports or will be soon that we can use.

Secretary Kissinger: Do the Israelis know that?

Mr. Clements: No. I suggest we put one ship out of Rotterdam as a signal.

Mr. Sisco: That's a good idea.

Secretary Kissinger: The only way we can wind this up is if the Soviets see we won't quit and won't panic; if the Europeans see that they are pushed between losing their NATO relationship and lining up with us.

Mr. Clements: This will have a helluva effect on the Europeans.

Secretary Kissinger: It will help with the PRC and will limit adventurism in the Soviet Union. When the Europeans are restored to balance, they will realize that we help our friends.

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