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EO 13526 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs  
EO 13526 3.5(c)~~TOP SECRET/NOFORN~~National Security Council Meeting  
Thursday, September 11, 1969MIDDLE EAST

## PARTICIPANTS:

- ✓ The President
- ✓ The Secretary of State, William P. Rogers
- ✓ The Attorney General, John N. Mitchell
- ✓ The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff,  
General Earle G. Wheeler
- ✓ The Director of Central Intelligence,  
Richard M. Helms
- ✓ Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
- ✓ Under Secretary of State, Elliot L. Richardson
- ✓ Deputy Secretary of Defense, David Packard
- ✓ US Ambassador to the UN, Charles Yost
- ✓ Assistant Secretary of State, Joseph J. Sisco
- ✓ Director, Office of Emergency Preparedness,  
General George A. Lincoln
- ✓ Colonel Alexander Haig
- ✓ Helmut Sonnenfeldt
- ✓ Harold H. Saunders
- ✓ Alfred L. Atherton, Jr., Department of State
- ✓

Helms:

Arab-Israeli problem has gotten steadily worse over last two years. Four-Power talks recessed since early July in favor of US-USSR talks. USSR has probably told Nasser some compromise necessary. Al Aqsa Mosque burning increased Arab frustration. Situation compels moderate Arabs to take a more active military posture.

Israel has adopted "no budge" position. Israel's attitude on borders getting progressively harder.

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E.O. 13526, Section 3.5

DECLASSIFIED BY 431/9050 per sec. 3.3(b)(1)(C), 3.5(c) on 7/28/2014  
By RS/MIH NARA, Date 8/8/2016

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Retaliatory strikes doing Arabs more damage -- deliberately. Raids these days are for keeps -- no prisoners.

On the Arab side, governing factor remains military incompetence. Some progress being made -- partly to compete with terrorists.

Palestinians have kept Lebanon without a government since April. Not a military threat but getting "deep into the Israeli psyche." Al Fatah increasing operations but main focus on PFLP with about 500 members. Terrorist position: no settlement until Israel driven into the sea. Their position may make it impossible for some Arab leaders to reach settlement.

Rogers:

US-USSR talks have concentrated on UAR-Israel settlement to make Jordan settlement easier.

President:

When we speak of Soviet client states, are we speaking of UAR, Syria, Iraq. Israel-Jordan US clients. USSR does not have close contact with Jordan?

Rogers:

Hussein doesn't feel he is our client now.

Sisco:

USSR showing increased interest in getting into Jordanian aspects of a settlement. US under increasing pressure from Hussein to involve itself in Israel-Jordan settlement.

Rogers:

When we talk about face-to-face discussions, no problem with Jordan.

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Sisco:

I came away from Moscow judging: Soviets want to continue dialogue with US for both Mid-East and general reasons. Question: is how Soviets view the area: If area undergoing increasing radicalization, does Moscow view this as in USSR interest.

US-USSR agreement in talks on the following:

- Israel and UAR would sign same agreement.
- Recognition of Israel's right to exist.
- Freedom of passage through Tiran. On Suez, USSR has qualified by reference to Constantinople Convention of 1888.
- Execution of agreement would await agreement on total package -- UAR, Israel and possible Jordan.
- We have agreed on the principle of demilitarization.

Soviet plan:

1. Israeli withdrawal 40 miles.
2. Opening Canal.
3. Israeli withdrawal to June 4 lines and Gaza Strip.
4. Demilitarization of Negev-Sinai border. Seem willing to accept only token demilitarization on Israeli side.
5. Irrevocable UN force at Sharm al-Shaikh.

Position US has taken:

1. Within context of agreement, Israeli withdrawal to "secure and recognized border"

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to be defined by parties. We "do not exclude" pre-war border.

2. Demilitarization of entire Sinai.
3. Options for Sharm al-Shaikh. Let parties negotiate. Kept open Israeli presence.
4. Ultimately, sovereignty of Gaza would have to be determined by Jordan, UAR, Israel.

President: To what extent does that reflect Israeli views.

Sisco: They have seen our position. Israelis have opposed, but if they got this they would like it.

Kissinger: What makes you think they would like it? No evidence

Sisco: Subjective judgment.

Rogers: When Israel really opposes something, they "let us have it with 10 barrels," but they haven't. I think Israel would be happy if they got this much.

President: British and French attitude?

Sisco: Total demilitarization unrealistic, ought to be demilitarization on Israeli side. UN presence. French and British want to improve their position with Arabs.

President: Israelis don't trust UN.

Rogers: We're going to be isolated.

Sisco: Operational issue: Rogers will be talking Mid-East with 50 foreign ministers at UN. Question: Do we

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state our judgment that final border should be pre-war UAR-Israel border, to be agreed in direct negotiations.

