

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

## BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

1974-9-24, Assad, Kissinger,  
Khaddam

SEP 24 1974

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To:  
Thru:  
From:

The Secretary  
P - Mr. Sisco  
NEA - Alfred I. Atherton, Jr.

Bilateral Talks During UNGA  
Syria - Foreign Minister Khaddam

Setting

You last met Khaddam during his August 21 - 24 visit to Washington.

His principal interest will be to hear your views following the Rabin visit on the prospects for further Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab territory and for a PLO role in the negotiations. Khaddam will be very interested in your appreciation of what direction the next step can take, in order to report to President Asad and to prepare for your visit October 11 and for the Arab Summit in late October.

Khaddam will also want to discuss further development of bilateral relations. He made a number of assistance requests in a meeting with Ambassador Murphy on September 10, including a request for 500,000 tons of wheat and substantial quantities of rice, corn and vegetable oil.

Our objective will be to encourage continued, wholehearted Syrian participation in the peace effort, without holding out unrealistic hopes. At the same time, you will want to set forth our anticipated strategy for the next stage, and to pose to Khaddam those questions you plan to take up with President Asad in October, so that the Syrians will have time to think over their position before your arrival in Damascus. Although you may want to reserve some of the detail for Asad, you will want now to prepare the Syrians for our judgment that a first stage of negotiations on the Jordanian front as well as a further round of disengagement on the Egyptian front are necessary before we can proceed with a next step on the Syrian front. Your principal task will be to persuade the Syrians

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in turning to the Israel-Jordan front, you are preparing to address the Palestinian issue and that Syria should play a constructive role. In that context, you can argue for letting the Egyptian front proceed at its own pace in order to maintain momentum and for not according the PLO a predominant role at Jordan's expense if there is to be a chance of bringing Israel along.

Issues/Talking Points

1. Middle East Negotiations

Syrian Position: The Syrians will probably seek to have early progress on the Syrian or Jordanian front with a role for the PLO, rather than to let the Egyptian front take the lead alone. Asad told Rifai that he would withdraw from the negotiations if the next step is in Sinai alone. If agreement is not achieved by early spring on Israeli withdrawal from some new area on either the Jordanian or Syrian fronts, then the Syrians could move to renew the shooting on the Golan front. Whether or not early agreement on Israeli withdrawal from part of the West Bank would meet Syria's minimum requirements would probably depend upon the degree to which Palestinian interests are taken into account. Nevertheless, this is the position we would like to persuade the Syrians to take. Anything less, regardless of progress on the Egyptian front, would risk having the Syrians reject the utility of pursuing the negotiation route.

U. S. Position: Our interest is to engage Asad in the process of producing an Arab consensus that will support an Israeli-Jordan agreement and a relationship of the Palestinians to it that Israel can live with. If that issue is to be addressed in the next stage, it is important that Asad understand why it is politically impossible to conduct another negotiation over the Golan Heights at the same time. Persuading Asad that he has something to gain by contributing constructively to a first step involving the Palestinians is the only way we can see of giving him reason to stand back in this next round without renewing the fighting. The second task is to persuade him that, as long as there is prospect of an agreement on the Israel-Jordan-Palestinian front, it may be useful to let negotiations proceed at their own pace on the Egyptian-Israeli front. With Khaddam, it may be better to concentrate on the first point.

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Your Talking Points:

--We must continue with the step-by-step process of moving toward peace. To try to move ahead too fast would stalemate the negotiations by asking one party or another to agree to things they are not yet ready for.

--We will be working with Israel to produce a negotiating proposal on the Jordanian front. As that process begins, we will need your efforts to develop a basis for negotiations and specific proposals on the Arab side.

--As you can imagine, we anticipate considerable difficulty in delivering Israel on this one. We have repeatedly stated that the legitimate interests of the Palestinians must be taken into account, and we need Arab help to define how this should be done. It is crucial in doing this that the Arab side take into account what will be necessary to allow some chance of Israel's accepting their proposal. What understanding is likely to emerge from current Arab talks on this issue?

--We want to move ahead as quickly as possible on all fronts, but the situation inside Israel, and the Jordanian/PLO issue, limit the pace at which things can move. Much work is needed just to get the Jordanian negotiations started, but progress on any front will pave the way for progress on others. In the context of building momentum, we are inclined to let Egyptian-Israeli negotiations proceed at their own pace in the next round.

2. UNDOF Dispute

Syrian Position: Because of an incident August 26 in which a UNDOF detachment tried to prevent Syrian Defense Minister Tlas from entering the area of separation, Syria now claims that UNDOF's mandate is limited to observing and reporting when it believes a violation has been committed. Under this interpretation, UNDOF would no longer be able to stop and inspect civilian or military persons entering the

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area of separation. The UN sent Under Secretary Guyer to Damascus recently to try to reach an understanding with the Syrians. He was unable to do so, and Khaddam agreed to continue the discussions in New York.

