

Middle East

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES

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TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 536 OF 29 NOV
INFO PRIORITY RABAT, UKMIS NEWYORK, WASHINGTON. ROUTINE OTHER
MIDDLE EAST POSTS, PARIS, ROME

MY TELNO 535: PLO/JORDAN

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS UNDERTAKING TO HABIB DURING THEIR RECENT TALKS, KING HUSSEIN ON 29 NOVEMBER GAVE THE US AMBASSADOR AN ACCOUNT OF THE TALKS HE HAD HAD WITH ARAFAT EARLIER IN THE DAY. VIETS HAS SINCE GIVEN ME A FULL BRIEFING.
2. THE KING TOLD VIETS THAT ARAFAT HAD BEEN ANXIOUS TO REASSURE THE JORDANIANS THAT THE STATEMENT ISSUED AFTER THE MEETING OF THE PALESTINE CENTRAL COMMITTEE IN DAMASCUS (DAMASCUS TELNO 333 REFERS) DID NOT CONSTITUTE A REJECTION OF THE REAGAN INITIATIVE, BUT SIMPLY RESTATED THE FACT THAT UNFORTUNATELY THE REAGAN PROPOSALS DID NOT MEASURE UP TO THE CLEAR EXPECTATIONS OF THE JORDANIANS.

TO THE PLO'S EXPECTATIONS. ARAFAT HAD GONE ON TO SAY THAT IN HIS VIEW THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT OF 1 SEPTEMBER CONTAINED MANY POSITIVE ELEMENTS, AND THAT MORE AND MORE PEOPLE IN THE PLO WERE COMING TO RECOGNISE THIS. ARAFAT HAD PROPOSED THAT TWO JOINT PLO/JORDANIAN COMMITTEES BE ESTABLISHED IMMEDIATELY TO STUDY ALL THE AVAILABLE POSSIBILITIES FOR A JOINT APPROACH TO THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. ONE COMMITTEE WOULD ADDRESS THE QUESTION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PLO AND JORDAN WHILE THE SECOND, CALLED BY ARAFAT THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE, WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL QUESTIONS RELATING TO A JOINT PLO/JORDANIAN APPROACH TO THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. BOTH COMMITTEES WOULD BE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT REPORTS FOR REVIEW BY ARAFAT AND CROWN PRINCE HASSAN (KING HUSSEIN WILL BE IN THE FAR EAST AT THE TIME) AT A MEETING IN AMMAN IN MID-DECEMBER, SO THAT THEIR CONCLUSIONS WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR KING HUSSEIN'S TALKS WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN ON 21 DECEMBER.

3. ARAFAT HAD CLAIMED TO KING HUSSEIN THAT HE WAS CONFUSED BY THE MANY CONFLICTING SIGNALS EMANATING FROM THE AMERICANS AND THE ARABS ON THE NATURE OF THE FUTURE POLITICAL ROLE ENVISAGED FOR THE PLO. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME US CONGRESSMEN HAD SUGGESTED THAT THE PLO SHOULD FORM PART OF A JOINT ARAB DELEGATION TO THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. THERE WAS ALSO A MOROCCAN PROPOSAL THAT THE PLO SHOULD FORM A GOVERNMENT IN EXILE, WHICH ARAFAT SAW AS A POSSIBLE OPTION MERITING FURTHER STUDY. IN HIS TALKS WITH THE KING ARAFAT HAD, HOWEVER, REPEATEDLY STRESSED THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO DO ANYTHING WHICH MIGHT INHIBIT PROGRESS IN THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

4. KING HUSSEIN SAID HE HAD REVIEWED WITH ARAFAT WHAT HE TERMED THE UNHELPFUL ATTITUDE OF BOTH SAUDI ARABIA AND MOROCCO TOWARDS JORDAN OVER THE REAGAN INITIATIVE. ARAFAT HAD ALSO, ACCORDING TO THE KING, SAID HE WAS RECEIVING CONFLICTING SIGNALS FROM THE SAUDIS AND WAS NOT QUITE SURE WHAT GAME THEY WERE PLAYING. THE KING AND ARAFAT HAD AGREED THAT THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE POSITION FOR THE OTHER ARAB STATES TO ADOPT WAS TO GIVE FULL BACKING TO WHATEVER AGREEMENTS JORDAN AND THE PLO COULD WORK OUT BETWEEN THEM.

