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Kayali Ghazal

STATE:  
 SUBJ: Syrian-American Relations: Syrian World View

SUMMARY

Syrian Charge d'Affaires in Washington in 1967

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NEA:ARN:AIKilgore:jfc	4-12-71	22670	NEA - Joseph J Sisco

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NEA - Mr. Atherton

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ACTION:

Chaleb Kayali called on Assistant Secretary Sisco April 9 for discussion of Syria's view of world and Syria's relations with other countries including US under new Syrian regime headed by President Hafiz al-Asad. Kayali pictured Syria as trying to escape from its former isolation. It has already improved relations with Arab world particularly Lebanon and Jordan. Improvement of relations with West generally is sought while Syrian relations with US are under study. Syria has to have political and economic cooperation with East Bloc but mutual confidence has not been strong since Asad took over. Kayali personally hoped US would not falter in seeking Middle East peace, but his government frankly thought US would fail through lack of resolution.

Sisco said USG is determined press forward towards peace and better chance to achieve it has never existed. We had found UAR response to Amb. Jarring courageous and constructive;

Israeli response did not match positive quality of UAR

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ACTION:	<p>answer. We fully aware of our positive responsibility towards peace in Middle East. We would welcome opening of Suez as interim solution leading to peace and we expect Israel will be coming forth with some Suez proposals, in week or two. We have set ourselves self-imposed <del>deadline</del> <sup>time-table, and weeks ahead</sup> <del>and it will</del> demonstrate that what may appear to some people as lag in progress towards peace will prove not to have been the case. If in attempting to break out of its isolation Syria sought improved relations with US, it would find us sympathetic and quite open-minded.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>END SUMMARY</u></p> <p>1. Sisco said he was aware of purpose of Kayali's visit to Washington which was to look at Syrian-American relations and make recommendations to his Government. He read excerpt from Secretary Rogers' statement of December 9, 1969 in which Secretary said, QTE Whenever and wherever Arab states which have broken off diplomatic relations with United States are prepared to restore them, we shall respond in same spirit. ...We remain</p>	
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	<p>prepared to work with others - in the area and throughout the world - so long as they sincerely seek the end we seek: a just and lasting peace. END QTE</p> <p>2. Sisco continued that peaceful settlement of Middle Eastern crisis is in US national interests. We have no national aspirations in Middle Eastern area other than peace. In seeking peace over last two years we have tried to take into account legitimate concerns of both sides. Those who maintain that Israel wants America to have bad relations with Arabs are incorrect. Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan himself had said that more <sup>Arab</sup> friends US has in area, better for Israel.</p> <p>3. Kayali said he personally accepted general lines of what Sisco had said. He agreed that US goal in area is peace; it could not be otherwise. Kayali was not on an official mission. In fact it was more personal than official. He had been half picked to come to Washington and had half volunteered.</p>		
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ACTION:

He was grateful to Mr. Sisco for receiving him because it would ease his task of preparing a report and making recommendations to his government.

4. Kayali described Syria as trying to extricate itself from isolation. Relations with Arab countries had already improved greatly. President Frangie of Lebanon and Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan had made successful visits to Damascus, in both of which Kayali played some small role. Relations were improving with both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and relations with Iraq were even moving in a positive direction. Syrian relations with West had to improve along with its relations with Arab countries. Full diplomatic relations with Great Britain would unquestionably be restored within a few weeks although time was not ripe for restoration of diplomatic relations with US.

5. Kayali believed that some degree of public hostility towards the US exists in Syria which Asad regime might

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 well be exaggerating in its own mind. No one knows if  
 such hostility actually exists but regime probably believes  
 that restoration of diplomatic relations with US would cause  
 an unpopular reaction. US of today is not same US as four  
 years ago. US position is much improved from Arab point  
 of view but public opinion changes slowly and US has been  
 strongly attacked in Arab media for nearly four years. Sisco  
 noted that if Syria wishes to improve its relations with US  
 it would find us quite sympathetic and open-minded.  
 6. Kayali said Asad regime has already gone long way towards  
 mastering situation within Syria. It was working as rapidly as  
 possible to meet demands of Syrian masses who have a democratic  
 tradition. A Peoples' Council will prepare a constitution.  
 Arbitrary arrests have been abolished. Alawite domination of  
 Syrian Army had been ended by dismissal of between 60 and 80  
 top Alawite military officers. The very serious danger of  
 civil war over Alawite dominance had thus been happily