U. S. Position: We strongly support the premise that UNDOF is more than an observer force, and that it should continue to have the right to inspect persons entering the area of separation. You may wish to feel your way on this issue to see whether Khaddam raises it. It may be best to leave it between him and the UN, but if there is any hint of the subject, you will not want it to seem that you are unconcerned.

#### Your Talking Points

--While we agree that UNDOF must respect Syria's sovereignty, UNDOF clearly has the authority to check civilian and military personnel entering the area of separation. The U. S. strongly supports UNDOF's continuing such inspection.

--We well know Syria's views on this, but this position is implicit in the agreement and its negotiating background. The statement of the Chairman of the Military Group, during the Geneva meeting at which the Disengagement Agreement was signed, which was agreed to by all parties, specifically says that "UNDOF shall deny access to any military forces into the separation of forces area" (para 7) and that "UNDOF will assume control, will establish and man observation posts in evacuated Israeli positions." Paragraph E of the agreement itself uses the word "inspect" (not "observe") in describing UNDOF's role. We do not see how UNDOF can perform its mission unless it has the right to check all persons entering the zone to assure itself that there are no violations.

--But far more important than these words is the fact that if UNDOF is unable to inspect persons entering the area of separation, then UNDOF will not be able to perform its functions in a manner commanding the respect of all concerned. The resulting loss of confidence by Israel could make it more difficult to persuade Israel to proceed to further stages of disengagement.

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3. Disengagement Agreement Violations

During your talks with Khaddam in August, he alleged that Israel has committed several violations of the disengagement agreement and asked for your support in bringing about Israeli compliance with the agreement. Following is a listing of the complaints made by Khaddam, along with our comments:

- a. Arrest by the Israelis of three Syrian civilians in Haddas village (in the area from which Israeli forces withdrew as a result of the disengagement agreement) on June 19, 1974. Comment: UNDOF reports that the arrests were made before the withdrawal of Israeli forces, and the UN Secretariat accordingly believes that the Syrian complaint is not valid. The disengagement agreement does not cover problems of this sort.
- b. Israeli military presence, contrary to the agreement in hills Abu Zahab, Aakkacha, and Abbas. (This is the line of hills south of Kuneitra.) Comment: The UN Secretariat believes the problem may derive from discrepancies between Syrian, Israeli and UN maps, possibly caused by broad boundary lines being drawn with a felt pen on small scale maps. Also, this is an area where before 1973 each side had accepted de facto positions of the other side that were forward of the 1967 ceasefire lines. The Israelis have maintained those positions.
- c. Israeli military operations in hill Abu Nada (the higher of the two hills overlooking Kuneitra). Comment: The UN confirms that the Israelis have conducted maneuvers in this area but is unsure whether this constitutes a violation. The hill is west of lines A and A-1, but the Israelis agreed that there would be no weapons there that could fire into Kuneitra.
- d. Construction of an anti-tank bunker east of line A-1, and laying mines and barbed wire. Comment: This is the anti-tank ditch the Israelis have built along line A facing Kuneitra. We informed General Shihabi in July that since the agreements do not forbid such activity, as long as no military personnel are maintained in the area between

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lines A and A-1, we do not believe the Israelis have committed a violation. You will recall that the Israelis told us in May that they would do this, but we did not make a point of it with the Syrians.

e. Obstruction of engineers' work aimed at clearing the separation zone of mines, thus preventing the return of civilians to the zone.  
Comment: It is difficult to understand this complaint, since it implies activities by Israeli forces inside the area of separation. The UN tells us it knows of no such activities.

Khaddam also complained to you about Israel's destruction of Kuneitra just before the withdrawal of its forces from the town. Our intelligence indicates that the Israelis did systematically level most of the buildings not previously damaged in Kuneitra before evacuating it.

Syrian Position: The Syrians still consider these as violations, and Khaddam may raise them again.

U. S. Position: As indicated above, most if not all of these activities do not appear to be violations of the Disengagement Agreement. We do not think there would be anything to be gained by your volunteering a response to Khaddam on any of these points. However, if he brings them to us, we suggest you make the following points.

Your Talking Points (If the subject is raised by Khaddam)

--We have looked into the complaints you gave me in August. We have not been able to reach any definite conclusion on the validity of most of them, owing either to lack of information or to the fact that the agreements do not specifically prohibit the activities in question. For example, there is nothing in the agreement that prohibits the Israelis from constructing their anti-tank ditch along line A, as long as it is not manned by Israeli soldiers; by the same token, the agreement does not prohibit Syria from building a road up Mount Hermon (which the Syrians have done over Israeli protests) as long as no military personnel are involved.

