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FM WASHINGTON
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 473
OF 270120Z FEBRUARY 90
INFO PRIORITY TEL AVIV, JERUSALEM, CAIRO, TUNIS, AMMAN
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MY TELNO 418: ARAB/ISRAEL:PEACE PROCESS
SUMMARY

1. BAKER ASKS ARENS FOR AN ISRAELI DECISION ON ATTENDANCE AT A TRILATERAL. STATE HOPE FOR AN ANSWER WITHIN THE WEEK. ADMINISTRATION BELIEVE EGYPTIANS ARE ON BOARD.

DETAIL

2. STATE TELL US THAT DURING THEIR MEETING ON 23 FEBRUARY, SECRETARY BAKER TOLD FOREIGN MINISTER ARENS THAT HE THOUGHT THE TIME WAS RIGHT FOR A TRILATERAL FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING. BAKER SAID THAT HE WAS READY TO CONVENE A MEETING AND ASKED FOR AN ISRAELI DECISION ON ATTENDANCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. ARENS DID NOT TAKE ISSUE WITH BAKER'S JUDGEMENT, THOUGH HE RAISED ONCE AGAIN ISRAELI CONCERNS OVER POSSIBLE PLO ASSOCIATION WITH THE PROCESS.

HE AGREED TO DISCUSS BAKER'S REQUEST WITH HIS COLLEAGUES, BUT STATE UNDERSTAND THAT THIS WILL NOT OCCUR UNTIL ARENS RETURNS FROM POLAND ON 1 MARCH. THEY HOPE FOR A REPLY WITHIN A WEEK.

3. BAKER ALSO TELEPHONED ABDUL MEGUID ON 23 FEBRUARY TO REPORT HIS MEETING WITH ARENS. ABDUL MEGUID APPARENTLY CONFIRMED HIS READINESS TO ATTEND A TRILATERAL.

COMMENT

4. THE ADMINISTRATION APPEAR CONFIDENT THAT, BARRING ANY NEW ISRAELI CONDITIONS, THE EGYPTIANS (AND BY IMPLICATION THE PLO) ARE FULLY ON BOARD, AND THAT A POSITIVE RESPONSE FROM THE ISRAELIS IS ALL THAT IS HOLDING UP THE PROCESS. GIVING EVIDENCE TO THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ON 23 FEBRUARY, BAKER SAID QUOTE THE DISCUSSIONS I HAD WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF EGYPT WITH RESPECT TO THESE TWO AREAS (IE AGENDA AND PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION) WENT VERY, VERY WELL. I FORESEE A POSSIBILITY, IF THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF ISRAEL IS IN A POSITION TO BE EQUALLY FORTHCOMING AND OUTGOING, THAT WE MIGHT HAVE SOME CHANCE OF MAKING A LITTLE PROGRESS..... I AM GOING TO CONTINUE TO REMAIN ENGAGED AS LONG AS I THINK THERE IS SOME HOPE OF MOVING THE PROCESS FORWARD. BUT WE REALLY NEED NOW TO START. WE NEED ACTION. WE HAVE DONE A LOT OF TAKING UNQUOTE.

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ARAB/ISRAEL: PEACE PROCESS

SUMMARY

1. BAKER EXPECTED TO PRESS ISRAELIS FOR A DECISION ON ATTENDANCE AT A TRILATERAL WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

