

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Omar Saqqaf, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia
Ismail Fahmy, Foreign Minister of Egypt
Vice President Gerald Ford (at end)
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
Peter W. Rodman, NSC Staff *MR*

DATE AND TIME: Monday, February 18, 1974
11:35 a.m. - 12:50 p.m.

PLACE: The Secretary's Office
Department of State

Secretary Kissinger: Ismail, you look disgustingly well.

Minister Fahmy: [To Saqqaf] He is always provocative.

Secretary Kissinger: Omar, do you have a doctor?

Minister Fahmy: We wanted to go to Las Vegas, but it was too far.
[Laughter]

Secretary Kissinger: He has got a lot of money to play around with! He could break the bank.

Foreign Minister Saqqaf: Henry, I do not know what we are going to discuss now. You saw me; you saw my friend. I do not know what more there is.

Secretary Kissinger: Should I sum up my understanding of what you have told me? Let me sum up.

I understand you to say that a decision has been made in principle to lift the embargo.

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DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, as amended, Sect 3.5

NLM 03-34 Per Ltr. 1-16-09

By P. H NARA, Date 10-9-09

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Minister Saqqaf: At the 1st of March.

Secretary Kissinger: At the next meeting of the oil ministers.

Minister Saqqaf: In two weeks or ten days.

Secretary Kissinger: That is essentially unconditional. The decision is made.

Second, you are urging us to do our utmost to bring about disengagement on the Syrian side.

Third, the four heads of government would consider it useful if I came to the Middle East. You proposed that I go before the Islamic Conference.

Minister Saqqaf: Before the Mexico trip.

Secretary Kissinger: [Laughing] Yes. I cannot, but I will come immediately afterward.

This is your understanding?

Minister Saqqaf: Yes.

Secretary Kissinger: I will report this now fully to the President. I have told him generally over an open phone but I will tell him more fully when he returns.

First, let us discuss in practice what will happen now, and second, the meeting with the President tomorrow and so forth.

I will go under these conditions. You understand that my trip will only start the negotiations; it cannot settle them. Maybe a miracle will happen, but it cannot settle it.

It will be the same as my first visit to Egypt.

We will need to find a forum and we will keep the pressure on during it, but it cannot be done in one week.

Ismail, you remember the propositions the Israelis made to you at first. And I am sure they will make similarly outrageous propositions to the Syrians. This has to be understood.

Secondly, I go out and bring the Israeli proposal from Jerusalem to Damascus, which I can do. If the Israelis run true to form, it will be unacceptable to the Syrians. Will the Syrians then say the embargo cannot be lifted?

Minister Saqqaf: We once mentioned five to seven kilometers.

Secretary Kissinger: What five to seven kilometers?

Minister Saqqaf: Disengagement. Could that be our understanding that this will happen? I am not saying what Syria wants; Syria wants all the Golan.

Minister Fahmy: They cannot get it.

Secretary Kissinger: Syria cannot get all the Golan in disengagement. It is impossible.

Minister Fahmy: The Israelis are very keen about the list. They should appreciate the list is coming.

Secretary Kissinger: I do not have it.

Minister Fahmy: This is a very positive step from President Asad.

You were going to get Dayan here.

Secretary Kissinger: I can do that. Then I do not need to go out there.

Minister Fahmy: You did both [in January]. You saw the Israeli Ambassador yesterday.

Secretary Kissinger: Just to prepare him.

Minister Fahmy: Does he know the Syrians are about to give a list?

Secretary Kissinger: No. I am not crazy.

Minister Fahmy: Where do all these stories about our being divided come from? The stories about division between Sadat and Faisal?

Secretary Kissinger: Are there stories? Let's the three of us go down together afterwards.

Minister Saqqaf: We will not mention the list. Or the embargo.

Secretary Kissinger: You can say you want to make it clear that you had a unified message, that yesterday we discussed bilateral matters and today your common position.

Minister Fahmy: You should not discuss the embargo.

Secretary Kissinger: No. I am not the problem. I would urge you to be very strong to the President tomorrow, about no leakage.

Minister Fahmy: This is serious.

Secretary Kissinger: You should be serious. Say you cannot do it if it leaks.

Then next week -- I can get Dayan to come here once I get the lists and visitors. If I go there, I can get Dayan to come here later. This is also possible.

You dealt with them for three months. You know their tactics.

Minister Fahmy: You were very insistent on the lists; now Asad agrees.

Now the request of the four heads of state is they want to see you very actively involved in the disengagement process. Because of Asad's position internally.

Secretary Kissinger: I will be involved. It is giving up our position that we would not while the embargo is on, but we do it because we understand the difficulties.

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On Saturday we decided we do not want our two best friends -- which we consider you two to be -- embarrassed vis-a-vis Syria or the radicals. We are concerned for long term stability.

