

CONFIDENTIAL

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FM AMMAN

TO DESKBY 292200Z FCO

TELNO 47

OF 292015Z JANUARY 86

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

INFO PRIORITY TEL AVIV, DAMASCUS, CAIRO, JERUSALEM

YOUR TEL NO 23 (NOT TO ALL): ARAB-ISRAEL

SUMMARY

JORDAN/PLO TALKS AT AN IMPASSE. THE U.S. HAS MOVED SIGNIFICANTLY ON PLO PARTICIPATION IN A CONFERENCE. BUT ARAFAT ALSO WANTS U.S. ACCEPTANCE OF PALESTINIAN RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION WITHIN A CONFEDERATION+ U.S. HAVE REJECTED THVS. FERGIUSON'S TALKS WITH MURPHY MAY PROVIDE THE ONLY POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY OF HELPING IN THE VERY LIMITED TIME LEFT.

DETAIL

2. I DELIVERED THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE IN YOUR TUR TO KING HUSSEIN THIS EVENING. HE ASKED ME TO CONVEY HIS WARM THANKS TO THE PRIME MINISTER. HE THEN ASKED THE JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER, WHO WAS PRESENT, TO BRIEF ME ON THE JORDAN/PLO TALKS.

3. RIFAI SAID THAT WHEN IN LONDON THE KING HAD ASKED MURPHY TO ENVISAGE PLO PARTICIPATION IN AN INTERNATIONAL PEACE CONFERENCE, IF THEY FIRST ACCEPTED RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338, AGREED TO NEGOTIATE PEACEFULLY WITH ISRAEL AND RENOUNCED VIOLENCE. WHENEVER ARAFAT WAS ASKED TO ACCEPT THESE CONDITIONS HE ASKED WHAT HE WOULD GET IN RETURN. WOULD THE UNITED STATES THEREFORE NOW ACCEPT THAT IF THE CONDITION WERE MET THE PLO WOULD BE INVITED TO ATTEND THE CONFERENCE? MURPHY HAD CONSULTED MR SHULTZ AND PRESIDENT REAGAN AND JORDAN HAD, SURPRISINGLY, BEEN TOLD BEFORE ARAFAT ARRIVED THAT THE US WOULD NOW AGREE TO THE PLO BEING QNVITED IF THEY PUBLICLY ACCEPTED THE THREE CONDITIONS.

4. THE KING INFORMED ARAFAT OF THIS DURING THIS WEEK'S TALKS IN AMMAN AND EMPHASISED HOW FAR THE US HAD MOVED FROM THE DAYS WHEN IT TOTALLY REJECTED AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AS WELL AS ANY PLO PARTICIPATION IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND INSISTED ON DIRECT JORDAN/ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS OR NOTHING. IT WAS JORDANIAN EFFORTS WHICH HAD BROUGHT THIS ABOUT. RIFAI COMMENTED THAT THE MAIN SIGNIFICANCE OF THE US MOVE WAS THAT IT IMPLIED THAT ISRAEL WOULD ALSO BE BROUGHT TO ACCEPT PLO PARTICIPATION.

*Gloomy outlook
for PLO
acceptance of
conditions for
participation in
a peace conference.*

CDN

not

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5. ARAFAT'S REPLY WAS THAT HE WOULD ACCEPT THE US/JORDANIAN UNDERSTANDING ONLY IF THE US ALSO ACCEPTED THE PALESTINIANS' RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A CONFEDERATION AND ON THE BASIS OF THE 11 FEBRUARY AGREEMENT. THE KING REPLIED THAT JORDAN ACCEPTED THAT POSITION OF SUBSTANCE BUT IT SHOULD NOT BE LINKED TO THE QUESTION OF PLO ATTENDANCE AT A CONFERENCE. HUSSEIN NEVERTHELESS AGREED TO PUT THE POINT INFORMALLY TO THE AMERICANS BUT STRESSED THAT HE WANTED A CLEAR ANSWER FROM ARAFAT HOWEVER THEY REPLIED. RIFAH SAID THAT IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PLO THAT THEY HAD TAKEN A FIRM POSITION IN ADVANCE NOT TO ACCEPT THE CONDITIONS.

