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SENIOR WSAG MEETING

Thursday, September 10, 1970

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Time and Place: 3:15 p.m. - 4:00 p.m., White House Situation RoomSubject: Middle East (See Part II for discussion of Cambodia)Participants:

State - U. Alexis Johnson  
 Joseph J. Sisco  
 Rodger P. Davies

JCS - Adm. Thomas H. Moorer  
 Lt. Gen. Melvin Zais  
 General John W. Vogt

Defense - David Packard  
 Robert Pranger

NSC Staff - Harold H. Saunders  
 Col. Kennedy  
 Mrs. Jeanne Davis

CIA - Richard Helms  
 Thomas Karamessines  
 David Blee

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

It was decided:

1. that the WSAG Middle East Working Group would prepare;
  - a. a political-military scenario-contingency plan for deterring Soviet intervention in the event Israel were to employ its forces in support of King Hussein at his request against the Fedayeen and;
  - b. alternate packages of equipment support for Israel based on alternative assumptions as to the level of hostilities and threat to Israel resulting from Israeli intervention in support of King Hussein at his request against Fedayeen in Jordan.
2. that the political military Contingency plan for U. S. intervention in Jordan in support of King Hussein at his request against Fedayeen would be reviewed and revised as necessary for consideration by the WSAG.

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Mr. Sisco: To bring us up to date on the hijacking situation, I have had a report from Bern that we have received a counter proposal from the PFLP: If the three governments will release the captured commandos (7 in all and the body of the one killed), the PFLP will release all the women, children and sick without any discrimination as to nationality -- i. e. including Israelis. As a second stage, they would exchange all the rest of the passengers for the Fedayeen (numbers unspecified) held by Israel. This proposal has a certain amount of public appeal and we consider it a clever PFLP strategem. It forces the four nations to decide to act together to turn down the proposal but put pressure on Israel; or, to act on a piece-meal basis and leave unresolved the most serious problem -- the exchange of the balance of the passengers for the Israeli-held Fedayeen.

Dr. Kissinger: They are using the nationals of other countries as hostages for the Israeli prisoners.

Mr. Johnson: If Israel accepts, they accept the principle of hostages.

Mr. Sisco: Just before the Bern meeting, we are told, Eban sent a private message to Home to the effect that if the four countries acted together and held out for the release of all passengers and the aircraft, Israel would reconsider its position. At the meeting, the ICRC representative said the PFLP counterproposal was discriminatory and he would not proceed on that basis. He demanded the release of all passengers, without discrimination, and the aircraft; or the ICRC would pull out of the negotiations. The UK, German and Swiss representatives took the same position, and the proposal was rejected. The UK representative then asked for the Israeli position on the exchange of the prisoners. The U. S. representative, as instructed, let others take the lead. The Israelis took a very hard line -- in effect "no deal". The four asked that the Israeli representative go back for instructions and he agreed to do so. Another meeting has been set for 6:00 p.m., EDT. I think this represents a bit of progress.

Ron Zeigler is having trouble with press reports about the possibility of military intervention. We should hold to a line which neither adds to the speculation nor is absolutely categorical that nothing is intended.

Mr. Johnson: We have said previously that we are relying on diplomatic channels and the ICRC efforts. We should stick with that.

All agreed.

(Mr. Sisco left the room at Mr. Zeigler's request)

Mr. Johnson: The situation in Amman has quieted down.

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Admiral Moorer: The Ambassador has not made any recommendation for an evacuation.

Dr. Kissinger: Who is fighting whom and to what end?

Mr. Davies: The 1st Brigade of the Jordanian Army and the radical Fedayeen-- possibly the PLO.

Mr. Helms: It is unclear just who is involved. The King has said for the ninetieth time that if this present cease-fire doesn't hold, he has had it.

Dr. Kissinger: The radio report we had yesterday meant that Hussein was leashing the Army, rather than unleashing it, didn't it?

Mr. Davies: Yes. He asked the Army to restore control.

Dr. Kissinger: What is his game?

Mr. Helms: He wants to avoid fighting.

Dr. Kissinger: But that means his end. There is no way for him to get back control without fighting.

