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WASHINGTON SPECIAL ACTIONS GROUP

November 9, 1973

Time and Place: 3:02 p.m. - 4:10 p.m., White House Situation Room

Subject: Middle East

Participants:

Chairman: Major Gen. Brent Scowcroft

State: Kenneth Rush
Roger Davies

DOD: William Clements
Major General Gordon Sumner

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

CIA: William Colby
Samuel Hoskinson

NSC Staff: William Quandt
Jeanne W. Davis

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

It was agreed that:

... The airlift of supplies to Israel would be continued through November 14, but at a reduced rate.

... Deputy Secretary Clements would discuss with Secretary Schlesinger, and General Scowcroft with Secretary Kissinger, provision to Israel of the film from the latest SR-71 mission.

... The Iranians would be invited to fly with U. S. patrols over the Arabian Sea and an Iranian destroyer will be invited to train with a U. S. destroyer in the area in preparation for the MIDLINK exercise; MIDLINK should continue.

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.... Deputy Secretary Rush would check with Secretary Kissinger as to whether Congressman Stratton's group should be permitted to visit Tel Aviv and Cairo.

.... Admiral Gayler's (CINCPAC) trip to Australia should be cancelled.

.... We should stick with the request for \$1.3 billion MASF for Vietnam for FY 1975.

... General Scowcroft will check with Secretary Kissinger concerning an invitation to the Shah and to Saudi King Faisal to visit the U. S. S. Hancock.

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General Scowcroft: Bill (Colby), may we have your briefing.

Mr. Colby briefed from the text at Tab A

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Mr. Clements: I think the impact of the Arab oil production cut-back on the U.S. will be more severe than CIA does. I estimate a 17% drop.

Mr. Colby: My figure is edging up.

Mr. Rush: It will probably reach 17%.

Gen. Scowcroft: Let me give you a rundown on where we stand in this mixed up agreement. Last night we got a cable from the Egyptians reporting that the Israelis had a significantly different interpretation of the agreement. They were insisting that Suez was a cut-off town--that there would be no phone or mail service, newspapers, doctors or tradesmen allowed in or out. They insisted that the Cairo-Suez road was in Israeli hands and the UN could establish only two check-points. The Egyptians thought announcement of the agreement should be held up until these points were clarified and they had received assurances that Israel would comply with the agreement. We sent word of this to Secretary Kissinger and to the Israelis. The Secretary sent messages to both the Israelis and the Egyptians and there were talks back and forth---a hand-holding operation in both directions. Then Egypt this morning agreed to the announcement, but the Israelis said 'no', if the Egyptians were insisting on interpreting the announcement their way. We had already given the letter to the UN Secretary General and the agreement had already been leaked by the Japanese.

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Mr. Rush: That was outrageous---it was leaked by the Foreign Ministry.

General Scowcroft: The Israelis argued that the 6-point package was an integral package, including the last paragraph on the lifting of the blockade. Following a special Israeli Cabinet meeting, it was announced that the agreement had the concurrence of both countries and it is scheduled to be signed tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. in the military meeting. So we're off to a shaky start.

Adm. Moorer: 2:00 p.m. local time?

Gen. Scowcroft: Yes, 7:00 a.m. here.

Mr. Rush: The so-called blockade is really a mess.

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General Scowcroft: This is to stay within this room, but the Secretary has reached an oral understanding with the Egyptians on the easing of the blockade. The Israelis wanted it said that the blockade would be lifted. They Egyptians complained, saying they would have to deny that the blockade was lifted, but that they would ease it.

Adm. Moorer: But they don't have a blockade.

Gen. Scowcroft: They couldn't lift the blockade because they didn't have one, so they changed "ease" to "relax". The Israelis will say that they understand the ceasefire is a ceasefire on land, sea and air, without saying the blockade has been lifted. They Egyptians wanted no reference to the blockade but the Israelis, for internal reasons, needed some reference to it. So the situation is precarious.

Mr. Clements: But there has been some progress.

Mr. Rush: Some progress then some regression.

Mr. Clements: We call that backing and filling.

Adm. Moorer: More filling than backing.