DETAIL

2. KURTZER (DAS, NEA, STATE) GAVE US AN UPDATE ON THE PEACE PROCESS TODAY. HE SAID THAT THE PREPARATORY MEETINGS WITH ISRAELI AND EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS HAD MADE PROGRESS BOTH ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES AND ON SIDE ASSURANCES. STATE HAD ADVISED BAKER THAT AGREEMENT AT A TRILATERAL FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING NOW LOOKED FEASIBLE, AND THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO MAKE FURTHER PROGRESS WITHOUT ONE. BAKER CURRENTLY HAD BEFORE HIM A RECOMMENDATION THAT HE SHOULD EITHER (A) CALL SHAMIR AND ASK HIM WHETHER HE WAS READY TO AGREE TO A TRILATERAL OR (B) WAIT FOR ARENS'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON ON 23 FEBRUARY AND CONVEY THE SAME MESSAGE THROUGH HIM. IN EITHER CASE, THE MESSAGE WOULD BE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WANTED A CLEAR RESPONSE WITHIN A CERTAIN TIME LIMIT (A FEW DAYS) OR ELSE THEY WOULD LOOK FOR A SUITABLE OPPORTUNITY, SUCH AS A SPEECH, TO WIND DOWN THE PEACE PROCESS AND EXPLAIN WHY IT HAD NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO PROCEED. WHICHEVER ALTERNATIVE BAKER TOOK, HE WOULD TAKE PARALLEL ACTION WITH ABDUL MEGUID ON EGYPTIAN READINESS. KURTZER'S OWN VIEW WAS THAT SHAMIR WOULD TRY TO AVOID A DECISION, BUT, WHEN PRESSED, WOULD PROBABLY AGREE.

3. ON THE DETAIL, KURTZER SAID THAT THE PROCESS OF SIDE ASSURANCES WAS FURTHEST ADVANCED. THE ISRAELIS STILL CLAIMED TO BE UNHAPPY WITH WHAT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS WILLING TO OFFER, BUT KNEW THAT THEY WOULD NOT GET MORE. THE PALESTINIANS HAD SOUGHT ASSURANCE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION DID NOT SEE ELECTIONS AS THE END OF THE PEACE PROCESS, BUT WERE COMMITTED TO PURSUIT OF A FINAL SETTLEMENT. THE ADMINISTRATION HAD FORWARDED A DRAFT LETTER TO THE EGYPTIANS, INCORPORATING PREVIOUSLY STATED US POSITIONS ON A FINAL SETTLEMENT.

4. ON THE PALESTINIAN DELEGATION, KURTZER CONFIRMED THAT NO LISTS OF NAMES HAD CHANGED HANDS. ALL PARTIES KNEW THAT IT WAS THE INTENTION TO INCLUDE ONE OR MORE DEPORTEES, AND EAST JERUSALEMITES WITH ALTERNATIVE ADDRESSES IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. IF THE ISRAELIS WERE WILLING TO GO ALONG WITH THE MEETING, THEY COULD FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES LOOK ON THEM AS RESIDENTS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. THEY HAD ALSO BEEN OFFERED A DISCLAIMER, TO THE EFFECT THAT PARTICIPATION OF PALESTINIANS FROM PARTICULAR AREAS WAS NOT TO BE SEEN AS PREJUDGING THE STATUS OF THESE AREAS. NAMES OF INDIVIDUAL PALESTINIANS HAD BEEN MENTIONED IN THE COURSE OF DISCUSSIONS AND THE ADMINISTRATION BELIEVED THEY HAD A REASONABLE IDEA OF WHO WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO ALL PARTIES. HOW THEY WOULD BE SPECIFIED REMAINED UNCLEAR. KURTZER THOUGHT IT MOST LIKELY THAT A LIST WOULD BE CONSTRUCTED AT THE TRILATERAL AND ANNOUNCED BY THE EGYPTIANS AFTERWARDS. THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD SAY AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE. OTHER PARTIES WOULD BE URGED TO DO LIKEWISE.

5. ON THE TIMING OF THE TRILATERAL, KURTZER SAID THAT THE EARLIEST

OCCASION WHEN ALL THREE WERE FREE WAS THE END OF NEXT WEEK. BUT UNLESS BAKER COULD GET A QUICK ANSWER FROM SHAMIR THAT ALREADY LOOKED AMBITIOUS. IF THE TRILATERAL WERE SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDED, THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD HOPE TO MOVE QUICKLY TO THE CAIRO MEETING (IF POSSIBLE WITHIN 48 HOURS) IN ORDER TO GIVE AS LITTLE CHANCE AS POSSIBLE FOR THE UNRAVELLING OF AGREEMENT.

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