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NSC Meeting: The Middle East. December 10, 1969

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Summary:

The Council re-caps the current situation in the Middle East and discusses US options to improve the American position in the Middle East and work for an Arab-Israeli settlement.

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

By KW NARA, Date 7-17-03

TOP SECRET/NODIS

NSC MEETING

Wednesday, December 10, 1969 -- 10:00 a.m.

The Middle East

PARTICIPANTS: The President
The Vice President
The Secretary of State, William P. Rogers
The Secretary of Defense, Melvin R. Laird
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff,
General Earle G. Wheeler
Director of Central Intelligence, Richard M. Helms
Director, Office of Emergency Preparedness,
General George A. Lincoln
Under Secretary of State, Elliot L. Richardson
Ambassador Charles Yost
Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President
Assistant Secretary Joseph J. Sisco
Alfred L. Atherton, Jr., Department of State
William Watts, NSC Staff
Harold H. Saunders, NSC Staff
Pat Conger, CIA

President: Let's limit discussion to the Mid-East. It would be useful at a later time to review Lebanese contingency planning -- to know that the U.S. has less flexibility today than in 1958. We could not order today the kind of landings that had been mounted then. Also, let's put the Libyan issue aside until later and concentrate on the Mid-East.

But first, let's hear report from Secretaries Rogers and Laird on trip to Europe. [This briefing followed and will be covered in Mr. Watts' notes: "On Mid-East, Schumann may be a bit of a problem."]

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Let's turn to the Mid-East. In the last two weeks, the pressures to see me on the Mid-East have been mounting. Oil people were in yesterday; the Israeli group in Congress is ready to jump down our throats.

Helms: [Text will be provided.]
Deterioration has continued. Chances for violence have increased:

--UAR forces remain impotent.
--Lebanese front opened.
--Hussein almost powerless to control fedayeen. Almost an autonomous Palestinian state within Jordan.

New Israeli cabinet will have to cope with new financial problem. Problem arises from military purchases. With or without help, government will have to control spending strictly. Electorate endorsed government position on peace conditions. Only argument is over what exactly to do with occupied territories -- assimilate or not. Israeli settlements increasing on Golan Heights, West Bank, north Sinai coast, Sharm al-Shaykh. Military objectives: (1) deter UAR; (2) if possible, topple Nasser. Israel could be considering a penetration in force into the UAR; an Israeli attack across canal could incur substantial casualties. We think Israelis feel they can bring Nasser down.

Arab leaders know they cannot defeat Israel. They want outsiders to bail them out. Attitude is one of "monumental frustration." Ideal goal: make Israelis consider whether better to return occupied territories rather than go on sustaining casualties. Nasser's November 6 speech -- "mostly sound and fury"; same may well be outcome of December 20 Arab summit meeting.

Israel remains militarily superior. Soviets appear to be just about replacing Arab losses.

Since September, violence has increased on all fronts but Lebanon. That appears likely to become more active now. Israeli policy -- community responsibility -- on West Bank a response to greater fedayeen activity. Hussein looking for more equipment.

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Fedayeen movements (8,000 guerrillas) do not pose a serious military threat but can be disruptive. Moscow may begin supplying fedayeen directly. Shelepin statement October 20.

President: Will Dr. Kissinger now brief on the issues.

Dr. Kissinger: We have discussed negotiating positions before in the NSC. What I want to do here is to discuss some of the basic premises which underlie them, leaving negotiating positions to the negotiators.

I would sum up the issues in the following way:

1. The first issue is whether it is possible to improve the U.S. position in the Arab world by dissociating ourselves from Israel's positions. If so, how permanent would that improvement be? What does it mean to dissociate ourselves?

   -- Those who favor dissociation argue that our problem in the moderate Arab world is that we seem to be Israel's lawyer.

   -- Others argue that the objective of the Arab radicals is to do away with Israel, not just to do away with Israel's conquests. A second issue is not just our negotiating position but whether we are willing to see sanctions imposed on Israel for not withdrawing.