Gen. Scowcroft: The Secretary had good meetings in Amman and Riyadh. The only surprise was that King Hussein hit him up for considerably increased MAP.

Mr. Rush: It would have been a surprise if he hadn't.

Gen. Scowcroft: Right, but they want a substantially more sophisticated program than they have had so far.

Mr. Colby: What did (Saudi King) Faisal say on the 1967 border?

Gen. Scowcroft: He said he wanted to help the Americans but was embarrassed to be in this position. He said he was under strong radical pressure and that all the Arabs were united. He hoped we could move quickly to a settlement and he would do the best he could. He is in a tough position, but he indicated that when he could move, he would: but he couldn't move until there was some movement in the negotiations.

Mr. Clements: We couldn't expect more.

Mr. Colby: If that's all, that's okay. He wasn't hanging on an extreme position.

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General Scowcroft: Apparently not.

Mr. Clements: His excuse has to be some movement on the Israeli side.

Mr. Colby: That's essential to progress. I was afraid he was hooked on the 1967 position.

Mr. Clements: He'll move off that.

Mr. Rush: Faisal, for the first time, has sent a congratulatory message to Brezhnev (on the Soviet national anniversary). And they are really chasing us down on supplying our ships with POL.

Mr. Clements: That's (Saudi Petroleum Minister) Yamani.

Mr. Davies: Jeeb Halaby has just had a talk with Yamani and he phoned yesterday afternoon. Yamani said when there was some progress toward a settlement, they would take this as a basis for relaxation of their restrictions. But they had a great interest in using their oil revenues for development in the Arab world and for heavy investment both here and internally. He was very bitter over the \$2.2. billion supplemental request for Israel and charged that the U.S. had flown material directly to El Arish and had participated with the Israelis in the action. He moved off that position during the course of the meeting, however, and Halaby said the atmosphere was more positive when he left.

Mr. Rush: Time is working against us.

Adm. Moorer: The Europeans will be even worse off with the oil restrictions.

Mr. Clements: We're not sure of that yet.

Mr. Colby: I agree, There may be a smaller percentage cut in Europe.

Mr. Rush: But if everyone is cut off, the Europeans will be in worse shape.

Mr. Clements: If the Europeans are under the same embargo we are, they'll be in a helluva shape, but the embargo is not being applied equally.

Mr. Rush: The Europeans aren't being hit yet.

Adm. Moorer: But half of the Netherlands refining output goes to Europe.

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Mr. Clements: There will be some adjustment to take care of that. The Netherlands bore the brunt because they were believed to be more active. Twenty-four or twenty-five percent of the Dutch population are Jewish or of Jewish extraction, and they have a disproportionate influence in government, business and banking. They are more pro-Israeli than any other European country.

Mr. Rush: But the EC declaration was quite pro-Arab, and the Netherlands joined in. The Arabs will cut off anything that goes to the U.S.

Mr. Clements: That means from Rotterdam.

Mr. Rush: Also from Aruba, Timor and Curacao.

Gen. Scowcroft: The Secretary feels we shouldn't cut off the airlift yet.

Adm. Moorer: We have enough equipment to keep it going to Tuesday 4

Gen. Scowcroft: He wants it to go to Wednesday ~~but he would agree to~~ a slightly reduced rate. 5

Mr. Clements: We can do it easily. We are flying 15 planes a day.

Adm. Moorer: We can cut to 12.

Mr. Clements: Is that okay?

General Scowcroft: Yes. He is worried that a cut-off might upset the ceasefire or might look like a price we had paid to Egypt. Have we stopped our discussions with the Israelis on military equipment?

Mr. Clements: For all practical purposes. General Sumner still has some communication with them but not on any new things.

General Sumner: The pressure is off now.

General Scowcroft: You can go ahead and talk to them, but without any commitment.

Mr. Colby: [redacted]

General Scowcroft: [redacted]

Adm. Moorer: [redacted]

Mr. Colby: [redacted]

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General Scowcroft: [redacted]

Mr. Clements: Admiral DePoix (of DIA) is just back from Israel and he says our team is getting maximum cooperation on every photo and every piece of equipment. It was slow for a while but he says they are cooperating perfectly now. There is nothing we are not getting. It would be doing damned little to let them have the film. I think we'd be in a poor position.

