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IMMEDIATE

MAY 9, 1974

HAKTO 67

FOR: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM: THE SECRETARY

PLEASE CONVEY THE FOLLOWING TO THE PRESIDENT:

1. I AM IN THE PROCESS OF ORGANIZING VARIOUS FORCES FOR WHAT I BELIEVE WILL BE MY CLIMACTIC MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ASAD ON SUNDAY. YESTERDAY I BROUGHT THE ISRAELI POSITION TO ASAD WHICH REPRESENTED AN ADVANCE OVER THE PAST ISRAELI PROPOSALS. I INFORMED ASAD OF ISRAEL'S WILLINGNESS TO DRAW ITS DEFENSE LINE WEST OF THE ENTIRE CITY OF KUNEITRA. WHILE THIS REPRESENTS IMPROVEMENT, THE FACT IS THAT WHEN ONE ANALYZES THE CURRENT ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL PROPOSAL, FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES IT IS NOT MUCH MORE THAN A SYMBOLIC PULLBACK FROM THE LINE THAT EXISTED JUST BEFORE THE WAR OF OCTOBER 1973. MOREOVER, UNDER THE ISRAELI PROPOSAL ASAD COULD NOT RETURN HIS CIVILIANS TO KUNEITRA AND THE ISRAELI DEFENSE LINE WOULD BE AT THE EDGE OF THE CITY -- IN FACT ALONG ONE OF THE CITY STREETS. THUS SOME FURTHER ISRAELI CONCESSIONS ARE CLEARLY NECESSARY. ALL THIS WOULD BE FAR SHORT OF SYRIAN DEMANDS.

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State Dept. review completed

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INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

2. I HAD FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WITH MRS. MEIR AND THE KEY MEMBERS OF HER CABINET LAST NIGHT, AND THE CURRENT ISRAELI MOOD IS RESISTANT TO ANY ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS.

3. I WILL BE MEETING WITH THEM AGAIN ON FRIDAY EVENING TO REVIEW THE SITUATION, AND ON THE BASIS OF THE CABINET-APPROVED POSITION I WILL BE PRESENTING THE SYRIANS ON SUNDAY WITH A FEW ADDITIONAL MODIFICATIONS THAT DRAW THE LINE WEST OF THE OCTOBER LINE IN A COUPLE OF PLACES. FOR EXAMPLE, THE ISRAELIS ARE WILLING FOR THE UN TO TAKE OVER THEIR POSITIONS ON THE HIGHEST PEAKS ON MOUNT HERMON. WHETHER I CAN GET SOMETHING MORE FROM THE ISRAELIS ON FRIDAY IS DOUBTFUL.

4. I WOULD, OF COURSE, MAKE A MAJOR EFFORT WITH ASAD, IF THE ABOVE ISRAELI POSITION PROVES INSUFFICIENT, THE ISRAELIS WILL THEN FACE A CRITICAL CHOICE: TO PERMIT THE NEGOTIATIONS TO REACH AN IMPASSE AND THEREBY FACE THE PROBABILITY OF AN ESCALATED ATTRITIONAL RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS, OR TO FACE UP TO GIVING UP ANOTHER KILOMETER OR SO OF TERRITORY WHICH WOULD NOT AFFECT THEIR SECURITY ADVERSELY BUT WOULD REQUIRE GIVING UP SOME OF THE CULTIVATED FIELDS ATTACHED TO SETTLEMENTS THEY ESTABLISHED NEAR HADASSA IN 1968. AGAIN, I AM STRUCK WITH THE LACK OF FLEXIBILITY WHICH THE DOMESTIC SITUATION IN ISRAEL CAUSES, AND WITH THE LACK OF RESPONSIBILITY WHICH STAKES THE AMERICAN POSITION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND RISKS AN ENHANCED HOLE FOR THE SOVIET UNION ON A KILOMETER HERE AND THERE AND ON THE VAGARIES OF ISRAELI DOMESTIC POLITICS. AT THE SAME TIME, ASAD, WHO SEEMS TO WANT A DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT, ALSO HAS INTERNAL PRESSURES WHICH CONCERN HIM. HE STRESSED REPEATEDLY THAT HE MUST HAVE THE KIND OF DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT WHICH HE CAN EXPLAIN TO HIS PEOPLE AFTER 26 YEARS OF STRUGGLE AND NOT PROVIDE THE OPPONENTS OF HIS REGIME AN OPPORTUNITY TO UPSET HIM.