Minister Fahmy: This is why your visit is necessary.

Secretary Kissinger: I will take the visit.

How does it work in practice? First, they have to agree to negotiate. That I can get done next week.

Second, we have to work on them -- and it will take time -- to change their position. You remember their first position -- that you go back twenty kilometers from the Canal. Then it was for you to go back to the October 22nd lines. Then even when I was in Aswan, they wanted to stay along the Canal. All together, it took about eight weeks. I am not saying it will take eight weeks, but you have to be prepared for their first proposal to be outrageous.

The Syrians first proposal is outrageous too.

I just want him to understand. We will bring pressure on Israel; frankly, equipment will go slowly, but we will not say anything. If there is a public confrontation, it is harder. We will do it our way. I want to delay a public confrontation as long as possible. Because we will have to do more.

Minister Fahmy: The linkage is important, you understand.

Secretary Kissinger: I can get negotiations started.

Minister Fahmy: This is it.

Secretary Kissinger: But as a practical matter, if I bring a plan to Asad, will he get so angry he will make difficulties?

Minister Fahmy: We told him.

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Secretary Kissinger: You told him what he is in for.

Minister Fahmy: Yes. And you will get a Syrian plan that is not on the mark.

Secretary Kissinger: [Laughs] That I already got! They gave them two kilometers of the Golan. They will never accept two kilometers of the Golan.

Minister Fahmy: He needs something to justify his giving the list. You have to help him.

Secretary Kissinger: Maybe I will sum up for the President your report, this way.

Minister Fahmy: And you should add that it is very serious about linkage. Qaddafi just went to Cairo. All of a sudden. It is unbelievable.

Minister Saqqaf: That is why the King wants me to go to Lahore as soon as possible.

Minister Fahmy: Qaddafi wants to talk to our Paliament first. It is a tactical move.

Secretary Kissinger: Then your President speaks tomorrow?

Minister Fahmy: Yes. Then Sadat will take Qaddafi to Riyadh to apologize to King Faisal.

Minister Saqqaf: Something has to happen. Qaddafi does not stand still.

Secretary Kissinger: Is this an offensive move?

Minister Saqqaf: Saudi Arabia is the leader of the Arab cause. We respect his ideas as we respect Asad's moves.

Secretary Kissinger: Is it an offensive move?

Minister Saqqaf: This time I do not think so.

Minister Fahmy: Is it a general thing?

Minister Saqqaf: No.

Minister Fahmy: Just tactical.

Secretary Kissinger: So I will go to Damascus and from Damascus to Jerusalem. Maybe I will visit Cairo and Riyadh. I will go to Cairo, if I am welcome, if Gromyko is not there. [Laughter]

First, Damascus, Jerusalem, then Damascus -- or maybe to Cairo and Riyadh while the Israelis are working out a plan. Then I will go back.

Minister Saqqaf: That is something you can arrange.

If there is no promise

Secretary Kissinger: That is my worry.

Minister Saqqaf: The decision is the decision of the four.

Minister Fahmy: Even Asad agreed about it. The final decision was that it is not linked. Even Asad agreed, so there is no need to worry.

Secretary Kissinger: I am worried about two things: Basically, I think King Faisal's strategy always, and President Sadat's since 1972, is the correct one -- that the Arab nation can achieve its objectives only in friendship with the United States, not in opposition to it; and anything that creates tension between us hurts you.

Right now the oil embargo is really a weapon in the hands of Israel. There is not enough to really hurt but it irritates. You have seen the polls. The longer it goes on, the more opinion turns against you. The people queuing up for gasoline get the gasoline but it is irritating. If

now something happens again on the embargo question, this will start a wave here. And we will have to say something, and the tension will start.

My second worry is the opposite. I do not want President Sadat and the King to expose themselves so much that they are hurt in the Arab world. Because we know they are basically friendly. So it is better if you do not promise anything flatly. We do not want you to be vulnerable, especially on something we cannot do right away.

Minister Fahmy: Who are the radicals? Iraq and Libya. They never exercised any embargo on anyone.

Secretary Kissinger: In practice, the radicals are using the Saudi weapon.

Minister Fahmy: Yes. Now Iraq has accepted the decision of the four. The new development today is that Qaddafi is coming to apologize.

Then President Sadat will take Qaddafi to Faisal to apologize to Faisal. So he will not be a radical any more.

Secretary Kissinger: True.

Minister Fahmy: So you should not worry about the radicals any more.

Minister Saqqaf: I do not like to worry about how someone can defend himself or not. We do things because we believe they are right.

Secretary Kissinger: Right.

Minister Saqqaf: So there is a promise by the four heads of state to lift the embargo. You should not think it is just for offering to the U. S. just out of friendship with the United States. It is not a condition, but as a good friend of ours we know what to expect from you. This will help Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the moderate regimes throughout the Arab world.