Adm. Moorer: [redacted]

[redacted] the Air Force Chief of Staff was not at all cooperative--we had to go over his head.

Mr. Clements: When we did, we got it. I'll talk to Jim (Schlesinger).

General Scowcroft: Okay; I'll check again with Kissinger.

Mr. Clements: I'd like to do it; this isn't a one-way street.

Mr. Rush: After all we've done for them, if they didn't cooperate-----

Mr. Clements: But we shouldn't snap at a gnat and swallow a camel. [redacted]
[redacted] I'd like to see us do it.

General Scowcroft: (to Clements) Let me know (about your conversation with Jim (Schlesinger)). I'll ask Kissinger.

[Omitted here is discussion unrelated to the Middle East]

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Adm. Moorer: We are imposing rigid restrictions on the use of fuel which will have an impact on readiness. We've cut down 35% in some cases. We have the advantage of the normal Christmas standdown, and we are permitting some of the 6th Fleet ships to go into port.

Gen. Scowcroft: Where do we get our fuel for Thailand?

Adm. Moorer: From Singapore.

Mr. Clements: Most of it comes out of the Middle East, with some from Indonesia.

Adm. Moorer: It's from the big companies. The Saudis are telling them that they can't sell to the U.S. or they'll reduce their crude supplies.

Mr. Rush: Having leapt the barrier on the oil embargo, the Saudis are getting a kick out of enforcing it. They're going overboard.

Mr. Colby: In Singapore, too?

Mr. Clements: Everywhere. Look at Canada. The Canadians are responding as quickly as Singapore.

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Mr. Rush: They responded at once, but they said they wouldn't cut off our sources in Western Canada.

Mr. Clements: That's because they have no way to get oil from Western Canada to Eastern Canada.

Adm. Moorer: General Casey's team that has been in Israel evaluating their losses has done an outstanding job. Israel started with 993 tanks and lost 495. They have them broken down by type. They lost 87 aircraft. In line with the President's policy of replacing Israeli losses, we had to have a baseline from which to operate. The team will be back this weekend. We plan to follow them with an operational/technical team. They will examine the capability of Soviet weapons: how they were used and how the Israelis defended against them--the doctrinal situation in which losses occurred, etc. They will extract the lessons learned, the way the Egyptians fought; did they follow Soviet doctrine? They will consider if we should emphasize stand-off weapons so we can knock out missiles from a distance. We won't be increasing the total number of U.S. military in Israel--we're just replacing one team with another.

Mr. Colby: Have the British hit you yet on lessons learned?

Adm. Moorer: Yes, the British and the Germans. I expect that will be Topic A at the ministerial meeting in December. We will sanitize our final report and give them the things John Finney has already discussed with them.

Mr. Colby: Senator Symington wants it too.

Mr. Clements: We'll sanitize a report for him too.

Adm. Moorer: But they must understand that this was a peculiar environment--it's as far away from Vietnam as you can get. In this situation, there was no place to hide, the weather was perfect, the tanks were ready targets for guided weapons. We have to be careful about assuming the same things would happen in Europe. This was a natural for the TOWs, Mavericks and Walleyes. The kill percentage was fantastic---65-90%.

Mr. Clements: Tom's (Moorer) group has really been pitching in on this. They have brought all their assets to bear on producing some net assessments. I'm very enthusiastic about this. This evaluation process is superior to anything they've done before. They're looking at what happened; what killed the tanks; what was the survival rate; what kind of ammo was used; why did some survive and not others?

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Adm. Moorer: When the Israelis started across the Canal, they had one' brigade to guard their right flank. The brigade that was scheduled to cross had to be brought in to support that flank, and the reserve brigade was the one that actually went across. Our people said there was a destroyed vehicle every 10 square meters. When the tanks were hit, the ammunition in the turret would go off, and the force would flip the turret upside down in the same mount. In the future they may not want to put their ammunition in the turret. They're looking at things like that.

Mr. Clements: They're looking at effectiveness and usefulness, and the only thing that has made this possible is the full cooperation of the Israelis. It's damned important that we give them something back.