5. MY EFFORTS IN THE LAST FORTY-EIGHT HOURS HAVE BEEN DESIGNED TO KEEP THE RUSSIANS ESSENTIALLY NEUTRALIZED AND NON-INVOLVED -- THIS WAS THE PRINCIPAL RESULT OF MY MEETING WITH BROMYKO IN CYPRUS -- AND PREPARING THE GROUNDWORK FOR SAUDI INTERVENTION IN DAMASCUS IN SUPPORT OF THE POSITION I WILL BE PRESENTING TO ASAD ON SUNDAY. MY CONVERSATION WITH FAISAL TODAY INDICATED THAT THE SAUDIS ARE PREPARED TO BE HELPFUL. SAQQAF, THE FOREIGN MINISTER, PUBLICLY ENDORSED YOUR FOREIGN POLICY AND OUR STAND ON DISENGAGEMENT. FAISAL COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE FLATTERING. THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT THE SAUDIS WILL SEND AN EMISSARY TO DAMASCUS TO WEIGH IN ON THE SIDE OF MODERATION. I WAS ALSO ABLE TO ANNOUNCE AT THE CONCLUSION OF MY SAUDI VISIT HERE TODAY, THE VISIT OF PRINCE FAHD TO WASHINGTON ON MAY 24, WHICH REFLECTS THE PROGRESS WE ARE MAKING IN ESTABLISHING A BASIS FOR LONG-TERM ECONOMIC, SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND MILITARY SUPPLY COOPERATION BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UNITED STATES.

6. TONIGHT I WILL BE GOING TO CAIRO FOR FURTHER TALKS WITH SADAT AND CONCERTING WITH THE EGYPTIANS ON WAYS IN WHICH THEY WILL EXERCISE THEIR INFLUENCE IN DAMASCUS.

7. THERE IS STILL A CHANCE FOR AN AGREEMENT BUT IT IS TOUGH GOING.

WARM REGARDS..

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MAY 9 8 27 PM '74

May 9, 1974

HAKTO 67

FOR: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM: THE SECRETARY 

Please convey the following to the President:

1. I am in the process of organizing various forces for what I believe will be my ^{climactic} ~~climatic~~ meeting with President Asad on Sunday. Yesterday I brought the Israeli position to Asad which represented an advance over the past Israeli proposals. I informed Asad of ~~the~~ Israel's willingness to draw its defense line west of the entire city of Kuneitra. While this represents improvement, the fact is that when one ~~analyzes~~ analyzes the current Israeli withdrawal proposal, for all practical purposes it is not much more than a symbolic pullback from the line that existed just before the war of October 1973. Moreover, under the Israeli proposal Asad could not ~~return~~ return his civilians to Kuneitra and the Israeli defense line would be at the edge of the city -- in fact along one of the city streets. Thus ~~some~~ some further Israeli concessions are clearly necessary. All this would be far short of Syrian demands.

2. I had further discussions with Mrs. Meir and the key members of her Cabinet last night, and the current Israeli mood is resistant to any additional concessions.

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3. I will be meeting with them again Friday evening to review the situation, and on the basis of the Cabinet-approved position I will be presenting the Syrians on Sunday with a few additional modifications that draw ~~the~~ the line west of the October line in a couple of places. For example, ~~the~~ ^{the Israelis} ~~are~~ are willing for the UN to take over their positions on the highest peaks on Mount Hermon. Whether I can get something more from the Israelis on Friday is doubtful.