2. A second issue is: Assuming we have decided to continue working for an Arab-Israeli settlement no matter how hard to achieve, what is the best strategy for achieving this? There are two schools of thought:

   a. Let local forces assume responsibility for the terms of a settlement, leaving to outsiders the problem of bringing the parties together and guaranteeing those terms once agreed. (Our position right now is part way between this and the second.)

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-- Those who favor this approach believe that the problem is probably insoluble. The more we get into the issue, the more we will be pressed to impose sanctions on Israel. Our most useful role is simply to try to promote Rhodes-type talks.

-- Those who oppose say that: This is the strategy tried from November 1967 to January 1969, which we abandoned last February. This assumes that the Arabs can contain their frustration and channel it into negotiations. It also assumes that Israel can remain militarily superior and deter UAR attack.

b. Generate international pressures for the terms of a settlement.

-- Those who favor this approach argue: We cannot just sit back. The Near Easterners are too suspicious of each other to initiate negotiations unless outsiders frame the terms of negotiation.

-- Those who oppose feel that we might end up with the worst of everything. International diplomatic action has raised Arab hopes too high without being able to produce results and diverted the Arabs from coming to terms with Israel. If international pressure is generated, the U.S. will be expected to come up with all the ideas and impose terms unilaterally on Israel.

3. The third issue: Assuming the U.S. has an interest in generating whatever international pressure may be possible, how do we go about it? We have two broad choices:

-- Continue the present talks, try to achieve consensus on the terms of a settlement and then press Israel to accept (the USSR pressing the UAR).

-- Break off the talks now -- or let them peter out -- to cut our losses but also to generate pressure on the USSR and

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the Arabs to face up to the necessity to discuss reasonable terms.

I have already outlined the arguments for and against each of these.

4. The next issue is: If the U.S. wishes to continue negotiations what is the best forum? The three options reviewed last February remain the logical choices:

a. Four Power talks. We confront all the problems of whether we should be specific about the terms of a settlement or stick to the broad negotiating framework.

-- Those who have argued for this course started with the fact that last January-February the U.S. was under heavy international -- and special French -- pressure to join in Four Power talks. There was strong sentiment at that time for taking a more active role to see whether outsiders could help the belligerents formulate at least a framework to get negotiations started. If we reached consensus, it seemed desirable to diffuse the onus.

-- Those who have worried about these talks have argued that:
-This is the forum in which the U.S. is most likely to be pressed to move away from a position that has any chance of acceptance in Israel.
-The other three disagree with us on procedure and substance.
-This brings the USSR into the Jordan talks.

b. US-USSR talks have been confined to the UAR because the issues seemed more tractable, because a UAR settlement would facilitate a Jordan settlement and because we thought the USSR might press the UAR.

--Those who argued for entering these talks did so on three grounds:

(1). For global reasons, the U.S. had an interest in seeing whether it could negotiate seriously on a range of important issues.

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(2) The USSR's persistent requests since September 1968 to talk about a Mid-East settlement suggested that Moscow might be uncomfortable in the Mid-East and might participate seriously in trying to work out a reasonable arrangement. While we maintained a proper skepticism, it made sense to probe far enough to see what was possible.

(3) The USSR should pay at least as much of the price for a settlement as the U.S. in expanding its influence with its clients.

--Those who opposed this course argued mainly that the USSR did not want a real peace; it simply wanted to persuade us to press Israel to give back the territory of Moscow's clients. Since the USSR was not likely to act seriously, it did not make sense to formalize the USSR's role in the Mid-East by giving it a place at the peace table.

c. U.S. mediation not heretofore explored in detail.

-- Those who argued for felt in general that:
-The U.S. should exploit its exclusive ability to move Israel and not share credit for a settlement, if any. The others only make our job more difficult.
-Nasser really wanted peace but that he could not say so publicly so he would welcome a private U.S. mediation effort.
-It made no sense to involve the USSR in any exchange on a Jordan-Israel settlement.

-- Those who argued against argued that we have an interest in diffusing responsibility.

