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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING

DATE, TIME, AND PLACE: Wednesday, August 4, 1982; 9:10-10:02 a.m.;  
White House Situation Room

SUBJECT: Lebanon Situation

PARTICIPANTS:

The President

The Vice President

State

Secretary George P. Shultz  
Ambassador Samuel Lewis  
Mr. Nicholas Veliotes

Defense

Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger

CIA

Director William J. Casey

USUN

Ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick

JCS

General John Vessey  
Lt. General Paul Gorman

White House

Mr. Edwin Meese, III  
Mr. James A. Baker, III  
Mr. Michael K. Deaver  
Mr. William P. Clark  
Mr. Robert C. McFarlane

The Vice President's Office

Admiral Daniel J. Murphy

NSC

Mr. Howard J. Teicher

DECLASSIFIED  
White House Guidelines, August 28, 1997  
By M77 NARA, Date 6/26/99

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MINUTES OF MEETING

The President joined the SSG at 9:10.

The Vice President began the discussion by stating that the group had been meeting since 7:15 to review events in Beirut. There was agreement and disagreement regarding what course the U.S. should take.

The President said that all he knew was that he had been informed at 6:10 in the morning that it appeared that an all out assault on Beirut by the Israelis had begun.

Secretary Shultz said that we had concluded that the military activity was not an all out assault. Secretary Shultz then briefed the President on the chronology of events that had led up to that morning's activities. He began with a summary of the meeting with Foreign Minister Shamir and his meetings with Shamir over the course of the day. He then pointed out that throughout these meetings, firing had continued, although serious negotiations were taking place. There was considerable disagreement between what the Israelis were telling us was happening on the ground militarily and what Phil Habib and other U.S. observers were witnessing. Shultz then reviewed Habib's request for a very strong letter that would threaten sanctions if the Israelis did not provide him with the amount of time and quiet that he needed to conclude the negotiations. Secretary Shultz continued by reviewing what he saw as our options at this time. First, we should issue a public statement that condemns the Israeli actions and calls for strict observance of the cease-fire. At the same time we should work in the UN to draft a UN Security Council Resolution that might include condemnation of Israel. Second, we can develop a letter from the President which includes very strong language, but does not contain a threat to Prime Minister Begin, regarding the consequences on U.S.-Israeli relations of continued Israeli uncooperativeness. Third, we could suspend arms shipments to Israel and impose other sanctions unilaterally.

The Vice President added that we could also threaten to pull Habib out, but the consensus was that such an action by us would be seen as a green light to Israel.

The President said, however, that he thought that we might have to pull Habib out if it continued to appear that the PLO was not negotiating seriously.

Judge Clark added that a press statement had been drafted by State during the night and the group had reworked it.

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NLS M03-1335 #1

BY KDJ, NARA, DATE 11/7/05

The President said that we should begin by reviewing the draft. He then asked who shot first in this latest round?

Secretary Weinberger argued that the Israel defense forces had acted first by moving to occupy a certain position that the PLO had vacated. This was met by PLO artillery fire and subsequently Israeli retaliation.

The President said that this seemed to be a continuation of the Israeli practice of maintaining a "cease-fire in place."

Ambassador Lewis opined that Israeli bombardments are worse than Israeli ground movement in terms of the consequences on the ground. Moreover, while some might disagree, it appears that PLO forthcomingness is a result of Israeli military pressure.

Ambassador Kirkpatrick then stated that the group should not lose sight of the fact that the PLO is not a bunch of agrarian reformers. They are international terrorists who are working against U.S. interests and committing acts of violence throughout the world supported by the Soviet Union. We want them out and the U.S. should not throw away the possibility of getting rid of the PLO by taking measures against Israel which will inhibit, if not eliminate, the prospects of achieving our objectives. Clearly, once we have removed the PLO from Lebanon we can make fast progress in the peace process.