Israeli argument: You have given away our counter.

Counter argument: Erosion of US position.

Questions:

1. What would we get in return from USSR.
2. What from Arabs.
3. Israeli reaction.

Problem is whether we could produce the Israelis. Mrs. Meir will object.

Rogers: Say what is our proposal on Tiran.

Sisco: We've let it open. UN presence logical, but Israelis won't buy.

Yost: Device would be UN couldn't be withdrawn without UNSC consent.

Richardson: No settlement if Israelis stay at Sharm al-Shaikh. Israelis determined to stay.

President: "Do you fellows ever talk to the Israelis?"

Kissinger: Israelis want presence at Sharm al-Shaikh with land access to it. If the Israelis accept principle of full withdrawal, it would hurt them more in Jordan.

President: What does USSR want? Leave it like it is?

Sisco: 1. They want to continue talks as a deterrent in the Mid-East.

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2. As long as they talk, this is a demonstration to Arabs that they are trying to help.

3. Be responsive to Nixon "era of negotiations."

Royers: They think they have brought Arabs farther than we have brought Israelis.

President: Don't Soviets know Arabs will be beaten in another war. "If they get screwed again, they won't have another Glassboro to bail them out?"

Halm: They really want to get down to Persian Gulf.

President: In 1967, Soviets looked unready to help Arabs. If this happened again, Soviets don't want to be in that position. Do they really believe -- given that fact -- that they consider this worth a US-USSR confrontation? Do they think this is about the best they can get now? They want talks to continue, but a settlement?

Sisco: They want settlement on own terms. Soviets want Nasser as their own tool. They haven't wanted to press him.

President: How is USSR doing in Mid-East? Not bad -- some weak reeds but still not bad.

Sisco: We have interest in stable peace. Less clear USSR sees this as its interest.

President: USSR can have influence while situation simmers. Does anybody think US as its friend? June war a tremendous victory for Israel and USSR. From their viewpoint why change the situation. Does Moscow think they're going to have confrontation with US over Israel? "You know damn well

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we're not and they know it." Do you think they want a deal?

Sisco: Not a deal that would cost Moscow much.

President: We're the honest brokers here.

Rogers: Could have a settlement that would continue exploitable tension. Meanwhile, they have isolated us from world community.

President: "Israel's puppet."

Richardson: One aspect in which USSR might want real settlement. Present situation continued strengthens fedayeen, weakens Nasser. Soviets less able to deliver if fedayeen come out on top, Soviets less able to deliver Arab demands which would then be not just return of territory but destruction of Israel.

President: Agree but if fedayeen prevail, they too would keep situation stirred up. Soviet have to have some reason to want to settle; what is it?

Rogers: If war broke out again, their clients would lose. Our hope is that they want to avoid a war.

Helms: USSR wants to open Canal to get into Persian Gulf.

Yost: On balance, USSR wants settlement but not going to jeopardize their influence. They could even shift support to fedayeen and try to ride that wave.

What concerns me is extent to which we are in trouble with moderate Arabs. Soviets without lifting a finger are profiting.

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Formula asking Arabs at outset to come to direct negotiations is a non-starter.

Situation is weakening moderate regimes and not increasing Israel's security. Even Moroccans and Tunisians getting worried about US position -- has not gone very far yet.

Kissinger: Soviets may have interest in Israel - UAR settlement because continued occupation of Sinai demonstrates USSR impotence. They want naval access to Persian Gulf. Plenty of tension will remain. They may see their opportunity in transitional regimes in Arabian Peninsula. I can see Soviet gains from a settlement.

Problem of concentrating on UAR-Israel settlement is that our friend, Hussein, comes off worse than Nasser.

Sisco: We have not presented our Jordan views to USSR. Gromyko wants to talk about Jordan.

Kissinger: We haven't told Israel our views on Jordan?

Sisco: Yes.

President: More on flavor at UN?

Yost: We would improve our position if we put forward fair terms.

Kissinger: If we propose and Israelis refuse, do we then continue Phantom delivery? What do we gain with Arabs then? We won't be accused of hypocrisy?

Yost: Yes but better off than now.

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Richardson: We have to put both sides in a position of being responsible for failure.

Kissinger: If we go this route, don't we have to bite the bullet and go all out for a settlement?

Richardson: We do have to face up to situation.

Rogers: This proposal wouldn't be accepted by Arabs right away.

Sisco: Keep our proposal linked to direct negotiations. That would force Soviets to deliver something uncomfortable.

Yost: We could get to direct negotiations but not as a sine qua non.

Sisco: Not sine qua non as start.  
If the principle is there, that's all we're asking for.

President: Isn't real Israeli position to "keep it like it is?"