President: It has been one of our assumptions in the U.S.-Soviet talks that we could get the Soviet Union to help bring the UAR around. Mr. McCloy yesterday hit hard on the following point: Nasser tells him and other American businessmen that the Egyptians don't want to be exclusively in Soviet clutches. They would like the opportunity for direct communication with the U.S.

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The oil people all seem to feel that we are making a mistake not to have a direct channel of communications with the Egyptians.

Secretary Rogers: We do have direct channels of communication with the Egyptians. It is interesting to note that when I sent my letter to Foreign Minister Riad, Ambassador Dobrynin came in and told me that Foreign Minister Gromyko had been embarrassed by what I had said in my letter. Riad had turned over a copy of my letter to Gromyko. Here was an opportunity given to the Egyptians to communicate with the U.S. and not to involve the Russians, and the first thing they did was to turn over the communication to the Russians. Also, we have a man in Cairo.

Mr. Sisco: We have had a considerable degree of direct contact with the Egyptians all along. My own feeling is that if we tried unilaterally to work out a plan with them, they would reject it, accusing us of trying to drive a wedge between them and Jordan.

The question is different on the Jordanian side. King Hussein wants us to be directly involved.

Dr. Kissinger: To sum up, we have three broad choices:

1. Let the talks peter out. Two sub-options:

-- Stick to present position even if Israel rejects it.

Some argue that this is the course most likely to isolate us. It would put us in a position where we would be pressed to continue military and economic support for Israel while Israel rejects the U.S. concept of what would constitute a fair settlement.

Others argue that this is the only position that would avoid a confrontation with Israel. It would enable us to stand on a position we regard as fair. We could blame failure on all sides and maintain that we are only providing enough aid to maintain Israeli security.

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-- Stick to present position, pressing Israel to accept it.

Some argue that this would be the best possible position to be in if possible short of a negotiated settlement. We would have produced Israeli agreement to a position we regard as fair.

Others argue that since Israeli agreement is unlikely, this course is really the same as the first with all its disadvantages. We might use a good deal of influence with Israel -- possibly eroding its position -- and yet not have produced an Arab offer of peace.

2. Press the talks to fruition.

-- Achieve big-power consensus but not impose on Israel.

Some argue that it would improve our position with the Arabs just to take a position closer to theirs than our present one. Also this would diffuse responsibility.

Others argue that the Arabs would judge us not on our position but on what we did with Israel. If we refused to press it on Israel -- and it would be more difficult than our present position to sell to Israel -- we would be called hypocritical.

-- Achieve big-power consensus and try to impose it.

Some argue that this is the only way a settlement could be achieved because imposition is necessary and it is essential to have at least the USSR aboard for imposition on the UAR.

Others aregue that the process of achieving consensus would dilute the substance of the consensus to the point where it would be all but impossible to impose it on Israel.

3. Develop an untried combination of negotiations.

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The choice among these must be made in the light of four conflicting U.S. interests:

1. Arab-Israeli settlement. This may be unattainable.

2. Not worsening relations with the Arabs, hopefully improving them. U.S. investment in oil is heavy and Western Europe and Japan depend on Mid-East oil supply.

3. Israel's survival. We are committed to Israel's survival, though not necessarily in its present expanded borders.

4. Avoiding a confrontation with the USSR. The Soviets would find it hard to stand by and accept the humiliation of its clients again.

I have presented a list of perplexities -- choices, not answers.

President: It seems to me as we look back over the 11 months since we took office, this area is the one where we have gone backward, not forward. I do not say this in any critical way, but I believe it is the case.

--The Soviet position in the Mediterranean seems stronger.

--Our position with the moderate Arab states seems weaker.

--The danger of war seems greater.

I do not mean to say that we have not done all we could do.

I would like to ask Mr. Helms a question. Just as an aside, I recall being briefed in the spring of 1967 by Eugene Rostow before the June war. He told me then, undoubtedly with the best will in the world, that there would not be a war. I repeated this in some of my public comments and then of course the war broke and my visits to all countries but Morocco and Israel had to be cancelled. Now, I do not want to put Mr. Helms on the spot and I will not hold him to his answer to

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this question, but I would like to ask: What do you think about the prospects for another war? Is the outbreak of war likely?

