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1974-12-16, Franjie, Kissinger

Meeting 2
MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
William B. Buffum, Ambassador to Lebanon
Joseph J. Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State
Alfred Atherton, Deputy Assistant Secretary
of State

Harold Saunders, NSC Senior Staff
Lawrence Eagleburger, Executive Assistant
to the Secretary
George Vest, Special Assistant to Secretary for
Press Relations

Peter W. Rodman, NSC Staff *WR*
Mr. Camille Nowfel, Department of State,
Interpreter

Fu'ad Naffa', Minister of Foreign Affairs
of Lebanon

Dr. Butrus Dib, Director General at the
Presidency
Najib Sadaqa, Director General, Foreign
Ministry

Dr. Abdil Isma'il, Director of Political
Affairs, Foreign Ministry
Ambassador Abbas Hamiyah, Chief of Protocol
Dr. Antoine Fattal, Legal Counselor,
Foreign Ministry

TIME AND DATE:

Sunday, December 16, 1973
12:10 - 1:25 p.m.

PLACE:

The Officers Club
Riyahq Air Base
Beirut

[After greetings and pleasantries in the anteroom, the group
went upstairs to the meeting room.]

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[Turkish coffee was served.]

Minister Naffa*: First of all, I would like to say welcome. It may not be necessary always to reiterate the good relations that exist between the United States and Lebanon. We can say that these relations are today as good as they can be, and we are concerned that they will continue to be so. We trust these good relations between the U.S. and Lebanon will extend to cover all Arab countries because true friendship implies that a friend should desire that his friends be friends to his other friends, and in this instance everyone can benefit from this kind of relationship.

Of course, American-Arab relations in the recent period have suffered severe blows. But today is an opportune time for the U.S. to regain friendship with the Arab countries and even to strengthen this friendship. I am hopeful, as a matter of fact I have no doubt, that the peace talks will result in positive measures, because we don't want these talks to have the result that if there is no result, American-Arab relations could become worse.

Some may wonder why we make such a connection between the Conference and American-Arab relations. The answer was given by Mr. Sisco -- the answer to the Peace Conference and U.S.-Arab relations is in the hands of the United States. Should there be peace, then the Arabs of course will give credit to the U.S. -- the Arabs and the entire world, because the U.S. plays the key role. We therefore are confident that the U.S. will use its good offices to exert pressure where pressure has to be exerted -- for a permanent peace. It has to be a just peace, or else it will not be permanent.

Dr. Kissinger is well aware of the position of Lebanon. I myself discussed this with you in New York just one day before the eruption of hostilities. I was convinced that you understood our situation exactly as we understand it. I have since discussed our situation in light of developments since the war -- with Mr. Sisco when he visited us subsequently. I believe our position is clear and well known and I don't want to take time to explain it again. I'm sure you will have such a discussion with His Excellency the President in a little while.

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I would like, however, to listen to your views, Mr. Secretary, with respect to the developments that have happened since Mr. Sisco's visit to us, so we may be able to take positions with regard to the details affected by developments since our meeting with Mr. Sisco. We have communicated to you through the American Embassy in Beirut the subjects we would like to have you shed light to us on.

[Dr. Kissinger gets the list, at Tab A, and reads it over.]

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, I have seen these questions, Mr. Foreign Minister. How should we proceed?

Minister Naffa: These subjects were submitted to you so as to place you in the atmosphere of our concern.

Dr. Kissinger: First of all, Mr. Foreign Minister, let me express my appreciation for the courtesy with which you have improvised our welcome here. I hope it has been no inconvenience to you. But I have sensed the warmth of the welcome here, and my colleagues and I are grateful.

Secondly, I would like to express agreement with your remarks that relations between Lebanon and America are excellent. We of course are committed to your territorial integrity and your independence. This has been reiterated by many of my predecessors and I am happy to reaffirm it today. And of course we are ready to cooperate with you on these matters and on all matters, including internal security, on which you feel we can make a contribution.

Let me make a few general observations.

