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Authority E.O. 12958

By *MS* NARA Date 12-13-07

1974-2-19, Faisal, Nixon, ~~Faisal~~ Saqqaf meeting

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE~~
EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT'S FILES

FROM:

BRENT SCOWCROFT

SUBJECT:

The President's Meeting with Foreign Ministers Fahmi and Saqqaf

DATE AND TIME:

Tuesday, February 19, 1974
11:09 a.m. - 12:35 p.m.

PLACE:

The Oval Office

PARTICIPANTS:

President Nixon
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
Ismail Fahmi, Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Egypt
Umar al-Saqqaf, Minister of State for
Foreign Affairs, Saudi Arabia
Major General Brent Scowcroft, USAF

Secretary Kissinger: The last time Foreign Minister Fahmi was here was on the day he became Foreign Minister.

Minister Saqqaf: It is very good to see you again, Mr. President.

The President: I was in Florida when you both arrived.

Secretary Kissinger: I gave the President a daily report of our various meetings.

The President: I am always glad to welcome both of you. Your conversations with Secretary Kissinger have indicated the importance of this meeting. It is perhaps crucial in making a breakthrough on the issues confronting us. Just to make sure that we all have the same understanding of where we are, I would like each of you to sum up your understandings.

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E.O. 12958, as amended, Sect 3.5

NW 01-34/12-09-07-7 Dec. 06

By *RC* / Date 16 APR 07

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Secretary Kissinger: As I understood our conversation, the two Foreign Ministers reported on the summit meeting of the four heads of state as follows:

- (1) They decided to lift the oil embargo at the next meeting of oil ministers -- in about two weeks. This decision is unconditional.

The President: Who would participate?

Minister Saqqaf: All the Arab producers. The only one we are not certain of is Iraq.

Secretary Kissinger:

- (2) The four heads of government strongly urged our best influence for a Syrian-Israeli disengagement.
- (3) The President would agree to send me to the Middle East, hopefully even before the Mexico Conference, to get Syrian-Israeli talks started. This is very important for President Asad who faces serious domestic problems. The ability of the four leaders to lift the embargo will depend on the maintenance of secrecy about this understanding. This is the way I understood our conversations.

Minister Fahmi: What Kissinger has told you is correct. We are pleased to come here on behalf of the four government leaders with the mandate which Kissinger summed up. I would like to add some background. There was unanimity in these decisions. In fact, there is no new change regarding the assurances which you had been given for the State of the Union Address. There were only some obvious apprehensions on the part of Asad. He is in a difficult spot, but there is no basic change in the content you had. You have said you are actively committed to a disengagement in Syria as you have done so effectively in Egypt. We want you to continue and the idea is we would like Kissinger to go -- even before Mexico, but we realize that is not possible. We would appreciate it, if it is possible, that you could make Kissinger's visit known to the press at the end of this meeting.

On the oil, the decision was final and unanimous to lift the embargo. The problems are Iraq and Libya. Iraq probably will not participate and

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Libya very likely will be all right. We do not expect trouble from Qadhafi, but even so it would not change anything. This decision should not be leaked to the press. The four leaders want you to know that there is no change in their commitment.

Minister Saqqaf: It is true there was no condition to the lifting of the embargo but you must bear in mind it will not be lifted for nothing. If lifted, something is going to happen. The idea of our friend going to the Middle East is to have something happen before the embargo is lifted. We had these three conditions, but I find it very hard not to link the three. The embargo is not going to be lifted without something else happening.

Secretary Kissinger: That is not the way I understood it. First, there is the problem of us working under pressure. Secondly, all we can do next week is to get talks started. We must work at home here with the Jews and the Congress and it is not possible to make substantive progress next week. As you know, we went through terrible problems with the Egyptian-Israeli disengagement.

Minister Saqqaf: Let me read: "The four heads of state agree to lift the embargo and it will be discussed by the oil ministers at a meeting within two weeks. The heads of state feel it is a must that a disengagement agreement be reached and a decisive one in the Golan Heights."

The President: The critical question is what you expect with regard to timing on Syrian-Israeli disengagement. I don't want you to have any illusions that sending Kissinger out to get them talking will result in something happening in two or three weeks. It will be hard going. All that I can do is to say, without any regard to the embargo, we will do our best to get Syrian-Israeli disengagement -- the best possible disengagement and as quickly as possible. But the Syrians we do not know so well. The Egyptians are very mature people. The Syrians are not so mature. Negotiations may move faster; they may move slower. Israel at the moment does not even have a government. I raise these points only because I do not wish any illusion that we can do this instantly. We have made a commitment -- that is all I can do.

