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OF 232320Z MARCH 90
INFO PRIORITY TEL AVIV, JERUSALEM, CAIRO, TUNIS, AMMAN, RIYADH
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ARAB/ISRAEL: PEACE PROCESS
SUMMARY

1. STATE DEPARTMENT PREPARING FOR EARLY RESUMPTION OF PEACE PROCESS IF PERES SUCCEEDS IN BUILDING A COALITION. IN EXPECTATION OF THIS, STATE ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO BOLSTER PERES' POSITION. INSTRUCTIONS REQUESTED.

DETAIL

2. WE HAVE SPOKEN TO KURTZER (DAS/NEA, STATE) ABOUT THE WAY AHEAD FOR THE PEACE PROCESS.

3. HE THOUGHT THAT PERES HAD A REASONABLE CHANCE OF STRIKING A DEAL WITH THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES. STATE'S LATEST INFORMATION WAS THAT PERES HOPED TO CONSTRUCT A COALITION WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE DAYS, THUS GIVING HIMSELF AN OPPORTUNITY TO WIN A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE BEFORE THE KNESSET ADJOURNED. IF HE FAILED TO MEET THIS DEADLINE, LIKUD WOULD BE ABLE TO BLOCK HIS EFFORTS TO RECONVENE THE KNESSET, LEAVING THE SHAMIR-LED CARETAKER GOVERNMENT IN POWER UNTIL AT LEAST APRIL.

4. THE ADMINISTRATION ACCEPTED THAT ANY HOPE OF PROGRESS ON THE PEACE PROCESS DEPENDED UPON PERES BECOMING PRIME MINISTER. IF HE DID, STATE WOULD BE READY TO MOVE AS SOON AS HE WAS. IN KURTZER'S VIEW IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE FOR OFFICIALS TO MEET FIRST TO FINALISE SIDE ASSURANCES (ON WHICH PERES MIGHT SETTLE FOR LESS THAN WAS NOW ON OFFER), DETAILS OF THE PALESTINIAN DELEGATION ETC. BUT IF PERES FELT A POLITICAL NEED TO MOVE STRAIGHT TO A FOREIGN MINISTERS TRILATERAL, BAKER WOULD PROBABLY ACQUIESCE.

5. KURTZER NOTED THAT A CAIRO MEETING WOULD NOT PRODUCE QUICK RESULTS. PERES WOULD THEN FACE SNIPING FROM LIKUD. HE WOULD ALSO HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE QUESTION OF THE PLO ROLE, WHICH WAS LIKELY TO BECOME MORE VISIBLE AS ARAFAT SOUGHT TO MAKE CLEARER HIS OWN CONNECTION WITH THE PROCEEDINGS IN CAIRO. GIVEN THAT PERES WOULD IN ALL PROBABILITY BE LEADING A WEAK GOVERNMENT, STATE WERE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO BOLSTER HIS POSITION IN THE AWKWARD PHASE BETWEEN THE START OF A DIALOGUE AND VISIBLE SIGNS OF PROGRESS WITH IT.

6. KURTZER SAID THAT STATE WERE WORKING ON WAYS TO EXTEND US SUPPORT FOR PERES TO HELP HIM IN THIS PERIOD. BUT A GESTURE FROM THE ARABS AND/OR THE EC IN RECOGNITION OF THE STEP PERES HAD TAKEN IN OPENING A DIALOGUE WOULD ALSO BE VALUABLE. ON THE ARAB SIDE HE THOUGHT ONLY THE SAUDIS HAD THE STATURE AND THE MODERATE CREDENTIALS TO MAKE A GESTURE BOTH MEANINGFUL AND POSSIBLE. STATE HAD IN MIND SOMETHING LIKE A MEETING IN WASHINGTON BETWEEN PRINCE BANDAR AND THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR, A MEETING OF THE ISRAELI AND SAUDI PERM REPS IN NEW YORK, OR A MEETING OF SAUDI AND ISRAELI OFFICIALS, PERHAPS OF A TECHNICAL/ SCIENTIFIC NATURE UNDER THE UN UMBRELLA. KURTZER TOLD US, IN CONFIDENCE, THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAD FLOATED THIS IDEA WITH BANDAR LAST SUMMER IN THE CONTEXT OF THE KING'S PROPOSED VISIT, BUT THE KING WAS APPARENTLY UNWILLING. STATE HAD NOT GONE BACK TO THE SAUDIS SINCE THEN.
7. ON THE EC SIDE, KURTZER THOUGHT THAT A GESTURE OF SUPPORT FOR PERES, IN THE FORM OF A JOINT STATEMENT OR A MEETING OR VISIT, TOGETHER WITH SOMETHING TANGIBLE SUCH AS A REVERSAL OF THE DECISION TO SUSPEND SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION, WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL.
8. WE EXPRESSED DOUBTS ABOUT SAUDI WILLINGNESS TO GET OUT IN FRONT OF THE ARAB PACK IN THIS WAY. KURTZER ACCEPTED THIS BUT HOPED THAT THE QUOTE LOGIC OF THE SITUATION UNQUOTE AND THE FACT THAT PERES RATHER THAN SHAMIR WAS IN CHARGE MIGHT MAKE THEM MORE RECEPTIVE THAN LAST SUMMER.
9. WE ASKED WHETHER THE ADMINISTRATION WERE CONSIDERING SIMILAR GESTURES TOWARDS ARAFAT, WHO WAS ALSO LIKELY TO COME UNDER PRESSURE IF THE DIALOGUE APPEARED TO BE GOING NOWHERE. KURTZER SAID THAT HE DID NOT SEE A NEED FOR ANY CORRESPONDING MOVE. IT WAS SIMPLY A CASE OF HOW TO SHORE UP A WEAK GOVERNMENT, THE SURVIVAL OF WHICH WAS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO KEEP THE PEACE PROCESS MOVING. A GESTURE TOWARDS THE PLO, SUCH AS AN UPGRADING OF THE US/PLO DIALOGUE, WAS AN OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE RIGHT MOMENT, BUT NOT PART OF THE EXERCISE IN HAND. WELCH (NSC) WHOM WE SPOKE TO LATER, WAS MORE SYMPATHETIC TO THE IDEA THAT SOME ACTION TO STRENGTHEN ARAFAT'S POSITION MIGHT ALSO BE NEEDED AT THIS STAGE.
10. KURTZER STRESSED THAT THESE IDEAS HAD ONLY BEEN DISCUSSED AT THE WORKING LEVEL IN STATE AND NSC. THEY WERE NOT YET ADMINISTRATION POLICY. ROSS WAS AWARE OF THEM. KELLY HAD NOT BEEN WHEN HE CALLED AT THE FCO ON 20 MARCH. GIVEN THE SPEED WITH WHICH THE PROCESS MIGHT MOVE IF PERES WERE SUCCESSFUL, KURTZER WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR OUR EARLY REACTIONS.
- COMMENT
11. THESE IDEAS DO NOT APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN FULLY THOUGHT THROUGH,

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AND AT THIS STAGE APPEAR UNHELPFULLY ONE-SIDED. BUT THE
ADMINISTRATION ARE CLEARLY CASTING AROUND FOR IDEAS TO KEEP THE
DIALOGUE AFLOAT. IF AND WHEN IT GETS GOING. IF WE HAVE IDEAS OF
OUR OWN NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO FEED THEM IN.

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