

MIDDLE EAST

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TELNO 323

OF 080140Z FEBRUARY 86

INFO IMMEDIATE AMMAN, DAMASCUS

INFO PRIORITY TEL AVIV, JERUSALEM, CAIRO, RIYADH, TUNIS

INFO ROUTINE OTHER MIDDLE EAST POSTS, PARIS, BONN, ROME, MOSCOW

AMMAN TELNO 68: ARAB-ISRAEL: US VIEWS

SUMMARY

1. US BELIEVE THAT THE BREAKDOWN OF THE JORDAN/PLO TALKS WAS PROBABLY ALWAYS INEVITABLE. THEY NOW FEAR A JORDAN/SYRIA RAPPROCHEMENT, AND EXPECT JORDANIAN CRITICISM OF THEM. BUT NO NEW US IDEAS.

DETAIL

2. WE COMPARED NOTES WITH KIRBY (STATE) ON 7 FEBRUARY FOLLOWING CONFIRMATION OF ARAFAT'S DEPARTURE FROM AMMAN.
3. KIRBY CONFIRMED THAT AT HIS FINAL MEETING WITH RIFAI ON 6 FEBRUARY, ARAFAT HAD TURNED DOWN THE US TEXT, WHICH WAS A REWORDING OF THE US POSITION, CLEARED ONLY WITH MURPHY, AND OFFERED NOTHING NEW. BREAKDOWN HAD APPEARED INEVITABLE FOLLOWING THE EMERGENCE OF THE PLO'S OWN FINAL PROPOSALS, WHICH KING HUSSEIN HAD - WITHOUT ASKING THE US TO CONSIDER THEM - DISMISSED ON 5 FEBRUARY, TELLING ARAFAT THEY WERE "NOT SERIOUS".
4. KIRBY SAID BOEKER AND CLUVERIUS HAD FOUND THE KING'S POSITION ON 6 FEBRUARY STILL MUCH AS IT HAD BEEN AT THE END OF THE LONDON/HAGUE EXCHANGES. HE HAD NOT THEN BELIEVED ARAFAT CAPABLE OF MEETING HIS CONDITIONS. THE INITIAL AMMAN CONTACTS WITH ARAFAT AND THE SHIFT IN THE US POSITION HAD TEMPORARILY ENCOURAGED HIM TO BELIEVE SOMETHING COULD BE WORKED OUT. BUT ARAFAT'S BEHAVIOUR IN THE LAST FEW DAYS HAD KILLED THESE HOPES. (KIRBY ADDED THAT QASSEM HAD ALSO TOLD THE US THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE ARAFAT WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED THE KING'S CONDITIONS, EVEN IF THE UNITED STATES HAD MOVED ON PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION. ARAFAT WAS FRIGHTENED FOR HIS LIFE).
5. KIRBY SAID THAT THE PUBLIC LINE AGREED BETWEEN RIFAI AND ARAFAT ON 6 FEBRUARY WAS THAT THE JORDANIAN-PLO DIALOGUE WAS CONTINUING. RIFAI HAD TOLD ARAFAT THAT THE KING'S PUBLIC EXPLANATION OF EVENTS WOULD QUOTE NOT BE HARSH UNQUOTE.
6. KIRBY SAID THAT RIFAI PLANS TO GO TO DAMASCUS ON SUNDAY 9 FEBRUARY TO PREPARE FOR AN EARLY ASAD VISIT TO AMMAN (NO DATES).

6. KIRBY SAID THAT RIFAH PLANS TO GO TO DAMASCUS ON SUNDAY 9 FEBRUARY TO PREPARE FOR AN EARLY ASAD VISIT TO AMMAN (NO DATES). ARAFAT, FOR HIS PART, WOULD PROBABLY TRY TO BRING FORWARD HIS VISIT TO CAIRO IN ORDER TO GET IN FIRST WITH HIS VERSION OF THE BREAKDOWN.

7. KIRBY SAID THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD NO CLEAR IDEA HOW THE KING WOULD PLAY HIS HAND WITH ASAD. AN OBVIOUS OPTION WAS TO TRY TO AGREE A JOINT JORDANIAN/SYRIAN FORMULA FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND PUT IT FORWARD, KNOWING THAT ISRAEL AND THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT ACCEPT IT. THIS WOULD BE A MEANS OF ASSOCIATING SYRIA WITH HIS INITIATIVE, WHILE IN EFFECT ENDING IT. IT WOULD OF COURSE BE A CONSIDERABLE STEP FOR SYRIA, BUT ONE ASAD MIGHT BE WILLING TO TAKE TO END JORDANIAN INDEPENDENCE IN THE PEACE PROCESS AND TO GET CLOSER TO TAMING ARAFAT.

8. KIRBY SAID THAT THE KING HAD TOLD BOEKER ON 6 FEBRUARY OF HIS DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES. BUT HIS CRITICISMS HAD FOCUSED NOT ON THE CONTENT OF THE RECENT EXCHANGES IN AMMAN BUT RATHER ON THE ADMINISTRATION'S PERFORMANCE OVER THE ARMS PACKAGE, AND THE OPPORTUNITIES LOST IN MID 1985 OVER THE MURPHY MEETING. KIRBY EXPECTED THE KING TO REPEAT SOME OF THIS IN PUBLIC.

COMMENT

9. KIRBY GAVE NO HINT OF ANY FURTHER US EFFORTS IN THE PIPELINE. THEY ARE WATCHING KING HUSSEIN CLOSELY BUT SEEM TO HAVE NO PLANS TO GIVE HIM ANYTHING TO HELP HIM WITH ARAFAT OR ASAD. THEY HAVE ALL ALONG SUSPECTED ASAD'S INTENTIONS, THEY NOW FEAR THAT HE MAY SUCCESSFULLY REEL IN HUSSEIN.

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