4. I will, of course, make a major effort with ~~Asad~~ ^{Asad}. If the above Israeli position proves insufficient, the Israelis then will ~~face~~ face a critical choice: to permit the negotiations to reach an impasse and thereby face the probability of an escalated attritional ~~war~~ resumption of hostilities on the Golan Heights, or ^{to} face up to giving up another kilometer or so of territory which would not affect their security adversely but would require giving up some of the cultivated fields attached to settlements they established near Kuneitra in 1968. Again, I am struck with the lack of flexibility which the domestic situation in Israel causes, and ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~the~~ the lack of responsibility which stakes ^{risks} the American position in the Middle East and ~~makes~~ an enhanced role for the Soviet Union on a kilometer ~~■~~ here and there and on the vagaries of Israeli domestic politics. At the same time, Asad, who seems to want a disengagement agreement, also has internal pressures

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which concern him. He stressed repeatedly that he must have the kind of disengagement agreement which he can explain to his people after 26 years of struggle and not provide the opponents in his regime an opportunity to upset him.

5. My efforts in the last forty-eight hours have been designed to keep the Russians essentially neutralized and non-involved -- this was the principal result of my meeting with Gromyko in Cyprus⁻ and preparing the groundwork for Saudi intervention in Damascus in support of the position that I will be presenting to Asad on Sunday. My conversation with Faisal today indicated that the Saudis are prepared to be helpful. Saqqaf, the Foreign Minister, publicly endorsed your foreign policy and our stand on disengagement. Faisal ~~could~~ not have been more flattering. ~~There is~~ There is a good chance that the Saudis will send an emissary to Damascus to weigh in on the side of moderation. I was also able to announce at the conclusion of my Saudi visit here today, the visit of Prince Fahd to Washington on May 24, which reflects the progress we are making in establishing a basis for long-term economic, scientific, technical and military supply cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the United States.

6. Tonight I will be going to Cairo for further talks with Sadat and concerting with the Egyptians on ways in which they will exercise their influence in Damascus.

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7. There is still a chance for an agreement but it is tough going.

END Text

Warm regards.

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May 9, 1974

HAKTO _____

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FROM: THE SECRETARY

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the city *in fact along one of the city streets*
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memorandum and All this would be the start of Syrian demands
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position I will be presenting the Syrians on Sunday with a few additional modifications that draws the line west of the October line in a couple of places. For example, they are ^{for} willing ~~are~~ the UN to take over their positions on the highest peaks on Mount Hermon. Whether I can get something more from the Israelis on Friday is doubtful.

4. I will, of course, make a major effort with Asad.

If the above Israeli position proves insufficient, the Israelis then will face a critical choice to permit the negotiations to reach an impasse and thereby face the probability of an escalated attritional type resumption of hostilities on the Golan Heights, or face up to giving up another kilometer or so of territory which would not affect their security adversely but would require giving up some of the cultivated fields attached to settlements they established near Kuneitra in 1968. Again, I am struck with the lack of flexibility which the domestic situation in Israel causes. ^{and} At the same time, Asad, who seems to want a disengagement agreement, also has internal pressures.

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 the American position in the Middle East
 + the enhanced role for the Soviet Union
 on a kilometer here & there + on the margins
 of Israeli domestic politics.*

SECRET/SENSITIVE
EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

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He ^{repeatedly that} stressed he must have the kind of ^{explain to people} disengagement agreement which he can justify and not provide the opponents in his regime ~~who do not favor~~ ~~improved relations with~~ and ~~representative~~ ~~opposition~~ opportunity to upset him.

5. My efforts in the last forty-eight hours have been designed to keep the Russians essentially neutralized and non-involved--this was the principal result of my meeting with Gromyko in Cyprus, and preparing the groundwork for Saudi intervention in Damascus in support of the position that I will be presenting to Asad on Sunday. My conversation with Faisal today indicated that the Saudis are prepared to be helpful. I was also able to announce at the conclusion of my Saudi visit here today, the visit of Prince Fahd to Washington on May 24, which reflects the progress we are making in establishing a basis for long-term economic, scientific, technical and military supply cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the United States.

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SECRET/SENSITIVE

-4-

EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

7. ~~I do not see that agreement is precluded~~ there

is still a chance

*for an agreement but it is
tough going.*

WARM REGARDS.