Mr. Helms: The most likely trend is a "continuing bleeding process." I come down on the side that there will not be a major conflict. I say this because I think the 1967 war taught the UAR and the Soviets a lesson in what not to do in creating a situation where Israel believes that its survival is at stake.

President: You see nothing, then, that the UAR could do to give Israel the excuse I think it is looking for to "bang them."

Mr. Helms: Farther down the track, if the moderates are driven into the radical camp, the Saudis, for instance, might try to close the Straits of Tiran. But predicting for the foreseeable future, I do not see this kind of development.

You may recall, Mr. President, that you asked me a similar question at the dinner you held last spring for King Hussein. The scenario that I foresaw then seems to be playing itself out -- a steadily rising level of violence but not another full-scale war.

President: The Soviet attitude in SALT seems more responsible and more reasonable than could have been predicted. This does not indicate that we have any easy bargain ahead of us but it does indicate that there is a chance that the USSR wants to make a deal.

One could make the same sort of deduction about the recent moves with Germany, although at the same time one could posit a Soviet objective fragmenting the Western alliance.

On the Middle East, however, is it fair to say that Soviet interests can only be served by tension. I know it is sometimes said that the Soviets are uncomfortable in the present situation. But I sometimes have

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trouble understanding why.

Mr. Helms: I think they want the situation to stay the way it is.

Secretary Rogers: I am not so sure of that. I believe they are quite concerned about the consequences of the kind of explosion Israel could provoke.

Dr. Kissinger: The longer Israel holds its conquered Arab territory, the longer the Soviets cannot deliver what the Arabs want. As that time drags on, the Arabs must begin to conclude that friendship with the Soviet Union is not very helpful -- that it led to two defeats, one of which the U.S. rescued the Arabs from, and to continued impotence in regaining what they have lost.

Secretary Rogers: The Soviets have some of the same problems with the UAR that we have with Israel. They cannot just walk in to Nasser's office and gain his acceptance of any proposition they may put to him. They must consider the fact that the more radical Arab elements like the fedayeen are going to blame the Soviets for not producing what the Arabs want.

President: Then it is possible to argue, is it not, that if we want the Soviets to help, Israel is producing that result by scaring them. Why should it not be our policy to let Israel scare them a little bit more?

Secretary Rogers: I think our position is pretty well spelled out now as a result of my speech last night. The position I elaborated on there is thoroughly consistent with the UN Security Council resolution.

President: I have one question about what we should be doing in the next couple of weeks. At my meeting yesterday with Mr. McCloy and others, the American businessmen there were very much concerned that the pressures for a united Arab front at the Arab summit on December 20 would be too great for our moderate friends to resist. They felt that we needed some gesture before then in order to help the moderates. Is the Secretary's speech enough? They suggested that a Presidential emissary be sent to some of the moderates before December 20.

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Dr. Kissinger: I think the speech does all that we can now do.

President: The speech will probably enrage Israel, but does it give the moderate Arabs enough? Is there no other gesture that we should be making?

Mr. Sisco: We have done three things in relation to the summit:

--In advancing the October 28 formula with the USSR, we stated a position that is fair and balanced. This has not really been rejected by the UAR. All the UAR has said is that it wants to see what the Jordanian side of a settlement would look like before passing its judgement.

--In the speech last night, Israel should find a good many things that it likes. Israel will be critical, -- but probably not enraged. Israel will feel that the Secretary was too specific, but the Arabs will also object that the Secretary did not call for total Israeli withdrawal from Arab territory. It should be helpful to the moderates, although they will not be able publicly to recognize it as such. Nasser at the summit wants to mobilize Arab opinion behind him, and there is not much we can do to temper that process. But intelligence indicates that some travel is taking place among the moderates, and we do not believe the summit will lead to the dire consequences that someone like David Rockefeller has projected -- a break in relations or extreme measures against our oil companies.

--With all the reservations that all of us have about the Four Power talks, the fact that the talks have resumed leaves open the possibility of a political settlement, and there will be pressures on the Arabs not to foreclose that possibility.

