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RITY COUNCIL

INFORMATION

August 3, 1974

1974-8-3, Assad, Nixon, Murphy

MEMORANDUM FOR

GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM:

ROSEMARY NIENHUIS

SUBJECT:

Talking Points for Your Meeting with
Ambassador Murphy (Syria) -- Monday,
August 5, 5 p. m.

Ambassador Murphy goes to Syria at a time when US/Syrian relations (a) have developed on a political level as a result of first steps towards peace and (b) are developing on a practical level as Syria opens up to US economic and cultural activities, with participation in the Damascus Trade Fair as an example. He will be sustaining the momentum on both these tracks towards the building of a longer-term durable relationship based on what the US realistically can produce, both bilaterally and in the context of our broader peace efforts. Our relationship to date has been low-key and we will want to maintain that profile to avoid high expectations.

One main element of the US/Syrian relationship over the short-term future will be progress towards a peace settlement in ways that address the issues of greatest importance to Syria -- Israeli withdrawal and the Palestinians. The problem is that Ambassador Murphy is going to Damascus at a time when a major step forward has already been taken -- disengagement -- and it is not clear how quickly or whether new progress satisfactory to Syria will be made immediately. Thus, a major responsibility will be to sustain a dialog with Syrian leaders and build confidence in the future over the period ahead when there may be no quick direct movement on that front. We will need to keep Syria confident in the peace-making process, to assure them that their needs are taken into account and that their interests lie in working with our step-by-step approach.

[One approach that has been suggested for "next steps" has been movement on the Jordanian front involving the Palestinians and seeking Syrian support for such a process as a way of engaging Syria in the on-going process.]

Talking Points:

1. Following the disengagement agreements, the major US effort now is to develop realistic next steps. Consultations in Washington this

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summer [Allon, Rifai, Fahmy, a Syrian representative and possibly Saqaf] will provide the basis for consideration for this. Given Syria's strong interest in quick movement on issues of importance to it -- Israeli withdrawal and the Palestinians -- a major effort for you will be to keep Syria in the peace-making process over the period ahead in the event there is no clear immediate movement on its front. We want to avoid high expectations and the Syrians will need to feel their views are being taken into account. One possible approach that has been suggested for engaging the Syrians is movement in the Jordanian context involving the Palestinians and trying to seek Syrian support in that process.

2. The US/Syrian bilateral relationship must be realistically conceived to avoid exaggerated expectations of US assistance. We will be interested in imaginative ways in which the US, both the government and private sectors, can be helpful short of large-scale aid.
3. The President is interested in keeping in touch with President Asad -- building upon the rapport established during his visit -- and we welcome any suggestions in that regard.
4. We appreciate your undertaking this important assignment. [If signed, you may wish to hand Ambassador Murphy the letter of greetings from the President to President Asad.

[You may also wish to make the point that Secretary Kissinger wants to retain close personal control over the tactics of our relationship with Syria and the wisdom of sticking close to instructions.]

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