Many of our Arab friends prior to the October 6 war complained that the U.S. was not doing enough to bring about a settlement in the area. There was some merit in this criticism. There were many reasons for this. We were involved in settling the Viet-Nam war, which took much of our energies, and we had many domestic pressures. My predecessor did make a significant effort, but it is fair to say he did not receive the total support of all elements of the U.S. Government. He was permitted to do everything that would not produce domestic discord. Given our domestic situation, that

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is not very much. I have to say this in tribute to him because he made a very sincere effort. So, of course, did Joe Sisco.

There is one interesting historical fact; that every crisis since we came into office that was not inherited was in Joe Sisco's area. So we think Hamilton College is in for an interesting time.

When I saw the Foreign Minister in New York I told him we would make a major effort after the Israeli elections. I emphasize this, because our intentions existed before the war. But I think it is fair to say that since the war the objective conditions are better than they have ever been.

We have a very difficult problem with which you're familiar. There are many in the world who are very free in making public pronouncements. I tell my Arab friends and you that if you want declarations, you should talk to the Europeans and the Japanese. They are great at making declarations. If you want results, you had better talk to us. We may not promise as much as the others, but we are the only ones who can deliver what we promise. I emphasize that, because there have been too many declarations and too little progress. And as the Foreign Minister knows, the difficult thing in foreign policy is to go from here to there in a series of concrete steps.

We are determined to move towards the implementation of Security Council Resolution 242. But frankly, we don't want to be asked about every last meaning of every last ambiguous clause. I have said this to every Arab leader I have met.

If we put down now a Kissinger plan, this will only involve us in an uproar in the U.S. and a major theoretical debate. We are not your problem. We are committed to a just and durable peace, which by definition has to be one that the Arab peoples accept. But frankly we don't want to be engaged now in a debate over the last step when we've not taken even the first step yet.

And if the Foreign Minister will forgive me, because the standards of secrecy in the Middle East are not the highest, I don't give precise answers to these questions to governments either. I

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have said this to four other governments before I got here, so it's not directed at Lebanon.

Our Ambassador will apologize tomorrow for all the discourtesies I have made.

You can check with your colleagues in other countries because I have said the same to them.

The first question [raised by the Lebanese, Tab A] concerns my impressions following my latest visits to the area.

As the Foreign Minister knows better than I, the Arabs are a dramatic and highly individualistic people. So we now are engaged in attempting to get the agreement of three Arab parties and Israel on the text of the letter, which we and the Soviet Union have agreed on, to the UN Secretary-General, which will be the basis for invitations to the parties to the Conference.

So every time someone wants to change a word, it has to be cleared with the U.S., Soviet Union, and three other parties. So that is time-consuming. As soon as this is completed, which we hope will be in the next two days, we will show you the text. To go through all the arguments will be an imposition on your patience, and will also be confusing.

In a deeper sense, I believe the leaders in the area I have talked to have made the decision to move in favor of peace, and they recognize the complexity of the situation. And I believe we can work out understandings and discussions with them that can lead to a mutually acceptable solution. So I continue to be optimistic about the ultimate direction of the negotiations. And of course, there will be ups and downs, and difficulties.

Now, the second question, on the actual state of the current negotiations with regard to military disengagement.

The only place there are actual discussions is between Egypt and Israel at Kilometer 101. The two sides have put forward proposals that moved from the outrageous to the impossible. However,

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I believe there is a sufficient basis in some of the exchanges that have taken place to make me believe that something can be worked out on disengagement in the first phase of the Conference. Between Egypt and Israel.

As between Syria and Israel, those two sides of course have not even begun talking to each other. As you probably know even better than we, your Syrian neighbors have a somewhat complex method of negotiating. So we would like for some discussion to start between the Syrians and Israelis. The Syrians would like us to conduct discussions, but it is really impossible for us to conduct the discussions for Israel. We are not Israel's lawyer.

So once the discussions start, we will use our influence to bring about an acceptable solution. And we hope we can make progress in that direction in the next few weeks.

I had difficult but I think on the whole useful discussions yesterday with President Asad. And we decided we would both think a little more, and then we would send Ambassador Buffum to Damascus next week, probably Tuesday, for a further exchange of views. This should be kept confidential. I mention this to give you a sense of the fact that discussions are continuing. And we are planning to establish an Interests Section in Damascus and they will establish one in Washington.