Mr. Saunders: He may think there is a difference between fighting now and after the hijacking crisis is over.

Mr. Helms: I don't think that is a determining factor. He is simply not willing to take on the Palestinians in his Kingdom, with the possible help they would receive from the Iraqis, possibly the Syrians. We have reports that the Fedayeen are virtually out of ammunition -- that they would have run out days ago if they had not been supplied by the Iraqis.

Mr. Johnson: What is their normal source of supply?

Mr. Helms: Various sources -- at present, the Iraqis.

Admiral Moorer: They have been buying arms and stealing them from the Jordanian Army.

Dr. Kissinger: How good is the Iraqi Army?

Mr. Helms: As an Army, no good; as bandits, all right.

Dr. Kissinger: Can the Jordanians handle them?

Mr. Helms: We don't know; probably.

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Dr. Kissinger: But the Israelis could handle them easier.

Mr. Helms: No question.

Admiral Moorer: It would be no contest.

Dr. Kissinger: Can we discuss the additional assistance package for Israel which the President requested last Friday? Can we agree on a position that it shouldn't be done, but if it is done, this is a package that makes sense?

Mr. Packard: This package provides for 125 sorties. There is some dispute about the number of sites.

Dr. Kissinger: We can forward it to the President as the one making the most sense. We can tell him we have put together other packages for other contingencies.

Mr. Packard: This package includes the package already committed.

Dr. Kissinger: What will it lead to if the President sticks by his Friday decision to send additional material?

Mr. Johnson: The original package plus this add-on.

Mr. Package: This will double the sortie capability of the original package.

Mr. Saunders: It doubles the expendable munitions.

Dr. Kissinger: Should the President hold this for his discussion with Mrs. Meir or should we offer it now?

Mr. Johnson: Hold it for Mrs. Meir, by all means. The President can decide whether or not he wants to relate it to the New York talks.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes. Last week the President was relating it to the Egyptian violations. (to Mr. Johnson) Will you include this item in your memorandum to the President for his meeting with Mrs. Meir?

Mr. Johnson: Yes. We will include our recommendation on this additional package.

Dr. Kissinger: (to Mr. Saunders) Will you do a memorandum to the President on the package.

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Can we now review our hijacking contingency plans? We agreed yesterday on two categories: 1) a military evacuation of Jordan, and 2) a military campaign in support of Hussein. We agreed that, if Jordanian troops could not succeed alone and outside help was required, that U.S. troops would be preferable for the first category and Israeli troops for the second. The forces required would be roughly the same. (to Admiral Moorer) Have you been able to review what we might do?

Admiral Moorer: It is clearly understood that whatever we do from Europe must be such that it will not leak. Generals Throckmorton and Goodpaster both understand this. It is agreed that there is nothing we could do from Fort Bragg without a leak. We do have one battalion on 22-hour continuous alert plus flight time at Bragg.

Dr. Kissinger: So one battalion would be ready to go in 22 hours. Could others follow in 48 hours or when?

Admiral Moorer: There are two determining factors: the time required to marry the aircraft and the troops and that required to prepare and load the planes and troops for paradrop.

In Europe we have the Crescent Cap exercise in which one company of paratroops is prepared to load out and move in four hours. One light infantry battalion can move in 8 hours; others in increased times.

Dr. Kissinger: Can one company do anything?

Admiral Moorer: That is 484 men. They could seize and hold an airfield.

Dr. Kissinger: For 4 hours?

General Zais: There could be some paradrop follow-up if necessary.

Admiral Moorer: This is the best we can do without the risk of its becoming public.

(Mr. Sisco returned)

Mr. Johnson: How long could they continue to hold.

Admiral Moorer: For several weeks. We would have the problem of readjusting our air assets. It takes 10-12 hours to get tactical aircraft to bases -- Turkey or Cyprus if we use land-based air.

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Dr. Kissinger: The Turks wouldn't let us in, would they?

Admiral Moorer: Probably not. With regard to the Navy, some ships could begin to move in four hours without any public awareness. We could move two submarines into the Mediterranean to keep track of what the Soviet ships are doing. We could put ASW patrol aircraft into the central Mediterranean. We also have an amphibious operation on Crete which is due to be backloaded on September 14. We have taken every action we can take now without signalling an increased alert. Goodpaster and Throckmorton are aware of the problem and there is nothing else we can do now without risking a leak.