--We recognize that there are some irritants but think that on the whole the disengagement agreement has been well and faithfully carried out by both parties. Admittedly, the agreement does not cover everything.

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If the parties are interested in clearing up ambiguities and points in dispute, they could handle this through UNDOF.

--The destruction of Kuneitra is regrettable, and we understand the difficulty this creates for Syria in resettling the town.

4. Proposed Palestinian Item in the UNGA

The members of the Arab League have decided to work for inscription of a new item in the UNGA agenda entitled "The Question of Palestine". Egypt has informed us that the Arabs intend to seek UNGA recognition that the Palestinian people are entitled to the right of self-determination, to obtain recognition of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and to ease the way for PLO participation in the Geneva Conference. The Arabs plan to request the UNGA to permit the PLO to present its views to the Assembly.

Syrian Position: Syria will cosponsor this item and can be expected to support it vigorously.

U. S. Position: We have already said that the legitimate interests of the Palestinians must be taken into account in a peace settlement, and we are discussing the question of the Palestinians with the various parties. There may be some advantage in the various feeling their case has been heard, but it would not be helpful to have a resolution which attempts to restrict the freedom of the negotiators in deciding how Palestinian interests should be reflected in the negotiations, pre-judge the issue of Palestinian participation in the Geneva Conference, or call into question basic premises (e.g. the existence of Israel) on which a peace settlement should be founded as described in Resolution 338 and Resolution 242.

Your Talking Points

--We supported inscription of the Palestinian item on the UNGA agenda.

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--We continue to believe that the best hope for all peoples of the Middle East is the achievement of a just and lasting negotiated peace settlement, on the basis of SC resolution 338, taking into account the legitimate interests of all peoples of the region, including the Palestinian people, and the right to existence of all states in the area.

--After we are informed about what will be proposed in the resolution under the Palestinian item in the UNGA, the U. S. will decide its position in light of our primary objective of facilitating negotiations among the parties based on SC Resolution 338.

--We would have serious problems with any UNGA action which would attempt to prejudge the issue of representation at the Geneva Conference or change the premises defined in Resolutions 338 and 242. As was agreed among the parties to the Conference, the question of other participants from the Middle East is to be decided by the Conference itself.

--We continue to regard Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 as the framework for the Geneva peace conference and for the negotiating process, which we consider the most effective arenas for resolving such questions as the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people.

#### 5. Bilateral Relations and Aid

On September 10 Khaddam gave Ambassador Murphy a listing of aid and technical assistance sought from the U. S. This included a very large PL-480 request (500,000 tons of wheat, 100,000 tons of rice, 100,000 tons of sugar, 50,000 tons of vegetable oil, 50,000 tons of corn, plus canned fish and milk), 300 graduate scholarships, earthmoving equipment, technical assistance, and unspecified economic aid. Ambassador Murphy has begun discussions with Khaddam on exactly what is required and what we can do in each area. On the pre-sent visit, Khaddam is expected to be accompanied by one or two economic officials. We are arranging for Khaddam and/or his economic officials to meet with senior AID officers to discuss economic and technical assistance, but he will want to go over this with you. At the same time, the failure of Congress to pass an aid bill would leave us without the capacity to move ahead on any development assistance projects.

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Syrian Position: As a developing country with only limited oil resources (perhaps \$400 million in expected 1974 oil exports), Syria has need of foreign assistance to speed development and cover import needs. Khaddam and other members of his delegation will seek to follow up on our stated readiness to provide aid.

U. S. Position: We would like to be as forthcoming as possible, but the AID funds intended for Syria (the Special Requirements Fund) are in the AID bill which may not be passed by Congress this year. With only Continuing Resolution authority, we could not make AID funds available to Syria this year.

We expect to be able to go ahead with PL-480, but the quantity will have to be less than Syria's request. Second Quarter allocations are under interagency consideration, and we have requested 50,000 tons of wheat and 25,000 tons of rice (total value about \$18 million) for the quarter for Syria. We have emphasized the need to have a decision before your meeting with Khaddam, and Assistant Secretary Enders, who is coordinating the Department's position on global second quarter allocations, is giving special attention to the Syrian program. There are, however, some blocked and delinquent PL-480 local currency balances from the pre-1967 era which Treasury will want to have settled before concurring in signing a new PL-480 agreement. These include about \$10 million in local currency presently due plus about \$22 million in unrepaid principal.

#### Your Talking Points

--We are very happy with the progress in our bilateral relations, and look forward to their continuing expansion. The Damascus fair has shown the growing interest on both sides in commercial relations, and we want to cooperate in other fields, too. Ambassador Murphy has communicated to us the results of his discussions with you on possible types of cooperation.

--As you know, U. S. aid activities are dependent on funding by Congress. Because of problems involving other parts of the world, but not Syria, we may not have

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