[To Fahmy] Do you disagree?

Minister Fahmy: No. He has a very valid point. Because we had a decision once before, and there was a veto. What [the meeting in] Algeria really secured is that this will not be repeated.

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What Asad wants is to see some progress in his area.

Secretary Kissinger: We want it.

Minister Fahmy: Asad himself approved the decision.

The main thing is you should go and get yourself involved.

Secretary Kissinger: That I will do.

Minister Fahmy: So my basic instruction is to get you there.

Secretary Kissinger: What if I saw Gromyko in Geneva on my way over?

Minister Fahmy: It is unnecessary. Why?

Secretary Kissinger: To keep him out.

Minister Fahmy: He will get mixed up in it.

Secretary Kissinger: No, he will not.

Minister Fahmy: It is not necessary.

Secretary Kissinger: So I will see him on the way back. Did you see the Russians attacking me in Paris?

All right then, let us talk about tomorrow.

Minister Fahmy: First I think you or the President should send a message to prepare the way for you -- to Golda Meir.

Secretary Kissinger: Look, we have a lot of experience with the Israelis. It is senseless. When you were here [in October to November], I spent three nights with her and there was an explosion. We found the key was to make a big step, to wear her down.

If he writes her a letter now, we are fighting in the abstract. We should get their proposal, then bring pressure, and not do it before they have proposed anything.

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Minister Fahmy: Just to tell her you are coming.

Secretary Kissinger: I thought that after your meeting tomorrow with the President, you could step out in the Rose Garden, and he can say publicly that he is sending me to the Middle East because he attaches importance to his friendship. This way he does it for you.

Minister Fahmy: I am thinking of another letter.

Secretary Kissinger: A letter we can do.

Minister Fahmy: I am thinking of a letter to the four, that their decision was to help him.

Secretary Kissinger: All right. This can be done. This will be done tomorrow.

Minister Fahmy: Because he was asking for something and now it is given.

Minister Saqqaf: You have to help us.

Secretary Kissinger: He can write to each head and thank them for the visit, and that he wants to tell each of you he will actively pursue Israeli-Syrian disengagement to a conclusion, as a part of the process of implementation of Resolutions 242 and 338.

Minister Fahmy: I should add that he was always believing that the first statement he made in Congress was always valid.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes.

Minister Fahmy: There was some misinterpretation that we were going back on our word. He can say it is clear now that the word was kept.

Secretary Kissinger: I think we need an adviser on how to write to King Faisal anyway.

Minister Saqqaf: We are advising you.

When we left Algiers, we did not have time to discuss the communique. It was ten minutes before we left. But it will be taken care of.

Secretary Kissinger: Tell this to the President.

On the list, how many people know about it?

Minister Saqqaf: The four heads, that is all.

Minister Fahmy: And both of us.

Minister Saqqaf: And Ambassador Dabbagh but no one else.

Secretary Kissinger: I have to make sure it does not leak that I refused the list.

Minister Fahmy: You cannot refuse it. You have to take it.

Secretary Kissinger: I think that is right. It is too dangerous.

Minister Fahmy: You have no right to refuse the list. If you do, you will be going back on what you agreed with Asad.

Secretary Kissinger: I will bring him back in.

Before I go I will say they are agreed to give the list. Just to bring pressure on Israel.

Minister Fahmy: It would be very badly interpreted in Cairo if you refused it.

Secretary Kissinger: Then I will get it this afternoon. What do you think?

Minister Fahmy: Or tomorrow morning. That you are ready to receive what he suggested yesterday.

Secretary Kissinger: I will do it now. [picks up phone]: Get me Kabbani, the Syrian charge.

The Vice President is here now for lunch. I will bring him in so you can meet him. I will tell him what you have said to me.

[to Saqqaf]: I think this rumor about a split between you started when Ismail started telling me that you are so dangerous with women.

[Mr. Eagleburger comes in to deliver a message from the Israelis. Dinitz had received an answer to two questions left over from the breakfast Sunday: (1) The Israelis reiterated their adamant opposition to Soviet participation in the Syrian-Israeli talks, and (2) Israeli agreement to talk with the Syrians as members of the Egyptian military delegation at Geneva had not yet received Cabinet approval.]

[After reading the note to himself]: They are sons of bitches. We are going to have a happy time there next week.

Minister Saqqaf: You think so?

[The Kabbani phone call comes through. Dr. Kissinger indicates to Kabbani that after reflecting further on their conversation the previous day, it occurred to the Secretary that he should receive the material they had discussed. The Secretary says he had not fully understood the evolution of the decision in Algiers. He invites Dr. Kabbani to come in either that afternoon or early the next morning. Dr. Kabbani says he will call back.]

Minister Fahmy: [referring to the message from the Israelis]: They do not want you to go there?

Secretary Kissinger: They are not making it easy.