Dr. Kissinger: To recap, we could have one company in within four hours plus flying time. We could have an infantry battalion in within eight hours plus flying time. The rest would follow -- how soon?

Admiral Moorer: Within 24-28 hours, including alert time and flight time.

Dr. Kissinger: What gaps would there be after the battalion gets in? How long does the battalion have to hold?

Admiral Moorer: 24 hours alone; 48 hours before a brigade could get in. You understand that two battalions are understrength due to the general world-wide draw-down of the Army. In the meantime, we could start moving units of the 82nd Airborne.

Dr. Kissinger: Would it be possible to put this on a chart?

Admiral Moorer: Yes, but the situation changes by the minute. For example, some European units are now moving to training areas and would have to be brought back.

Dr. Kissinger: It's easier for you to visualize these things than for me. The President will be deciding this issue in a condition of stress. Can we give him an idea of the magnitude of the problem?

Admiral Moorer: I think this is as far as we can go now.

Dr. Kissinger: It sounds right to me.

Mr. Packard: I suggest, rather than supply a plan now, that the Chiefs keep the plan updated and when the President needs it he can call for it and get an updated plan.

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Admiral Moorer: We could give you one to give you the feel of it. You should call us before you give it to the President, however.

Dr. Kissinger: I assure you no decision will be taken to implement any plan without the Chairman and Secretary Laird in the room. I was thinking of this for illustrative purposes.

Mr. Packard: (to Admiral Moorer) Your people should keep this updated.

Admiral Moorer: We have been keeping an updated plan since June.

Dr. Kissinger: Can we discuss the second operation -- to support Hussein. I'm aware of the argument that it wouldn't do Hussein any permanent good and it would be better if the Israelis did it, but we had better have a plan on the off chance we have to do it. There is one additional alternative. The President wants us to consider using aircraft against the Fedayeen -- not necessarily ground forces. If the King should ask for help, we should consider providing air support.

Admiral Moorer: Our first recommendation is that we should not get involved. If we do, our first preference would be for the use of air against ground units, LOC, etc. One problem is that the Fedayeen provide no discrete targets.

(Mr. Sisco left the room again at Zeigler's request)

If the Iraqis should come across, their LOC would be visible and could be attacked by air either from carriers or from Cyprus.

Dr. Kissinger: Can we have an operational plan?

Mr. Johnson: This would require a minimum of forward air controllers.

Admiral Moorer: It is a feasible option.

Dr. Kissinger: Can you work it out?

Admiral Moorer: Yes. The Independence is only 100 miles from the beach.

Mr. Packard: This would require only giving an order to the carrier.

(Mr. Sisco returned)

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Admiral Moorer: Our third preference would be a ground operation in Jordan. The principal problem here is logistics. Initially, at least, we would have no seaport. We would require overflight facilities, or a move across Israel, a base in Lebanon, etc. The main difficulty would be fuel. If we had to mount a sustained operation, we would need ground access to Jordan proper.

Dr. Kissinger: How?

Admiral Moorer: We would need clearance to move across Israel or Lebanon.

Mr. Packard: (to Admiral Moorer) You should emphasize your caveat that you recommend against the operation.

Admiral Moorer: Yes, I recommend against it. The problem is logistics. An air operation could be done, but a ground operation would be a real problem.

Mr. Packard: Not to mention what would happen if the Soviets intervened on the other side.

Admiral Moorer: The Soviets have good reaction capability. They are capable of moving from Black Sea ports in about 120 hours. They could have ground forces to Egypt or Syria within 15 - 16 days.

Dr. Kissinger: Once we put in our four brigades, that's it then, unless we bring in troops from Germany.

Admiral Moorer: No. We could take troops from Europe or from the US. We have a Marine Battalion in the Mediterranean, some Marine Battalions on the West Coast. We would be stripped clean, however. If this should happen, we are at a mobilization level. If we got in a situation where there were indications that the Soviets were coming in, we shouldn't monkey around. We should tell the Soviets we mean business and show them by augmenting the 6th Fleet, moving tactical fighter squadrons and putting SAC on alert.