5. ARAFAT HAD EXPRESSED INTEREST TO THE KING IN US REFERENCES TO THE "POLITICAL BONUS" OWED TO THE PLO FOLLOWING THEIR WITHDRAWAL FROM BEIRUT. HE ALSO WANTED TO KNOW WHETHER THE AMERICANS WOULD CONSIDER STATIONING A MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE ON THE WEST BANK AND GAZA DURING THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD FOLLOWING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SELF-GOVERNING AUTHORITY IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.

6. THE KING TOLD VITETS HE HAD PRESSED ARAFAT VERY HARD ON THE IMPERATIVE NEED FOR THE PLO TO ACCEPT RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 AND THE RIGHT OF ISRAEL TO EXIST IN PEACE. HE HAD REPEATED TO ARAFAT WHAT HABIB HAD TOLD HIM THE PREVIOUS DAY: THAT THERE WOULD BE NO GIVE ON THE PART OF THE US IN FACE OF ATTEMPTS FURTHER TO

be no give on the part of the U.S. in face of attempts further to

REFINE OR REDEFINE THESE COMMITMENTS, BUT THAT BY PLAYING THIS CARD THE PLO WOULD "OPEN THE GATES TO EVERYTHING." THE KING BELIEVED ARAFAT HAD UNDERSTOOD THIS, BUT THE KING REMAINED UNCERTAIN HOW MUCH SUPPORT ARAFAT WOULD RECEIVE FROM THE OTHER LEADING MEMBERS OF THE PLO IF HE TOOK THE PLUNGE.

7. THE KING SAID HE HAD ALSO TOLD ARAFAT THAT VERY LITTLE TIME REMAINED IN WHICH TO DECIDE WHETHER THE PLO SHOULD JOIN THE REAGAN INITIATIVE, AND THAT HIS AMBITION FOR AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE WAS UNREALISTIC AND UNREALISABLE. THE KING HAD ALSO EMPHASISED TO ARAFAT THAT, WHEN HE SAW REAGAN IN WASHINGTON, HE WOULD BE LOOKING FOR STRAIGHT ANSWERS ON WHETHER THE US WAS PREPARED TO COMMIT ALL ITS RESOURCES TO REGAINING ARAB SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THAT HE ALSO INTENDED PRESSING THE AMERICANS FOR A FREEZE ON SETTLEMENTS. HE ALSO WANTED TO SHORTEN THE TIME ALLOTTED IN THE CAMP DAVID ACCORDS TO THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD LEADING TO AGREEMENT ON FINAL STATUS, SO THAT A REAL PEACE COULD BE ACHIEVED IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE PERIOD. THE KING TOLD ARAFAT HE SAW A VERY SERIOUS DANGER IN ALLOWING THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS TO EXTEND INTO THE PERIOD OF A NEW US ADMINISTRATION. KING HUSSEIN CLAIMED THAT ARAFAT HAD GIVEN HIM FULL SUPPORT IN PUTTING ALL THESE POINTS TO THE AMERICANS.

8. ARAFAT HAD COMPLAINED BITTERLY TO THE KING ABOUT HIS TREATMENT AT THE HANDS OF THE SYRIANS AND HAD REFERRED TO THE "POISONOUS ATMOSPHERE" OF HIS RECENT VISIT TO DAMASCUS. THE SYRIANS HAD TRIED HARD TO FORCE THE PALESTINE CENTRAL COMMITTEE TO ADOPT MORE EXTREME LANGUAGE IN THEIR STATEMENT. THE SYRIANS HAD MADE VIOLENT PERSONAL ATTACKS ON HIMSELF AND HAD ALSO EXPRESSED SCORN FOR THE FEZ DECLARATION AND ESPECIALLY FOR ARTICLE 7: THEY HAD IN ADDITION ATTACKED THE PLO'S CLOSER RELATIONS WITH JORDAN AND EGYPT.