At this point, Secretary Shultz returned from a phone call he had made to Foreign Minister Shamir asking Shamir or Ambassador Arens to stay behind in the event that there was a Presidential communication to be transmitted to Prime Minister Begin or the need for additional consultations. Shultz reported that Shamir was on his way to New York and that he could not stay nor would he leave Ambassador Arens behind. They had to keep their appointments.

Ambassador Lewis stated that Shamir must be very nervous and very concerned over the reception he was receiving here. It is typical of this Israeli Government that when a Cabinet officer is confronted with a difficult situation he tries to buck it to Begin.

The President picked up on what Ambassador Kirkpatrick said, agreed with her, and asked how do we inform the PLO of the situation and the need to get out?

Secretary Weinberger stated that the important question is how to get the PLO out and he agreed with Ambassador Kirkpatrick regarding just who the PLO is. But, he argued, the U.S. must let Israel know of the cost to Israel of its nightly activities.

Mr. Meese then reviewed our options in the UN. He felt that we could not take actions in the UN that would lead to the imposition of Chapter 7 sanctions, but we might need to adopt or support a different resolution that condemned Israel.

Judge Clark told the President that time was running short and he needed to decide on the statement, a possible response to a message that we had received from King Fahd, and how we might act in the UN.

The President suggested that we had to let the PLO know that their games must stop. Perhaps the best way to do this would be to communicate something along the following lines to King Fahd. The President said, "We have continued to hold back the Israelis, and I am again in communication with Prime Minister Begin. But PLO intransigence, who all of us agreed should move out, is causing problems and leading the Israelis to resume their activities. It is time for the PLO to move out."

The group broke out into a discussion that this might not be the time to send such a harsh message to Fahd.

The President continued with a proposed letter for Prime Minister Begin. Something along the lines of "Dear Menachem: We have come to the verge of a breakthrough in the negotiations to remove the PLO. We must, however, stop the fighting that your forces are conducting and get back to the negotiations. If this pattern of Israeli activity is to continue, we may have to pull out Habib."

At this point, Judge Clark said that a draft letter had already been prepared by the group and perhaps the President should consider the draft letter.

At this point, the President read the letter, studied it for approximately seven minutes, and then stated that he was concerned that the last part of the letter sounded as if we are more worried about ourselves than about the consequences for Lebanon or the Israelis. The President then proceeded, for the next five minutes, to rewrite the final page of the letter himself. The President wrote, "Last night we were making significant progress toward a settlement that would result in the removal of the PLO from Beirut. That progress was once again frustrated by the actions taken by your forces. There must be an end to the unnecessary bloodshed, particularly among innocent civilians. I insist that a cease-fire in place be reestablished and maintained until the PLO has left Beirut. The relationship between our two nations is at stake."

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The NSC concurred in the President's proposed language but suggested to the President, and Sam Lewis strongly endorsed, that the letter should be addressed to the Prime Minister and not to Menachem.

The President reluctantly agreed to this recommendation.

The group then turned its discussion to the public statement.

The President suggested that what had been proposed was much too lengthy and that we should not worry about responding to the press needs in order to determine how much and what we say. Rather, he suggested that we say that we have directed our concerns regarding last night's fighting to the PLO and to the Israelis. We have called upon them to maintain a strict cease-fire in place to allow the negotiations to continue.

Secretary Shultz argued that a stronger public statement was necessary. Perhaps we could use the letter to Prime Minister Begin and paraphrase portions of it to convey our sense of concern.

There was then some discussion by Secretary Shultz and Secretary Weinberger regarding what portions of the page of the letter should be developed. It was suggested that a sanitized version be drafted.

Judge Clark said that he totally concurred with Secretary Shultz: we should send the letter and then draw a statement from it. Moreover, we will definitely get the attention of the Prime Minister by not saying "Dear Menachem."

The President agreed that we could work from the draft statement that had been prepared by the State Department. But, he said, that any statement should have half of its emphasis on the PLO. We must make it clear that the President cannot tee-off only on Israel. The President closed the meeting at 10:02 by stating that he was extremely tired of a war whose symbol had become a burn baby with no arms.

Prepared By:  
Howard J. Teicher

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