Mr. Johnson: We may want to do those things as a deterrent before the Soviets move.

Mr. Helms: Yes. If you wait until they move you're finished.

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Admiral Moorer: Yes, we should establish a deterrent. We should call for partial or full mobilization, ask for a budget supplemental, divert materiel from Southeast Asia. We can't do it half-way; we have to be convincing.

Dr. Kissinger: To do what?

Admiral Moorer: To take a posture to deter the Soviets.

Dr. Kissinger: Suppose the President decides to assist the Jordanians. Does he have to do all these things?

Admiral Moorer: He should be prepared to take some or all of the series of measures I described.

Dr. Kissinger: Can you write them down? We don't want to go this course, but if we have to, let's be sure we do it right.

Admiral Moorer: The movement of one ship or one squadron is a feeble gesture that won't serve the purpose.

Dr. Kissinger: If the Israelis go into Jordan with ground forces, possibly with US air support, would we necessarily take these actions against the Soviets?

Admiral Moorer: No.

Dr. Kissinger: If we commit US forces for a sustained operation in Jordan, can we put together a contingency plan including these measures? (to Kennedy and Saunders) Will you put together something next week.

Admiral Moorer: You should clearly indicate US resolve -- and possibly establish a requirement for mobilization.

Dr. Kissinger: We must look at it from the point of view of what is politically bearable -- from the foreign policy point of view. We should get the list of measures you describe, let everyone look at it in the Working Group and agree that this is what we want to do.

Admiral Moorer: I would want the opportunity to selectively recommend certain steps.

Mr. Kissinger: You will, I want to narrow these steps to those which are more likely.

Admiral Moorer: I agree.

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Dr. Kissinger: What if there is a collapse of Royal authority and Hussein asks for help, the Iraqis intervene, and Israel enters Jordan? We may have to provide assistance for Israel and take measures to deter Soviet intervention.

Admiral Moorer: They would be the same as those I described if the US was prepared to stop the intervention.

Dr. Kissinger: We can't mobilize before the Soviets intervene.

Mr. Packard: We could move at a lower level.

Dr. Kissinger: I consider this not a remote possibility -- I think it is quite possible.

Mr. Packard: The Israelis have all the capability they need to intervene now.

Dr. Kissinger: Not to overcome a Soviet intervention. We might have to hold the ring.

Mr. Sisco: Any Iraqi invasion would increase the amount of support Iraq is getting from the Soviets.

Mr. Packard: The Israelis have the capacity now, but the question is for how long. The U.S. might have to step-up supplies to them later.

Dr. Kissinger: No one is talking about doing it now. If Israel wants to move into Jordan, what are we letting ourselves in for; and what measures must we be prepared to take against the Soviets? It is silly to close our eyes to the possible results of Israeli intervention.

Mr. Pranger: There are different contingencies depending on what the Israelis would want to do. We have broken it down by the scale of the intervention, what the Arabs would do, etc.

Dr. Kissinger: Having a contingency plan doesn't mean we would do it. I don't want the President to tell us to do something without our knowing: 1) what we must do for Israel and 2) what measures we should take to prevent Soviet intervention.

Mr. Sisco: What would Israel need in the face of a sustained Iraqi intervention in Jordan? What if the Egyptians step up their activities on the Canal? What would Lebanon need to face a Palestinian uprising there?

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Mr. Johnson: What assumptions can we make about the Jordanian Army?

Dr. Kissinger: It is easier to discuss these things now than on the morning it happens.

Mr. Pranger: We have looked at the matter. A limited Israeli intervention would require no additional military gear. From there on we have estimated levels of intervention from the other side. Israel would probably not need anything except expendables. We have an estimate here.

(Mr. Pranger passed a paper to Mr. Saunders)

Mr. Packard: Basically, they could do it with what they have -- or we could go as high as \$100 million a month.

Dr. Kissinger: Is \$100 million a month the only alternative to doing nothing?

Mr. Packard: We could do anything in between on a graduated basis.