Minister Fahmi: No one would logically expect disengagement within two weeks. What they want is to help Asad and have movement and disengagement agreement after a reasonable time. What you have said is adequate and there will be no problem. Asad knows he cannot have a disengagement before the oil ministers meeting.

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The President: We can't say what the disengagement will be. All we can say is we will work for a fair and just agreement.

Minister Fahmi: That is all we need.

The President: We will also need the influence of your governments to reach an agreement. We will need the help of each of you with Asad.

Minister Saqqaf: From our side we have done the impossible. Iraq is ninety percent Communist, Qadhafi is erratic, Algeria is far away. You have heard me talk about Asad. I think he is not in full agreement with us, but he is going up a little bit because of what is going on. We want help; we are not coming with conditions. King Faisal is your friend. And President Sadat is your friend. We think it is time for peace in the Middle East. If the Soviet Union once gets into the Middle East, it will be impossible to get them out. The masses of the Arabs are against the West.

Minister Fahmi: I disagree that the Arab people are against the West. But it is true that they cannot understand the positions the U.S. has taken in the Middle East over the past twenty years. But they are not anti-U.S.

Minister Saqqaf: We want no misunderstanding. We appreciate your difficulties. I will be the first to be seeing the other leaders but not as Arabs. There will be about thirty of them at the Islamic conference.

Minister Fahmi: As far as I am concerned, if the President will agree that Kissinger will travel on the 25th of February and go to Damascus and Israel once or twice, this will be an achievement and I believe that the four leaders will be content with this and with your statement.

The President: I would not want to leave the impression that Kissinger, after a tough trip to Latin America, and the others he has had recently to the Middle East and the Soviet Union that you will wait to see what happens before the embargo is lifted. We made a decision not to link our actions and the embargo. You go your way and we go our way. If we say we are working to get a disengagement without conditions and you say you will wait to see what happens -- that is holding it over our heads. We will not link anything at all nor will we say anything. But if, after Kissinger travels, the question is asked did he make enough progress and an argument ensues, we will be in an impossible position. We will continue

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to work for an agreement, but as I told your Ambassador earlier, it will be very difficult for us if the embargo is held over our heads.

Minister Saggaf: King Faisal knows that.

The President: We don't want to do anything to weaken your two governments but look at our own situation. There will be no disengagement or moves toward a permanent peace unless the U.S. uses great influence with Israel. I am prepared to use it, as is Kissinger, but it will make it very difficult with the press and with Congress if they say we are doing it because there is a gun at our heads. But, as I have said, I do not wish to do anything which would hurt your two governments. Four wars in the Middle East is too much. The question is who will play a role. Many want to, including the Europeans, but none of them can hold a rein against the Soviet Union if they decide to support the radicals -- and all of your countries have at least some. We want nothing out of the whole exercise except independence in the region and to work with you.

Many years ago I told Dulles that the decision on assisting in the building of the Aswan Dam was wrong. My point is this, here is U.S. policy as I have developed it and as Kissinger has carried it out. Kissinger has said nothing that does not have my complete support. We are committed to a permanent peace in the Middle East. We can not commit to when or to precise details -- those are for the negotiators to work out. What is new in this situation is that the United States is committed -- we are committed because we want peace, not only for Israel, but for all of your peoples. We do not wish to go back to our former restricted role in the Middle East, where we worked only with Israel, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, but we wish to be friends with all countries in the region. We do not wish to keep the Soviet Union out; we hope they will play a useful role, but we do not know. But no one here has a fear that the United States will try to dominate the Middle East so we will try to play a useful role.

The embargo is tough domestically -- you have seen the cars lined up at the gas stations. It is hard on me personally, but we will handle it. But to enable us to play a powerful role quickly, it is important that our friends not be there with a club over our heads. Otherwise, the press and the Congress will resist and ask why we do these things when you are keeping the embargo. That is a fact. There is no linkage. We will work for peace and assist to the extent that you want us, including the

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provision of aid. If the embargo is lifted, you will be playing a decisive role towards hastening an agreement; if not, you will make it more difficult for us to play a useful role. The key question is: do you want us to play a major role, to get Israel to be reasonable, to work toward a reasonable peace? That is what is on the line -- our help, economically, industrially, culturally. What is important is not the embargo or related conditions but the opportunity to build in the Middle East. It is a matter of trust between us. If Faisal moving alone on the embargo would endanger his survival, we do not wish that. We want all to see it to be in everyone's interest to allow the countries in the area to be independent and to avoid wars. Please convey this to your governments.