The business people I have talked to have suggested an emissary. I must say in all candor that many such emissaries have not been entirely helpful. Any man who goes must be familiar with the nuts and bolts of the dialogue. Nasser would use such a visit to build himself up, and the moderates would not see this as helpful. Anyone who went would not have much to add to what has already been said unless he were able

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to take with him some new concessions.

President: Forget about Nasser for a moment. If we are interested to avoid a united Arab front, what about sending someone to the moderates?

I know Elliot Richardson has to leave soon. Perhaps we should hear his comments now.

Mr. Richardson: A good place to start, Mr. President, is the evolution that you have traced since January. It seems true that our situation relative to that of the USSR has deteriorated on balance in the short run and that the Soviets have gained proportionately. Why is that so? I see two reasons:

--Among the Four Powers, the U.S. is the only one capable of exerting effective influence on Israel. So the U.S. is blamed for the continuing impasse.

--This negotiation is possibly unique in that Israel puts a high premium not only on the results of the negotiation but on the procedure by which those results are achieved. They will make concrete concessions to get from the Arabs a recognition that Arab willingness to sit down and talk would signify.

So we cannot talk simply about the terms of a settlement in an even-handed way. Israel doesn't care how reasonable the terms are as long as it does not have a part in their formulation.

It follows, therefore, that if we go farther down the track toward specifying the terms of a settlement, it will be increasingly difficult for the U.S. to deliver Israel. If we are brought along this route into defining the details of a settlement, all eyes will turn to us to deliver Israel and yet the very fact of our having specified the details of a settlement would make it less likely that we could deliver Israel.

If that is a fair analysis, the question is: How do we get out of this? I conclude that it is highly important

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to break away from this trend toward involving ourselves more and more in the details of a settlement.

President: You say it is important to get out. Let me understand your reasoning. Is it because you see this as a dead end street? Is it because we would be making a deal and then not being able to deliver on it?

Mr. Richardson: As Dr. Kissinger, described the options, one of them is to press the current talks to fruition. Within that option there are two sub-options:

--We could press for a big-power consensus but then not impose it on Israel. If that is the result, the U.S. will appear to the rest of the world as unwilling to support the consensus because it refused to deliver Israel.

--We would press for consensus and then try to impose it on Israel. The result again would be failure to deliver Israel because we will have gone into so much detail that we will not be able to persuade the Israelis to accept the consensus.

My point is that any effort to get into the formulation of the details of a settlement is a dead end street.

The question that I have posed: How to avoid that.

In answering that question, I would prefer to think not in terms of letting present talks peter out or breaking them off. I would prefer to focus attention on Israel's requirements for negotiation of the specific terms of a settlement among the parties. I would like to see us hammer on the Rhodes formula talks as the only way to achieve a settlement. If we could get the other three powers to agree that this is the only reasonable route to a settlement, then if the parties will not get together, or if they do get together and cannot agree, the onus for failure is shifted to them.

What I am suggesting is that we should put ourselves in a position so that, if there is no settlement, we

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will avoid to the extent we can the question why the U.S. is not delivering Israel.

Another way of stating this issue is to say that the strategy we adopt as we proceed in the Four Power talks boils down to the question of how hard we resist British and French efforts to hammer out a detailed position.

Secretary Rogers: This has been and is our policy. It is the policy I announced in my speech last night.

We should not delude ourselves. We are not forced to deliver Israel simply because of our negotiating position. We have been in this situation one way or another for 20 years. We are not going to escape from that position simply by getting out of the talks. The question will come up in the UN Security Council or in some other forum. Getting out of the talks will not relieve us of that problem.

I think perhaps we are putting too much emphasis on the forms here. Our position has deteriorated because we are seen as the principal supporters of Israel. We send planes and economic aid. Unless we want to change that policy, our position is going to deteriorate.

I might say that I have never heard a discussion of the Middle East -- and you know, Mr. President, that I have sat through a lot of them beginning in the mid-1950s -- where it was not said that our position is worse now than it was a little while ago.