Minister Fahmy: They have never made it easy.

Secretary Kissinger: I will take the list. It is too dangerous otherwise.

Minister Fahmy: What is keeping her from forming a coalition?

Secretary Kissinger: She has a majority of one without the Religious Party, and the Religious Party wants a coalition with the Right wing, the Likhud. There are enormous difficulties.

Minister Fahmy: This Syrian disengagement makes it easier for them.

Secretary Kissinger: If they had any sense, they would welcome it. It is the first time Syria has agreed to anything formal with them.

Minister Fahmy: And they can demobilize more.

Secretary Kissinger: We agreed, Omar and I, yesterday, that peace is even more in the interest of Israel than the Arabs in the long term.

You know what we went through on the Egyptian side, and they hate the Syrians even more.

Minister Fahmy: Dayan said there was no problem with Syrian disengagement.

Secretary Kissinger: When it does not seem to be happening, they are very generous in their statements.

But I will get it done.

Minister Saggaf: When this gets done, Henry, this package deal, no one knows what kind of Arab world it will be. It will be cooperative with the Western world, and we are tired of this coup d'etat here and there. And this trip by Qaddafi to Riyadh, it is amazing.

Minister Fahmy: He never deals with Kings.

Secretary Kissinger: It is a good move. It cannot hurt you.

Minister Saggaf: Not at all.

[At 12:37, Vice President Ford arrives and is introduced to the Ministers.]

Secretary Kissinger: We have had extensive talks, Mr. Vice President, both separately and together. There was a very important meeting last week in Algeria of the heads of government of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Algeria, and they formed some conclusions which Omar and Ismail were sent here to convey to the President on a confidential basis.

To sum it up, my understanding is as follows: the four heads of state decided the embargo will be lifted at the next meeting of the oil ministers -- which will take place within the next two weeks.

Secondly -- not conditionally but as a strong recommendation -- they are urging us to make a maximum effort to bring about Syrian-Israeli disengagement.

And third, as a sign of our engagement, they have asked the President to send me to the Middle East as soon as possible to get the talks between Syria and Israel started.

They have also said that any leak of this will make it impossible to implement it. Because it must appear as an Arab decision and not under American pressure.

Vice President Ford: Yes.

Secretary Kissinger: We will announce tomorrow that he is sending me to the Middle East.

We will get some flak for doing it without getting it lifted.

Vice President Ford: That is very encouraging, and the American people are very grateful.

Secretary Kissinger: We have put it in the context, Mr. Vice President, that these two Foreign Ministers are the two countries most friendly to the United States. We talked in the context that the objectives of these countries cannot be achieved in opposition to the United States -- but should be in friendship with us.

Anyone who has been in the Middle East has trouble keeping objective. Arab hospitality is a little overwhelming.

Vice President Ford: I have never been to the Middle East.

Minister Fahmy: You are welcome to come. This would be a good time.

Minister Saqqaf: That goes for Saudi Arabia too. We would be glad to have you.

The four important Arab leaders have taken an important decision. For us it means a lot -- for the Arab world, and also for the West and Middle East. I think it is a milestone and solves all the problems that could arise in the future. I believe in this. Henry heard about this from me.

We might be difficult sometimes . . .

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Vice President Ford: We are difficult sometimes too.

Minister Saqqaf: . . . but we keep our word.

Secretary Kissinger: That is what I wanted to say. They keep their word.

Vice President Ford: Henry has kept me informed -- whenever we can catch Henry here -- about how constructive President Sadat was and how helpful King Faisal was.

Minister Saqqaf: And we keep our word.

Minister Fahmy: It needs two-way cooperation. It is not enough that we in Egypt and Saudi Arabia believe it is high time to change the basic relations with the United States. We believe it is important to you too, because you are a superpower. As long as you have friends in the area, you should not miss this opportunity to respond positively.

I have asked Henry why there was this vacuum and misunderstanding for twenty-five years. As it is in our national interest, it is equally in your national interest to have good relations with the Middle East. So it is two-way.

Vice President Ford: The American people are looking forward to better and broader relations not only with your two nations but also with the area.

Secretary Kissinger: These two are the ones we have relied on in the first phase.

Mr. Vice President, we have made good progress with Syria, too, with the help of our two friends here.

Vice President Ford: We owe a great deal to Henry.

Minister Saqqaf: We believe it too.

Vice President Ford: We have never had a Secretary of State who had such broad public support. We are very fortunate.

Minister Saqqaf: You had a strong Secretary of State once earlier but not so friendly. In 1956.

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I do not just want to be flattering. When I met here once with your predecessor, he said that without coordination between the White House and the State Department nothing could be done. We can see it is true.

[The Secretary escorted the Vice President and Minister Fahmy upstairs to the 8th Floor for a formal luncheon. Minister Saqqaf decided that he was still not feeling well, so he declined.]

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