Minister Fahmi: What you have said is of historical importance for me and I will convey it word for word to President Sadat. The embargo will be lifted -- there will be no linkage. But it is not being done in a vacuum; this is the real world. Blackmail is a word you all used. You are committed to disengagement. It is not easy, but the most immediate thing is that Kissinger will be involved in the area. President Asad will try to follow. This is why I am here and am not going to Lahore. Egypt will lead, having in mind their own situation.

Candidly, since you spoke of the future, we reciprocate your feelings in every way. Trust is important. I must say that before October 6th there was no embargo and no blackmail. But the U.S. had a destructive policy over twenty years with respect to Israel. If we establish a new relationship and if your previous relationship with Israel continues, you can never play the role you described. If this special relationship with Israel continues, our security will be in jeopardy. Israel speaks of security in a hollow way. Our security is jeopardized because of this special relationship. In the last war the Israelis could not have done anything without you. We know we have made mistakes too but the Soviet Union got into the area only because of Dulles. We know how to deal with the Soviet Union. They were kicked out by Sadat independently. It is not tolerable to us that our security shall be at the mercy of the Israelis. I want to be clear on this, I am talking frankly.

The embargo will be lifted -- that is the decision of the four. We are not asking you to pay anything. We don't like linkage. If you want to play a role, play it because it is right. The 6th of October made all the difference and we hope that this change between us will be cemented. The information

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in your State of the Union Address is correct. There are some difficulties but they are not basic. The meeting in Algeria was to show their support -- they know you have difficulties.

Secretary Kissinger: If you will give us a chance to work on the Syrian side as in Egypt, we can get it done but we have to have room to maneuver. We have to be able to do such things as dividing the Israeli Cabinet and so forth. We do not want to make a frontal attack.

Minister Saggaf: For the last three years, you have done much. We have never felt bad relations. Things are now relaxed because of what you have done in Egypt and what you plan in Syria. But we want from you on what basis this disengagement in Syria will take place.

The President: There will be thorny discussions but I am prepared to make hard decisions not only to move to talks but to move them to a successful resolution. That is what is new. I have written to President Sadat, to King Faisal, and to Prime Minister Meir. I have been direct and firm and I will continue.

Secretary Kissinger: She felt you were giving her an ultimatum.

Minister Saggaf: This is what we had in mind. We do not want to commit you, Mr. President, but this is what I wanted to hear.

The President: Our public position is like the tip of the iceberg. I will be doing much more than will be made public. I will work behind the scenes. That is the way I work.

Secretary Kissinger: I believe that the principles applied on the Egyptian front can also be applied in the case of the Syrian front. The same general procedures and the same scope will be effective. Syria has made a not very modest proposal. In the case of the Egyptian disengagement, President Sadat was wise enough to go through the steps necessary. We could use the same steps and principles as in Egypt. Even in the Egyptian case, Israel had not agreed to leave the Canal.

Minister Saggaf: This is the difference. Egypt is very astute.

Secretary Kissinger: I will try to explain this to Asad.

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Minister Fahmi: You should not worry. Asad asked me to what extent the Soviet Union should be kept informed.

The President: I am thinking in long-range terms. The Middle East is the gateway to Africa and Asia. The United States is a world power. That is not our desire but it is a fact. We have no choice but to play that role. We have made major initiatives to the Soviet Union and China and we will be making one with respect to Europe this spring -- but the key area for progress is the Middle East. We want to have a special relationship with Egypt, with Saudi Arabia, and with the other Arab states. We will tilt from now on not just to Israel but to peace and justice. We need a closer relationship. There can be no permanent peace in the Middle East without the United States. We want to be helpful and we can be helpful. Kissinger will go out there next week. The purpose is to get talks started looking toward a disengagement. We will continue, after disengagement, to work on a permanent settlement in Geneva and in every way.

Now we should decide what to say to the press. I will say that we had a constructive meeting about the steps to bring a permanent peace to the Middle East. The major part of the meeting was devoted to the question of Syrian-Israeli disengagement. At the request of the four Arab leaders, I have asked Kissinger to go to the Middle East to try to get talks started, and we hope that this will be a useful step toward a permanent settlement.

Secretary Kissinger: We will let the press know that Israel was informed.

The President: Now what will you say?

Secretary Kissinger: Both should say the same thing in different words in support of the President's statement.

Minister Saqqaf: I will say we have been sent here with a mission by the four heads of state. We were very well met and had constructive discussions.

The President: It will be widely noticed that the embargo was not mentioned.

Secretary Kissinger: People will put two and two together.

Minister Saqqaf: And we are working toward permanent peace in the area.

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The President: Does it sound all right, what I would say?

Secretary Kissinger: These two are both great orators. They will have no problem at all with the press.

There followed some small talk as the meeting broke up in preparation for the statements to the press.

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