Mr. Rush: But let's not be too grateful. They're not doing this because they love us--it's in their own self-interest. They will get it all back.

Mr. Clements: But it makes a helluva difference in cooperation if they are getting the word from the top. [redacted]

Mr. Rush: I'd like to send them a few signals without hurting ourselves.

Mr. Colby: It's important that they get the right signals. If we continue the airlift [redacted] the signals might get mixed.

Mr. Rush: But there is the other side of the coin. Not only do they expect to get the \$2.2. billion all in grant aid, but they now want \$500 million a year each year in the future.

Mr. Clements: If we were in their position, we'd do the same thing. You can't blame them for trying.

Mr. Rush: I just don't want you to feel too grateful to them.

Mr. Clements: Don't worry about me.

Mr. Davies: Motor Hellas has been told they are to be denied crude. Will this affect the Eastern Mediterranean?

Adm. Moorer: Not right away.

Mr. Clements: It won't affect the 6th Fleet, but you may not be able to drive to work some morning. The 6th Fleet will get what it needs to operate. The public just hasn't got the message. It's not complicated; it's really pretty simple.

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Gen. Scowcroft: Does our evaluation team pretty well agree with the Israelis on their losses?

Adm. Moorer: No, but we have a par figure. On the aircraft, we know we're correct. But we're approximating on those things that are scattered throughout the sand.

Mr. Clements: We have a gap of 495 tanks between the Israelis and us. The truth lies somewhere in the middle.

Gen. Scowcroft: That's a pretty good gap.

Adm. Moorer: They captured 250 Syrian tanks--T-55s--in pretty good shape. We'll produce a fair number. On the public affairs side, it's important that Washington stick to the Shah's story on the operation of the P-3s. We will instruct the fleet to "no comment" and refer anyone back to Washington. Don't you think that is best?

Gen. Scowcroft and Mr. Rush: Yes.

Adm. Moorer: What about the next SR-71 mission? We're still interested in the SCUDs, and ceasefire violations.

Mr. Colby: Also in tank counts, military lines, resupply efforts.

Gen. Scowcroft: When do you want to fly?

Mr. Colby: We can do it any time.

Adm. Moorer: Whatever Henry (Kissinger) thinks.

Mr. Colby: Would you land in Greece?

Gen. Scowcroft: If it happens soon, we wouldn't be ready for Greece.

Mr. Davies: The ceasefire has to be stabilized first.

Adm. Moorer: (to Gen. Scowcroft) Did you say anything to Henry (Kissinger)?

Gen. Scowcroft: No, but I think it would be acceptable to him.

Mr. Colby: Let me remind you of the risk that the Soviets might put a Foxbat up from Syria.

Adm. Moorer: They couldn't catch it.

Mr. Colby: If the Foxbat started when the SR-71 was over Egypt, they could be together by the time it got to Syria, but only if the Russians fly it.

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Adm. Moorer: The SR-71 is Mach 3.2 and the Foxbat is straining at Mach 2. It's primarily a reconnaissance plane.

Mr. Clements: When could you fly a mission?

Adm. Moorer: We could do it tomorrow night.

Mr. Colby: There's no screaming hurry. Let's take a look at the track. We got a good read-out on the last one. We had weather problems, but we got pretty much what we wanted.

Mr. Clements: We should fly them on a regular schedule.

Mr. Colby: I think they have come to accept the flights.

Gen. Scowcroft: What kind of a regular schedule?

Mr. Clements: One a week.

Mr. Colby: That would be a little much if they had to fly from Massachusetts.

Gen. Scowcroft: If they are flying as often as once a week, we should look at the possibility of a European base.

Adm. Moorer: We can go tomorrow night or as soon as the weather permits. Then we might wait a week or so and discuss it again.

Adm. Weinell: What countries might let us base it there? Turkey?

Mr. Rush: No.

Adm. Weinell: What about Iran?

Mr. Rush: That would be okay.

Mr. Davies: Greece would be a possibility if the ceasefire stabilizes. At least I recommend we ask.

Mr. Clements: That's the best prospect. I don't think the Shah would let us.

Adm. Weinell: Not even if we gave him an SR-71?

Mr. Clements: The Greeks are our best chance.

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