6. THE KING EXPLAINED TO THE AMERICANS THAT THE TALKS WERE NOW AT AN IMPASSE. BUT HE WAS COMMITTED TO HIS EARLIER PROMISE AND WOULD INSIST ON A POSITIVE REPLY FROM ARAFAT. IF HE DID NOT GET IT HE WOULD GIVE A PUBLIC ACCOUNT OF THE BREAKDOWN AND, IN EFFECT, TERMINATE THE 11 FEBRUARY ACCORD. BUT HE INVITED THE US TO CONSIDER WHAT WOULD THEN HAPPEN. ARAFAT WOULD BE FATALLY WEAKENED. SYRIA WOULD PRODUCE A PALESTINIAN ALTERNATIVE WHICH WOULD BE TO NO-ONE'S LIKING.

7. THE US HAD REPLIED THAT ANYTHING SHORT OF AN UNQUALIFIED YES FROM ARAFAT (ON HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE THREE CONDITIONS) SHOULD BE TAKEN AS A NO. WHILE THE CONCEPT OF PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION IN AN ENTITY ASSOCIATED WITH JORDAN WAS CONSISTENT WITH REAGAN'S SEPTEMBER 1982 INITIATIVE, THE US WAS NOT WILLING TO DISCUSS MATTERS OF SUBSTANCE OF THIS KIND BEFORE AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. THE AMERICANS HAD ADDED THAT THEY WOULD PREFER NOT TO HAVE A BREAKDOWN IN THE KING'S RELATIONS WITH ARAFAT. THEY SUGGESTED THAT AS A MIDDLE POSITION THE KING SHOULD SEEK ARAFAT'S AGREEMENT THAT JORDAN WOULD GO AHEAD WITH A PALESTINIAN DELEGATION BLESSED BY THE PLO BUT KEEP THE DOOR OPEN FOR THE PLO TO JOIN IN WHEN ARAFAT COULD ACCEPT THE CONDITIONS. THE KING HAD REJECTED THIS ROUTE BECAUSE HE WOULD THEREBY LOSE PLO, SYRIAN SOVIET SUPPORT AND BE BACK TO A CAMP DAVID SCENARIO.

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9. RIFAH SAID THAT IT WAS CLEAR TO HIM THAT ARAFAT WAS NOT GOING TO ACCEPT THE CONDITIONS. HE BELIEVED THAT TO DO SO WOULD SPLIT AL FATAH, DESTROY HIS CLAIM TO REPRESENT LEGITIMATELY THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND CAUSE THE CREATION OF AN ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP IN DAMASCUS. THUS THERE WAS AN IMPASSE DERIVING FROM THE SELF-DETERMINATION ISSUE.

10. THE KING SAID THAT HE BELIEVED ARAFAT COULD NOW LOSE EVERYTHING. HE (HUSSEIN) HAD CONSIDERED WHETHER HE COULD FORM AN ALTERNATIVE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP BUT THERE WAS NOT TIME TO DO THAT AND STILL SAVE THE PEACE PROCESS. BEFORE HE WENT PUBLIC ON THE CAUSES OF THE BREAKDOWN HE WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH THE SYRIANS BUT THEN HE WOULD GO AHEAD. THE TRAGEDY WAS THAT ALL THIS WAS GOING TO END IN THE WEST BANK PALESTINIANS GETTING MERE AUTONOMY UNDER ISRAELI RULE.

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12. I ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS AN ELEMENT OF BLUFF IN ARAFAT'S POSITION. THE KING SAID THAT HE HAD THOUGHT SO FOR A MOMENT THIS MORNING. BUT RIFAI SAID THAT ARAFAT SIMPLY COULD NOT DECIDE THESE MATTERS ON HIS OWN. HE HAD TO TALK TO THE PRO-SOVIET ELEMENT IN THE PLO LEADERSHIP AND THEY ALWAYS ARGUED HIM ROUND TO THEIR SIDE. I ASKED WHETHER JORDAN WAS CONFIDENT THAT IF THE AMERICANS NOW MOVED ON SELF-DETERMINATION ARAFAT WOULD ACCEPT THE THREE CONDITIONS. RIFAI REPLIED THAT HE HAD SAID CLEARLY THAT HE WOULD.

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14. FOR COMMENT SEE MIFT. APART FROM FERGUSSON'S TALKS WITH MURPHY I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT WE KEEP THIS HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL ACCOUNT ENTIRELY TO OURSELVES.