As far as the Four Power talks are concerned, I do not know what we can do except to have a fair policy and to stand by it. That is why I believe we should emphasize Rhodes type talks.

But we are never going to escape from this problem unless we discontinue our support for Israel.

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Ambassador Yost: I would like to endorse Secretary Rogers' main point. Our deteriorating position is inherrent in the situation. Israel is depending on us and is pursuing a policy that most of the world considers unreasonable. Even if we pulled out of the talks, people would still look to us to deliver Israel. We would, in fact, be even more isolated than we are now, because we would have created the impression that we do not care.

If the Four Power talks fail, the issue will be thrust into the UN Security Council. If that happens, we at least want to be in a position where we, the British and French agree and where we are not alone.

The British and French do not differ with our position on substance; they differ on tactics.

If the U.S. puts forward a paper on a Jordan-Israel settlement analogous to the paper that Mr. Sisco has been discussing with Ambassador Dobrynin on a UAR-Israel settlement, there is a fair chance that we might bring the French and British along. If we did, we would have to exert pressure on Israel to get Israel to the table on that basis, just as we would expect that the UAR would come to the table only under Soviet pressure.

I believe we should continue on this road.

President: I think it is a mistake to have the USSR messing around on a Jordan settlement. We should be able to do anything that is necessary on that front. I just think that side of the problem should be sorted out in a different way. I hope we could stand as Jordan's friend as much as we are Israel's friend. We cannot have it said that Jordan was saved by the USSR.

Secretary Rogers: That is one thing to say, another to avoid. It is the situation -- not the talks that isolates us. The Soviets will go on championing Arab causes no matter what the forum.

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Ambassador Yost: Our position has been that a settlement must be a package, so we have to talk at some point about the Jordanian side of a settlement. At the same time, behind the scenes, we can work closely by ourselves with the Jordanians and the Israelis.

Mr. Sisco: I will be seeing Zaid Rifai in London tomorrow.

President: What will you talk about?

Mr. Sisco: I will do more listening than talking. We have no position right now that we can be concrete about. However, I will try to leave an impression about how far it might be possible to go. In any case, the process of consultation is important in itself.

President: Let's be sure we understand that the Soviets should not be involved on the Jordan front.

Secretary Laird: One of the things that will be raised in any talks with Jordan is the military shopping list.

Mr. Sisco: I doubt that we will get into that. This particular individual is not concerned about that problem.

President: A response to the Jordanians would be sensible as a parallel to whatever we have to do with the Israelis.

Mr. Richardson: Have we had an indication of the Soviet response to the Jordanian request for arms?

Mr. Sisco: No we have not heard.

Mr. President, if I may, I would like to say a word about how I would suggest proceeding.

I believe that we are limited in what we can achieve. I am skeptical that we can achieve a Four Power consensus or common ground among the parties in the area.

I do, however, have some thoughts about a way to proceed that might ameliorate the situation.

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We have put to the USSR our fundamental position on a UAR-Israel settlement. It is my personal view that if we ever get a Soviet-Arab agreement to that formulation, Israel would accept it.

We now have drafted an analogous document on a Jordan-Israel settlement.

It is my own feeling that this document should be given to Ambassador Yost to submit early in the Four Power talks. This would accomplish the following:

--It would demonstrate that we are taking the initiative on a Jordan settlement and not leaving Jordan to the USSR.

--The position in that document is consistent with what Israel has said to us in the past about its position on a Jordan settlement.

--In its emphasis on Rhodes type talks, it leaves the details of a settlement to negotiation between the parties.

I believe it would help tactically to preempt the talks by putting our position on the table early. If there is no Four Power consensus, then, we will have pegged out a fair and balanced position.

One of the basic weaknesses in the U.S. position now is that Israel does not accept our approach. Israel has taken the onus for failure to achieve a settlement. I believe we should take the position that if Israel could accept our position, we would be in a better position to justify helping Israel. If Israel accepted our approach, the onus for the continued impasse would shift partly to the other side.

President: You are talking now about the Jordan settlement?