Sisco: Agree. They'd like to see us isolated with Israel.

President: Why are we having Mrs. Meir come here?

Lincoln: US going to have to think increasingly about airplanes.

President: We have these visits -- Hussein thought we agreed he should have territory back. She just wants to talk to Jewish community -- "she doesn't give one damn about us. I don't know. I've never met her." What do we way to her? Keep our position "exploratory" until after she comes. How can Rogers protect our position.

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Rogers: I suggest no decisions this morning. I can stick on two issues in opening talks -- peace and Arab obligations and then direct negotiations. Say then we can't go much further if Arabs want to drive Israel into the sea.

Yost: Arabs could say: If we do such and such, what will you do?

President: These state visits are generally "a waste of time." I'd like to see us make a couple of specific points. Could we discuss specific terms of Israeli settlements with UAR, Jordan and Syria. Doesn't it make sense for us to get down to specifics? We need some positions they ought to accept.

I don't want to save the face of the USSR; they aren't trying to help us anywhere. I don't see why we should help them. That doesn't mean all their interests are different from ours. In developing our position, let's not give them a chance to claim credit for getting everything back for the Arabs. Mistake to "allow them to look too good."

Mitchell: Looking at our domestic interest, if we took away negotiating base of Israelis, it would take away base for your position on Vietnam and a lot of other issues.

Yost: Press reaction now saying US should do more.

Mitchell: No question. But if we undercut Israelis, "we're going to catch hell all over this country." Look at long-term pull: what are we going to get out of the Arabs in the long term?

Rogers: We have a lot of interests there. Arabs think we won't do anything unless Israel agrees.

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President: We have a curious thing politically. But in terms of votes that influences this Administration less than anything that has been here. I got lowest percent of Jewish vote of any candidate, in US history - 8%. What we're really talking about is history in Mid-East. Problem is not votes..

Mitchell: Problem is how this affects Vietnam.

Rogers: In this situation, if we had a posture that seemed reasonable...we're not going to win either way.

Mitchell: Yes -- I prefaced my statement by saying "if we undercut their position."

Yost: Our position in Israel's long-term interest.

President: Keep UN posture as low as possible so as not to preclude serious discussion with Mrs. Meir.

We should know before she comes our position on:

1. UAR-Israel settlement
2. Jordan-Israel settlement
3. Syria-Israel settlement

Rogers: I'll draw Gromyko out in first meeting. Second meeting will be after Meir visit.

President: Let's leave out Jewish community for a moment. Israel's position short range is unassailable, long range disastrous. I don't like just to sit here and go through the motions with Mrs. Meir. Don't go ahead until we talk to her.

Mitchell: Will Israeli position change after election?

Kissinger: Not much. Physical security is very attractive when all we offer in return are agreements with regimes that may not survive. That is Israeli dilemma.

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Yost: They don't have security now.

Kissinger: In a historical perspective, no way 3 million people can survive in the midst of 60 million hostile people unless they can change that hostility.

Richardson: Their future depends on help. They can't expect our help when our position deteriorates.

Kissinger: If any terms are fair, we will have to impose them.

President: Yes, but let's do it gradually.

On delivery of jets: Looking at "menacing Soviet naval building in the area" and future Israeli difficulty in beating Arabs, I don't think we should leave the impression that ----- in the event of a protracted war ----- the US will help.

If we determine that we want a settlement, we may have to cut off arms supply. But Israel is just about tough enough to say, "So be it." Masada complex.

We must be better prepared for this talk than for any we've had so far. Have an extended talk with Gromyko.

Rogers: We will give you a memo in next three or four days.

President: What about Congress?

Sisco: Balancing act. On whole, reaction good because they think we're trying while protecting Israeli security. Jewish community relatively quiet.

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President: Leaving aside the votes or Jewish community, American public is pro-Israeli. Yet the US public would not support US intervention to save Israel.

Rogers: Rabin says: Could handle USSR short of nuclear weapons or land invasions.

President: Do we have a position on hijacking-- international law, etc. Very few of our allies help us. Airlines, other governments not facing up to this sort of thing--Elbrick kidnapping. We may have to do something on our own.

Yost: Finns thinking about bringing issue to UN.

President: Could I say something about general issue at UN? Worldwide problem of violent methods.

Rogers: On the ambassador kidnapping. have follow-up car.

President: Do it.

To Mitchell: We should have for any state visitor federal legislation to keep demonstrators away. Foreign governments go to great lengths when we visit to avoid embarrassment.

Mitchell: There is legislation on domestic demonstrations at White House and Capitol.

President: But foreign visitors. Under Bill of Rights, hard to distinguish. Would you, John, assume responsibility to negotiate arrangements with local police.

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