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SUBJECT: Yasir 'Arafat's Preference to Deal Directly with the United States Government rather than to Discuss a Middle East Peace with Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat

Approved for Release
by the Central Intelligence Agency
Date: 11/13/13

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1. The following information was obtained [redacted] [redacted] October 1978. Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat recently gave Major General Shawqat, the head of Military Intelligence, permission to probe Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chief Yasir 'Arafat's views on the Camp David Accords and on continuing Middle East negotiations. Yasir 'Arafat conveyed a message to General Shawqat via an emissary on 12 October to the effect that he, 'Arafat, does not trust President Sadat and would prefer to deal directly with the United States (U.S.) on the matter of peace in the Middle East and the role of the PLO.

2. Given the nature of the message, General Shawqat chose not to pass the message to President Sadat and instead sent his own emissary to contact 'Arafat for clarification of 'Arafat's precise views and desires. General Shawqat's emissary was expected to return with 'Arafat's more precise views on 19 October.

3. General Shawqat has been appointed by the Egyptian Government to maintain discreet contact with the PLO. General Shawqat expressed the view that Yasir 'Arafat believes the U.S. Government is sincere in its efforts to bring peace to the Middle East and desires to be fair to all parties. General Shawqat believes, therefore, that Yasir 'Arafat would indeed want his own direct contact with the U.S. Government.

4. (U.S. Ambassador to Egypt's Comment: In our talk earlier this week, Shawqat also mentioned to me 'Arafat's alleged desire to engage in a direct dialogue with the U.S. He did not cast it in terms of a new effort, but rather as a continuation of 'Arafat's longstanding desire to have direct association with us. 'Arafat's desire to do so, Shawqat claimed, is intensified by the recent Camp David Accords. I reminded Shawqat of our offer of last summer to engage in a dialogue with the PLO if it publicly accepted U.N. Resolution 242 with appropriate reservations on the inadequacy of the refugee language and explicitly recognized the right of Israel to exist. I recalled that we, working with the Egyptians and the Saudis, had last year developed a fair formula for this purpose. Unfortunately, although the Egyptians had told

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us that 'Arafat favored the formula, he could not obtain the acquiescence of the PLO Executive Committee and the effort aborted. Shawqat should know that our offer still stands, but in the absence of such public acceptance by 'Arafat and the PLO of U.N. Resolution 242, it is not possible for the U.S. Government to engage in a direct dialogue with 'Arafat. I suggested that the best thing Shawqat could do was to urge the PLO leadership to reconsider their rejection of this earlier U.S. offer. Shawqat agreed that the PLO leadership, thanks largely to the Rejectionists and negative Syrian counsel, had been shortsighted, but seemed uncertain whether the PLO Executive Committee was likely to adopt a more positive stance in the present circumstances. The whole thrust of Shawqat's comment, reported in Cairo Embassy message number 22724, was on the importance of PLO acquiescence if West Bank/Gazan leaders are to be willing to stick their necks out and participate in the negotiations.)

5. According to information [redacted]

[redacted] an American of Arab extraction has been instructed by the PLO to meet quietly with Secretary of State Vance to ask if the Secretary would be willing to meet secretly with Shafiq al-Hut, who is in the U.S. as a member of the PLO delegation attending the U.N. General Assembly. Al-Hut apparently has instructions from 'Arafat to attempt to meet secretly with Secretary Vance to convey Palestinian views on the Camp David Accords to the U.S. Government as well as what in their opinion, the proper role of the PLO should be in future negotiations or in a peace settlement. No other members of the PLO delegation know of 'Arafat's instructions that al-Hut attempt to meet with Secretary Vance.

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