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NATIONAL SECURITY PLANNING GROUP (NSPG) MINUTES

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March 30, 1984

11:00 a.m.-12:00 noon

White House Situation Room

Participants: President, Shultz, Taft, Casey, Gabriel, Rumsfeld, Meese, Deaver, Murphy, McFarlane, Poindexter

McFarlane: Introduction--threat. What is our ability to deal with these threats?

Casey: Tehran is close to being ready to launch major attacks at Basrah. [REDACTED] Threat of Iranian attacks on Kuwait is increasing because of their assistance to Iraq.

Rumsfeld: Visited Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq, Bahrein, Kuwait. Iran will have trouble getting to Baghdad. Will probably settle for Basrah and establishment of fundamentalist Islamic state.

1. Countries feel vulnerable to terrorism, religious fundamentalism surrogates. Regimes see first task survival.

- U.S. ill equipped to deal with these threats.

- Because they are afraid they try to cut deals. Don't criticize countries causing trouble. In case of trouble they won't ask for help and may criticize.

- Domestically we must have the GCC public support.

2. They have inflated view of our capabilities. We contribute to it. We are not very capable unless we plan, exercise, think about it, and have public support. They think they can appease Iran by keeping us out.

3. They expect us to be effective. But we can't be unless we have planned it with their cooperation. It will take time. There will be a period of uncertainty. They will then question our ability. They'll begin to tilt to Iran. Lot of talk in Gulf about Shah and Lebanon and questioning of our commitment.

4. We must not look ineffective and uncoordinated. There is a tendency to over estimate our commitment and what we can do. If balloon goes up, our military will spend 90% of effort in self-defense.

5. As President said before, if you want to kill a snake you go for the head. We need to change governments in the countries that practice state-sponsored terrorism.

6. Events have proven that terrorism works.

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Taft: We have come to same conclusion as Don with regard to need for access. Have looked at triggering mechanisms that would allow us to get access.

We need to be sure Iraq doesn't lose. Iraq's fall is worst risk.

- Gabriel: - Reviewed NSDD-114.
- U.S. presence in region
 - pre-positioning Diego Garcia
 - land based pre-positioning in Oman
 - established CENTCOM January 1983
 - political-military & military-military talks December 1983-January 1984
- Deterrent posture
 - Middle East Force
 - ELF-One
 - Battle Group in Indian Ocean
- Summary of exercises in area
 - went over ELF-1 tankers/CV air wing exercise. Key is Saudi Arabia agreement.
 - B-52 exercise ("Busy Observer")

President: What would trigger Saudi Arabian cooperation?

Gabriel: Air attacks on Kuwait airfield.

Shultz: But they are more likely to use terrorist attacks or sabotage. It will be ambiguous.

President: If there are terrorist attacks, what will be our targets in Iran?

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McFarlane: Broad spectrum of possibilities. Iranian breakthrough. Could we live without Kuwait.

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Shultz: We need to work on access questions. At same time we can't use access as a cop out. Are we prepared to hit Iranian ports, cities, etc.

I really wonder whether we don't have other capabilities besides fighter raids to get to Iranians.

We should talk to French about Iraq. Iraq needs more competence.

Should almost seek an opportunity to do something against terrorism. We need to send a signal that we can do something about it. Need to look for an opportunity especially against Libya.

President: We can't afford another Beirut. Most likely, we will get another terrorist attack.

Do we have enough forces in the Gulf to respond even if we don't get access.

What if we bombed the area east of Basrah?

Shultz: That would be different matter to openly go into the war on the side of Iraq.

Gabriel: Our forces are ready. CENTCOM has plans but they all need access.

President: Are we certain that we will have a command structure that can carry out the mission without a lot of red tape.

Meese: We haven't talked about Congress.

Shultz: We are already talking about War Powers.

Rumsfeld: Oil is not the most important thing. Most important is to prevent Soviet involvement in the Gulf.

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