Mr. Sisco: Yes. I would leave the formula on the UAR-Israel

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settlement just as we last gave it to the USSR. I would not budge an inch from that position.

Secretary Rogers: I might report that our friends in NATO feel that Israel has not been forthcoming. We are saddled with backing the party that, in their view, is responsible for blocking success.

President: Coming back to Mr. Richardson's point, how do you see us coming out of these talks? If after we go through the procedure Mr. Sisco has outlined and we fail, how can we disengage? Are you suggesting disengagement?

Mr. Richardson: My suggestion has to be seen in the context of the options laid out in the paper Dr. Kissinger has circulated and from which he has briefed. I addressed myself to the three choices which he laid out:

--Let the talks peter out.
--Press for a big-power consensus with two sub-options of either not imposing it on Israel or of trying to impose it.
--Seeking a new combination of talks.

I do not believe we can undertake either of the last two.

We will proceed on the present course, and we will not succeed. Then we will have to consider how we achieve a posture that we can stand on to put ourselves in the best possible position.

I do not disagree with the desirability of continuing along the lines that Mr. Sisco has outlined.

I would, however, argue against allowing the other three powers to make our UAR document more specific. I believe it is important to leave details to the parties. It is important to keep the emphasis on Rhodes formula talks.

If we can do that, we would be in a fair position but not

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expected to exert pressure to achieve a settlement. The onus for that would rest on the parties.

Dr. Kissinger: I do not disagree with that assessment. But I believe we must face the consequences of that course.

--On the side of a UAR-Israel settlement, I agree that Israel might well yield, but we will pay a price for making them accept that formulation.

--On the Jordanian side, however, I see two prospects:

(1) The other three powers will go farther than we want and that will make it more difficult to impose a settlement on Israel.

(2) I cannot see Israel accepting our provisions on the Jordanian settlement.

I am concerned that putting forward a specific Jordan plan will slide us down the slippery slope toward the difficult question: Are we willing to proceed toward some form of pressure on Israel? If we are not, advancing a specific proposal in the Four Power talks will buy us no more than two or three weeks.

President: Do you agree?

Mr. Sisco: I agree that provisions on a Jordanian settlement may be even more difficult for Israel to accept than the provisions on a UAR settlement. But also, I doubt that the Arabs will accept. Our proposal would fall far short of Arab expectations on Jerusalem and on the refugee settlement.

I believe we should put ourselves in a posture that this is the framework within which we believe the parties should get together.

The leverage we have with Israel is the following: As long as they appear to be the main obstruction

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to peace, our job is more difficult in supplying them with the economic and military help they need. We recognize that we have to help Israel, but they have to help us if we are going to be able to help them.

Mr. Richardson: We have to think what we mean when we say that Israel will accept "it." The proposal we are talking about leaves all of the tough questions for negotiation between the parties. Acceptance would involve acceptance of some procedure for negotiation.

That is why the issue is whether or not we fill in the details of a settlement. If we go down that road, it is dangerous because we are even more exposed than now.

President: Secretary Laird knows a lot about the domestic pressures on this issue. What do you think?

Secretary Laird: Exerting pressure on Israel would make life politically difficult for us "for a little while." But I believe that Israel will go along -- they do not have anyone else to turn to. They have fewer friends in Europe and certainly none in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union. Israel is isolated and is going to have to make some sort of settlement.

Vice President: I concur.

As I travel around, the heat from the supporters of Israel is couched in general terms. There is a feeling in the community that supports Israel of disenchantment with the Administration.

I do not see how we can fail to pay attention to the European feelings that Secretary Rogers has expressed.

President: Assume for the sake of discussion that there is no domestic political pressure and that there is no moral question of continuing support involved, would the U. S. foreign policy interests be served by dumping Israel?

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General Lincoln: I have thought a lot about this. I would lean in the direction of dumping Israel but keeping something there -- something less than we have.

Secretary Rogers: What would be left?

General Lincoln: Israel is now the strongest power in the Middle East militarily -- though not economically except as supported by the U.S.

Israel's being there has help to make the Soviets a stronger influence in the Middle East.