9. SUMMING UP HIS TALKS WITH ARAFAT TO VIETS, THE KING HAD DESCRIBED THEM AS "PRETTY GOOD:" THE ATMOSPHERE HAD BEEN POSITIVE AND ARAFAT NOW SEEMED PREPARED TO GET DOWN TO SERIOUS DISCUSSION OF THE DETAILS OF A JOINT JORDANIAN/PLO APPROACH TO THE PEACE PROCESS. THE KING HAD EMPHASISED TO ARAFAT HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS FOR HIM TO BE ABLE TO SPEAK AUTHORITATIVELY IN WASHINGTON ABOUT HOW FAR THE PLO WAS PREPARED TO GO IN CO-OPERATING WITH THE REAGAN INITIATIVE SINCE HE THEREFORE NEEDED DEFINITE ANSWERS FROM THE PLO NO LATER THAN THE MIDDLE OF DECEMBER.

10. I HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO SEE THE KING MYSELF, BUT HOPE TO DO SO BEFORE HE LEAVE FOR MOSCOW, PEKING AND TOKYO ON 4 DECEMBER. NOR HAVE WE YET BEEN ABLE TO SPEAK TO ANY OF THE PALESTINIAN PARTICIPANTS IN THE TALKS. NO DOUBT THE KING WAS PUTTING AS POSITIVE AN INTERPRETATION AS POSSIBLE ON HIS TALKS WITH

SAW EARLIER TODAY, WAS CAUTIOUS AND DID NOT THINK ARAFAT HAD YET DECIDED TO TAKE THE PLUNGE.

11. ARAFAT WAS ACCOMPANIED ON HIS 3-DAY VISIT TO JORDAN BY KHALIL AL WAZIR, HANI AL HASSAN, HAMED ABU SITTA AND OTHER LEADING PLO OFFICIALS. HE AND KING HUSSEIN JOINTLY OPENED THE MEETING OF THE PLO HIGHER COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SCIENCE SEMICLN IN HIS SPEECH (THE FULL TEXT IS NO DOUBT AVAILABLE TO YOU) ARAFAT REFERRED TO THE "BROTHERLY WARMTH" WHICH THE PALESTINIANS FELT FOR JORDAN, THE COMMON FATE BINDING THE PALESTINIAN AND JORDANIAN PEOPLES AND THE UNITY OF POSITION BETWEENHIMSELF AND KING HUSSEIN. ALTHOUGH HE HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN INTENDING TO LEAVE EARLIER IN THE DAY FOR SOUTH YEMEN, ARAFAT STAYED ON IN AMMAN FOR THE WHOLE OF 29 NOVEMBER AND HAD MEETINGS WITH MEMBERS OF THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL AND THE PLO CENTRAL COUNCIL RESIDING IN JORDAN. AT THESE MEETINGS THERE IS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN A LENGTHY DIALOGUE ON THE SITUATION FACING THE PALESTINIANS FOLLOWING THE EVACUATION FROM BEIRUT AND ALSO ON HOW FAR THE REAGAN INITIATIVE WAS COMPATIBLE WITH PALESTINIAN ASPIRATIONS SEMICLN DEMANDS FROM THE US "AND SOME WESTERN COUNTRIES" FOR THE PLO TO RECOGNISE ISRAEL ARE ALSO SAID TO HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED.

12. THE PRESS HERE HAS REPORTED THE DECISION TO FORM A JOINT JORDANIAN/PALESTINIAN COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS FUTURE JORDANIAN/PALESTINIAN RELATIONS "AND THE ISSUED RELATED TO THIS AS WELL AS THE REQUIREMENTS OF POLITICAL MOVES IN THE CURRENT STAGE," AND THAT THIS COMMITTEE HELD ITS FIRST MEETING ON 29 NOVEMBER CHAIRED BY ARAFAT AND THE JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER. NO MENTION HAS BEEN MADE PUBLICLY OF THE SECOND COMMITTEE (SEE PARA 2 ABOVE). I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER KING HUSSEIN HAD A FURTHER MEETING WITH ARAFAT IN THE COURSE OF 29 NOVEMBER, BUT SUSPECT HE DID NOT AS HE WAS INVOLVED IN TALKS WITH THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER, OSAMA AL BAZ.

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