Mr. Kissinger: We should be able to make some realistic assumptions in between -- what the Egyptians would do, what the Iraqis would do.

Admiral Moorer: Israel would in effect be fighting on two fronts. Against the Iraqis, they would be using 500-pound bombs and ground-type ammunition. They have a stockpile of these things, which we would probably have to replenish. The \$100 million a month would be for a sustained war of attrition including the missiles in Egypt. This would not necessarily happen right away.

Dr. Kissinger: I might put my Program Analysis people on it and pull something together, which you could critique.

Mr. Pranger: This represents only 24 hours work. If we put it into a Working Group, we can have a contingency plan. We would have to work with the Israeli Defense people if it actually happened.

Admiral Moorer: I believe there are four components of a deterrent: 1) our military posture in Europe, which we could increase by deploying additional Army, Navy and Air units; 2) our strategic position, in which we should alert SAC and deploy our missile submarines.

All these actions should be vigorous and visible.

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Dr. Kissinger: We would take these actions if Israeli forces became engaged in Jordan and before the Soviets move?

Admiral Moorer: We should take deterrent action before they move. What do you mean by move?

Dr. Kissinger: Suppose the King asks the Israelies (or the US) for help against the Fedayeen or Iraqi and Israel gets involved. What do we need to held the ring against the Soviets?

Admiral Moorer: If we receive a political warning we could establish an advanced position.

Mr. Packard: There are two ways the Soviets might become involved: 1) through unlimited support for Egypt, Iraq, etc; there is no way we can stop them from doing that; or 2) if they should intervene with their forces, we could do these other things.

Dr. Kissinger: We may want to prevent the second possibility by assuming an intimidating posture.

Mr. Sisco: If you assume a limited operation in Jordan could be done by air; and if, by unlimited support of Egypt and Iraq, the Soviets unleash the Egyptians to intensify the situation on the Canal; there would be a tremendous need for Israel to counter with air. Do the Israelis have enough air power to mount a campaign against an Egyptian attack and at the same time mount an aerial operation against Iraqi troops? Iraq also has an Air Force which must be taken into account.

Mr. Packard: That would mean essentially the \$100 million a month package. If things went that far, the Israelis wouldn't be satisfied in a defensive position. This would mean all-out Middle East war.

Dr. Kissinger: It would not necessarily be all-out Middle East war. It would be a campaign of attrition along the Canal plus the operation in Jordan.

Mr. Packard: But we could assume the Israelis would go on the offensive.

Dr. Kissinger: Maybe they won't. Maybe they would be satisfied to hold one area and clean up the other.

Mr. Helms: For how long?

Mr. Sisco: Lebanon has even less control over the Palestinians. What would be required on that end? That is probably the way it would evolve, but it would be not quite all-out war.

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Mr. Pranger: The Israelis will have good tactical air capability. The A4s could easily interdict LOC.

Admiral Moorer: Israel would first destroy the Iraqi and Syrian aircraft; then shift to the A4s to interdict ground operations. They could then turn their more sophisticated aircraft to Egypt.

Dr. Kissinger: Would they have enough?

Admiral Moorer: Yes, but we should be prepared to replace their losses.

Dr. Kissinger: Let's ask the Working Group to give us the various levels of what it would look like.

Admiral Moorer: May I return to the four components of a deterrent posture toward the Soviets: In addition to the two I mentioned (our military posture in Europe and our strategic position), we would have to 3) establish lines of communication through a hostile ocean and 4) take action within the country, including calling up the reserves, changing current personnel rules, extending enlistments, etc. -- some things which would require Congressional authorizations.

Dr. Kissinger: That looks like the \$100 million package. If the Israeli forces move into Jordan you wouldn't need all that. You would need some diplomatic action somewhere.

Mr. Johnson: Yes, we need a political-military scenario. The diplomatic side of preventing the Soviets from coming in would be most important. What support we could get in the area, for example.

Admiral Moorer: But you have to convince the Soviets you mean business.

Mr. Johnson: And have the capability to back it up. This would require the support of others.

Dr. Kissinger: We should get this in order -- what we might do politically with the Soviets, with NATO, etc. Have the Working Group put something together.

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