[Question 3:] "The agenda for the second stage of actual peace negotiations, together with the order of priority to be ascribed to various questions." I think this question should be discussed after the first phase of the Conference. As painful as this may be for products in part of French educational theory, I don't believe in theoretical discussions at early stages but they should be left to later resolution. So I think after the first stage, the second will have to concern withdrawals, security zones, and guarantees, and move on then to the Palestinian question.

On the order of priority, I think it should be done in whatever order is most settleable at any given moment.

Please interrupt me if there are any clarifications or questions.

Let me reverse the 4th and the 5th.

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Minister Naffa: As far as the question of priorities, you believe in the fragmentation of the Conference, dealing with one issue and then moving on after settling it?

Dr. Kissinger: I am openminded. In general that is my approach. But some are interconnected. Egyptian-Israeli withdrawals and security zones and guarantees -- those can't be handled in isolation. But the question of the Palestinians and Jerusalem can be dealt with separate from the security issues.

On the 5th question, how the U.S. envisages Lebanon's participation and eventual role: We are prepared to support Lebanon's participation in the Conference after completion of the disengagement phase. And we recognize Lebanon has an interest in such questions as its frontier, especially as part of an international guarantee, and an interest in such questions as the Palestinians, and also Jerusalem.

Minister Naffa: I would like to make clear one point, with regard to Lebanon's borders. We want to make it clear that Lebanon's borders are not a subject of discussion. They are already settled, but only to be guaranteed.

Dr. Kissinger: I was coming to that. That is your 12th question. The only thing for the Conference to do is give international recognition to the existing border. I want to give you the assurance that was given by my predecessor -- that the U.S. regards the border as settled as an international frontier and not to be the subject of discussion.

Minister Naffa: Recognize the existing frontier.

Dr. Kissinger: That is correct. With regard to your fourth question [the problem of participation, in particular, of Syria, Jordan and the Palestinians]: Of course, Syria and Jordan are already part of the Conference.

As for the Palestinians, I will talk about that when I talk about question ten.

Question six, the role of the U.S. and Soviet Union, and the role of the UN Secretary-General, and do I envisage the participation of other states?

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On the role of the U.S. and Soviet Union, initially we will be co-chairmen of the conference, and we will use our good offices to move things along. But of course we have varying degrees of influence, and probably we are in a better position to influence Israel, which has to make the concessions, than is the Soviet Union.

Minister Naffa: This is exactly what I stated at the beginning of the session -- that the U.S. can play a more effective role.

Dr. Kissinger: Exactly. So we have no illusions about the dedication to abstract peace of the Soviet Union. But it is of course always possible for us to continue our unilateral effort.

The role of the Secretary-General will be one of the obligations that God will have inflicted on our new Assistant Secretary [Buffum]. And he [Waldheim] will not fail as a result of underestimation by himself of his own importance.

Minister Naffa: If we are to judge the Ambassador's success in the new role by his success in Lebanon, he will undoubtedly be successful.

Dr. Kissinger: The Secretary-General will convene and preside at the opening phase. And his disposition is to be helpful, as well as enthusiastic. Both qualities will be necessary, the former more than the second.

Do we envisage the participation of other states? I have notices that Foreign Ministers of other states have a great desire to participate in conferences that involve no risks, no obligations for them, and a great opportunity to make speeches.

I hope these conversations will be kept confidential. [laughter]

In principle, anyone who has an overwhelming interest to participate, we won't fall on our sword over. But speaking frankly, those who can't settle it will find the opportunity in whatever forum is most appropriate for speaking. As a veteran of the Viet-Nam peace conference, that had 169 sessions and has an unbeatable record because not one of them ever settled even the most minor substantive point. All the settlements were made outside of the conference.

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So I tell you frankly, there is great excitement over who can participate, but it's not a major issue. Ways will be found among those who have to settle, to settle.