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averted. Election of Asad, an Alawite, to Presidency had surprised a lot of people, but Asad is moderate and intelligent with no extremists or extreme leftists around him. His non-doctrinaire approach will gradually become clear in economic and political fields.		
7. Kayali described economic situation as harder to master than political. Rains had been short for three years and current year had also been marked by scant rainfall. Syria normally exported 500,000 tons wheat & whereas now it had to import 100,000 tons. Rapprochement with Arab countries might mean some economic assistance from them and US might help if relations were improved and Syria repaid some small loans. Marxism had heavily infiltrated Baath Party in Syria and Moscow was suspicious of Asad because he had removed Marxists from their positions. Asad had gone to Moscow to clear things up but situation is still not clear and coolness persists between Damascus and Moscow. While 7		
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ACTION: confidence is not good, political and economic cooperation between Syria and East Bloc remains necessary for both sides. If Syrian economy improves, and if Middle Eastern situation moves towards peaceful solution, Syria will loosen its close ties to Moscow and move towards positive neutralism.		
8. Kayali found Jordanian situation worrisome. Arab masses saw tension and fighting between Jordan Army and fedayeen as resulting from collusion between King Hussein and US. At same time UAR seemed to be embarking on an independent role. There was a possibility that it might make a separate peace with Israel. Arabs, including Syrians, were worried by this. Kayali mentioned quadripartite unity attempt among Egypt, Libya, Sudan and Syria in context of trying to prevent separate Egyptian stand towards peace with Israel.		
9. In response to Sisco's question respecting Syria's attitude toward Jarring and UN Resolution 242, Kayali said Syria does not believe a peaceful solution is possible		
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	<p>and that Rogers Plan will fail. For this reason Syrian regime sees nothing to be gained by supporting Resolution 242. On other hand, if there were new, positive signs of success, Syria would adopt same stand as Egypt. In response to Sisco's question about Syria's attitude towards opening Suez Canal as limited, interim first step towards peace, Kayali said Syria favored a wait-and-see policy. At same time Syrian regime conceded that UAR had created something positive with its undertaking to make peace with Israel and Mr. Sisco might have noted that Syrian media had toned down its criticisms of both Egypt and Israel.</p> <p>10. In giving Kayali an exposition of US views on current Middle Eastern situation, Sisco said he would be as frank as Kayali had been. We had found Egyptian succession following Nasser's death impressive and orderly. Sadat regime had continued to accept Resolution 242 and a peaceful solution.</p> <p><u>Its response to Jarring had been courageous and positive.</u></p>		
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ACTION:

While regime had failed to answer all questions, it had laid Egypt's cards on table. We were frank to say that Israel's response did not match constructive one we had received from Egypt. Kayali and his government should know that US realized it had a positive responsibility towards peace. As a Syrian, Kayali would recognize how upset we would be if Israel's security were endangered. However, there was overriding need for fundamental settlement, and Kayali could tell his Government that we remain determined to move ahead towards peace.

11. Sisco continued that we would favor opening Suez Canal as interim step leading towards peace. We believed it would reduce tension, separate combatants and be facilitative of an overall settlement. Within a week or two we expected to receive an Israeli proposal concerning Suez.

12. Referring to Kayali's earlier statement about suspicion of

~~US among Arab messes~~ ~~Sisco hoped Kayali~~ could see some

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Improvement in this respect over past year. Jordan and King Hussein were good friends of ours. It is not our impression that Hussein is trying to liquidate Palestinian movement. We have provided King with military equipment to compensate for losses his Army suffered in September fighting. Far from plotting against Palestinians, we believed that lasting political solution in Middle East had to take into account their legitimate aspirations; we believed a majority of Palestinians would support a political solution. This did not mean we believed political solution in Middle East could be at expense of Jordan; dismemberment of that country would alarm us deeply.

13. Sisco was keenly interested in Syrian attitude towards Middle East as conveyed by Kayali. As Sisco ~~xxx~~ <sup>saw</sup> situation there had never been better chance for peace. He had worked for 20 years on Middle East and had seen one lost opportunity after another. US task is very difficult. Although we

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ACTION: 7 are going through agony of <del>XXXXX</del> Viet-Nam Sisco hoped Kayali would carry away conviction that US will pursue peace in Middle East in our own interests. Sisco would love opportunity to use US resources in Middle East to help people of that area in aftermath of peaceful solution. 14. Kayali inquired if US had formulated an attitude towards Golan Heights. Sisco responded frankly that we had not. Syria had rejected & Resolution 242 and we had therefore had no occasion to go into details on that area but at appropriate time we would be addressing issue. He wondered if Syrian government had developed policy towards Golan. Kayali res-ponded that Syria's policy naturally was to get area back. New regime had not yet been in position to consider Golan; it had to await progress on other fronts. In view of Syria's conviction that US peace initiative will fail because US will not be able withstand Zionist pressures, Syrian regime believes there plenty of time left to think about Golan.		
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15. Kayali said he had not lost hope in peace which would bring justice and dignity. Those who have hope must not be given cause to lose it. Statements by Secretary Rogers and other American officials had been very helpful but now Kayali perceived a disturbing let-down and lack of movement. Egypt's agreement to make peace with Israel had brought on a psychological revolution in area. In aftermath Egypt's courageous action events had moved away from sterile negativism and outmoded slogans into more hopeful patterns. But if US let that hope fail, Kayali could not predict outcome.

16. Sisco responded that he had heard same sort of doubts about US expressed before but they are not valid. US will pursue its own ~~interests. Sisco maintained that~~ ~~the US had no intention of pursuing a policy of~~ ~~US would find~~ suitable occasions to reaffirm its policies as Kayali would see from concrete evidence in weeks ahead. US would not let

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down those who hoped for peace.

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