15. GRATEFUL IF WASHINGTON WOULD PASS THIS TEXT AND MIFT TO FERGUSSON IMMEDIATELY.
COLES.

MIDDLE EAST
LIMITED

NENAD
MED
NAD
SOVIET D
PLANNING STAFF
UND
ECD(E) (POCO UNIT)
NEWS D
INFO D
PUSD
SED
SCD
DEFENCE D

PS
PS/MR RENTON
PS/PUS
MR FERGUSSON
MR DEREK THOMAS
MR GOODALL
SIR D MIERS
MR O'NEILL
MR RATFORD
MR LONG

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION
ARAB/ISRAEL

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LIMITED

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NAD
SOVIET D
PLANNING STAFF
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ECD(E) (POCO UNIT)
NEWS D
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DEFENCE D

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION
ARAB/ISRAEL

PS
PS/MR RENTON
PS/PUS
MR FERGUSSON
MR DEREK THOMAS
MR GOODALL
SIR D MIERS
MR O'NEILL
MR RATFORD
MR LONG

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INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

INFO PRIORITY TEL AVIVUN DAMASCUS, CAIRO, JERUSALEM.

MIPT: ARAB-ISRAEL

1. THE ONLY POSSIBILITY I CAN SEE OF HELPING IS TO PERSUADE THE AMERICANS TO ACCEPT NOW THE PALESTINIAN RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION WITHIN A CONFEDERATION, EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE SPECIFICALLY AND RECENTLY DECLINED TO DO THIS. IT WOULD OF COURSE FALL WELL SHORT OF WHAT EC STATES HAVE ALREADY ACCEPTED. IT IS IMPLICIT IN THE 11 FEBRUARY AGREEMENT. PROVIDED THE EXERCISE OF THE RIGHT IS CONFINED TO A CONFEDERATION IT SEEMS TO ME TO BE OF VERY LIMITED SIGNIFICANCE.
2. THERE IS PROBABLY VERY LITTLE TIME. I CANNOT ASSESS WHETHER ARAFAT IS BLUFFING BUT HE COULD LEAVE JORDAN AT ANY MOMENT (THE KING WAS NOT SURE OF HIS INTENTIONS). I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT IF AT ALL POSSIBLE FERGUSSON SHOULD DISCUSS THE SITUATION WITH MURPHY AS THE FIRST ITEM ON HIS AGENDA INSTEAD OF LEAVING ARAB/ISRAEL TO FRIDAY AS I BELIEVE WAS THE INTENTION.
3. RIFAI DID MOST OF THE TALKING. WE MAY WELL FIND THAT HIS ACCOUNT DOES NOT ENTIRELY MATCH THE AMERICAN. I SUSPECT THAT HE MAY WELL BE WORKING FOR A BREAK WITH ARAFAT AND THE PLO WHOM HE HAS ALWAYS CORDIALLY DESPISED. WITH HIS USUAL EXCESSIVE CONFIDENCE IN HIS ABILITY TO HANDLE ANY INITIATIVE, HE MAY GRAVELY UNDERESTIMATE THE DANGERS FOR JORDAN OF SUCH A BREAK. I THEREFORE SAID AT ONE POINT IN THE CONVERSATION THAT I HOPED JORDAN WOULD WEIGH VERY CAREFULLY THAT CONSEQUENCES OF A RUPTURE BECAUSE IN MY VIEW AN ALIENATED PLO COULD POSE VERY CONSIDERABLE PROBLEMS IN JORDAN AND ON THE WEST BANK. THE KING MADE NO COMMENT. RIFAI SAID "LET THEM TRY".

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14.

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4. THE KING APOLOGISED TO ME AT THE END FOR BEING "DROZY". HE SAID HE WAS TAKING PILLS TO KEEP HIS BLOOD PRESSURE DOWN.

5. I SHOULD BE MOST GRATEFUL IF I COULD RECEIVE AN URGENT ACCOUNT OF FERGUSON'S TALKS WITH MURPHY ON THIS SUBJECT. UNLESS THE PLC LEAVE AMMAN WITHOUT FURTHER ADD THURSDAY MAY WELL BE THE CRUCIAL DAY HERE. I SHOULD LIKE TO GET BACK TO THE KING TOMORROW IF AT ALL POSSIBLE. IF THE PRIME MINISTER HAS NOT ALREADY SENT A MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT REAGAN YOU MAY WISH TO ADVISE HEP TO DO SO NOW.

COLES.

MIDDLE EAST

LIMITED

NENAD

MED

NAD

SOVIET D

PLANNING STAFF

UND

ECD(E) (POCO UNIT)

NEWS D

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SED

SCD

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MR FERGUSON

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SIR D MIERS

MR O'NEILL

MR RATFORD

MR LONG

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION

ARAB/ISRAEL

-2-

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