Question seven, the question of guarantees. The guarantees will have to be an essential element of the settlement. But I think we can discuss the nature of them better after we're somewhat closer to the final outline of the settlement, so we know what it is that has to be guaranteed. In general, a guarantee cannot be a substitute for a bad settlement. And there are examples in history where nations have not fulfilled their promises. And when people speak of joint U.S.-Soviet guarantees, and others, if it means everyone must approve any action, that means nothing can ever happen. It depends on how it is defined. So it may be that we will need a series of individual guarantees.

We have no final view on the subject, however. We are open to suggestions. And we are open to suggestions also on other points, but on this one we really have no fixed view.

[Question 8:] The composition and functions of international forces. Again, we are openminded and this depends on the nature of the guarantees. We are opposed to bringing Soviet combat forces into the Middle East in the guise of international forces or guaranteeing forces. But if Lebanon has a different view, we are willing to consider that. [Laughter]

Minister Naftali: If there is need for a suggestion, we will present them at an opportune moment. [Laughter]

Dr. Kissinger: In fact, we will forego the right to station American forces here in order to prevent Soviet forces.

[Question 9:] Demilitarization of certain zones: We believe this is absolutely essential. There is absolutely no possibility of Israeli withdrawal of a substantial size without simultaneous provision for demilitarization.

Now we get into a series of questions on which I do not want to be precise.

The first is [question 10] the future of the Palestinian people. We have no hesitation to say that the rights of the Palestinian people

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and the problem of refugees must be an integral part of the peace settlement. And we recognize also that the settlement must relieve the burden of those countries who have borne the difficulties they faced. But we would like to retain some flexibility about the method by which this is achieved. But committing ourselves now to such notions as an independent Palestinian state -- we will examine those questions when we are at a later phase.

[Question 11:] Withdrawal: I said in Peking right after my first visit to the Middle East that a settlement must include Israeli withdrawal from Arab lands. I do not think I am in the same position as the Japanese and Europeans in being more precise. It is one of the few cases where it may be easier to do things than to say them.

I have already indicated, with regard to question 12, that we recognize the frontier between Israel and Lebanon as the international frontier, not subject to negotiation and subject to the same formalities that will apply to other international frontiers.

Now, [question 13] the future of Jerusalem: I would like to save that problem to a later stage of negotiations, when the parties have gained more confidence in each other.

On one hand it should be easier to settle, because it has almost no practical significance; on the other, as the Foreign Minister knows, it has tremendous emotional significance, for both sides. But my experience as a negotiator has been that many things that seem inconceivable at the beginning seem more possible at a later stage. But it seems clear to us that in one way or another, there has to be Arab control over their holy places.

These, Mr. Foreign Minister, are the answers to your questions.

Minister Naffa: I would like to express to you my profound gratitude, Mr. Secretary. We did not pose these questions merely to pose questions, but in conjunction with the Ambassador we made a list to facilitate discussion.

Dr. Kissinger: Because he knows very well that I wouldn't answer them to him. [Laughter]

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Minister Naffa': I want to make sure you know we don't do this to embarrass any party, particularly the U.S., or to place it in a difficult position.

Dr. Kissinger: I appreciate that.

Minister Naffa': In a very special way I would like to express appreciation for the frankness, with which you gave us the answers. And also to thank you in a special way for recognizing the warmth of our welcome. We would have preferred a better way but were forced to do it this way because of the circumstances.

I would like to thank you in a specific way for your clarification of the specific points, and I would mention first the question of the border.

And I would like to thank you for your answer with regard to the Palestinian people. This is the first time we have heard a responsible American official speak of this people as a people, and this is very significant.

And I would like to thank you also for saying that any settlement would have to include liberation of those countries who have carried the burden for so long.

So we are thankful in every respect, except that your visit can't be longer.

Dr. Kissinger: Thank you, Mr. Foreign Minister. I hope to come back. And considering what awaits me at the next stop, I would gladly stay here longer and cut short the next stop! It is the first chance on my trip to spend an evening with a lady, and, contrary to my reputation, I would gladly give it up.

Minister Naffa': I can't share with you your good experience in the U.S. You have to suffer alone here.

[The meeting then ended. The meeting with the President followed.]

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