President: Looking at this from the Soviet viewpoint, if we save the UAR's bacon, the Soviets would gain by our act. In my view, Soviet-U.S. relations are the overriding concern. Therefore, the overriding question is: Who gains?

General Lincoln: If there were a settlement and if the Arabs were no longer dependent on the Soviet Union, they might be less hostile to the U.S. If some such miracle took place, they might even be grateful for our role in helping to get their territory back.

President: When we came into office, there was pleasure in Cairo because I had not received a large number of Jewish votes and the Israelis knew it. We will put that fact aside but we do have to note that the situation has now changed and Israel sees us as their only hope -- not because of trust or affection -- and the Arabs say that we have turned to Israel's support.

Politics aside, the talks in which we are engaged put up a facade of reasonableness and trying.

But I am concerned that we avoid what Dr. Kissinger called "the slippery slope."

I have a feeling that there isn't a thing we can do about "that place." I think anything that we do will fail.

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But before we go into the specifics of a settlement, if we are going to squeeze Israel, then I think we must expect the Soviets to squeeze the UAR.

Vice President: Before we leave domestic political concerns, I think we have not exploited through our own political avenues the possibility of bringing Israel to realize that it must help us in Asia.

President: General Wheeler, what do you think?

General Wheeler: I do not think these proposals will be blessed with any desirable outcome. They are doomed to failure. I do think, however, we must make the effort in order to achieve a more detached position. We are regarded now as being Israel's supporters and the prime offenders against the Arab world. I am not optimistic.

Mr. Helms: Here, here!

Secretary Rogers: Each time we have one of these meetings we all state the problem. Our relations with the Arabs will continue to deteriorate. If we are going to change that, we have to take positions that we would hate to take.

You, Mr. President, should realize, that we have done all we can think of doing. It is sort of like the situation in Vietnam. What we do in the Middle East probably will not work. But there is nothing anyone else can think of doing.

Theoretically, we could stop talking to anyone but that is unrealistic. The issue would end up back in the UN Security Council, and we would have to deal with it there in a much less advantageous forum.

President: I am not always one in favor of talking for the sake of talking, and I am concerned about the "slippery slope" that Henry talks about. But it is a point that if the talks break down we will have to deal with this problem in a much more difficult situation.

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Ambassador Yost: If they do break down, it is important that we have the British and French with us agreeing that they have broken down for reasonable causes.

Mr. Helms: At the risk of stating the obvious, I think we must do what we can to bolster the spirit of the Arab moderates.

President: With reference to the moderate Arabs, we should bolster their spirits as we can -- but without letting the Soviet Union take credit for it.

Secretary Rogers: Secretary Laird has given us some additional wherewithal for bolstering the spirits of one moderate Arab in agreeing to provide military equipment for Jordan.

President: Why not do this before December 20?

Secretary Laird: We have been trying to wait for the Congress in order to be assured that we would have the necessary appropriations.

President: What do you think, Henry?

Dr. Kissinger: I believe that you should look at the Jordan package before it is presented in the Four Power talks.

I agree that we should probably go ahead with the present talks in a general way and not break the Four Power talks now.

We will have to face the problem, however, that we will be faced at some point with the following argument: Whatever we do will require pressure on Israel. If we do not get a consensus in the Four Power talks, we will be told that the issue will be thrown into the Security Council and that we should therefore attempt to press Israel to accept our position in order to go into the Security Council in a better posture. If we do get a consensus, we will be told that we must press Israel to accept the consensus in order to avoid going into the UN Security Council in the position of not having done

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all we could to enforce an international consensus.

President: Henry has put his finger on the heart of the problem. Whether we succeed or fail we face a question of pressing Israel. If we fail, we will face the question of whether we should go on supporting Israel or squeeze Israel to accept our position. If we succeed in the Four Power talks, we will be faced with the question of what we are going to do to make the Israelis accept the consensus.

The basic point is whether we are going to put the squeeze on Israel.

If we are going to have to do that, we ought to get as much as possible in return for it. The Soviets should not come out ahead. The Arabs played a substantial part in bringing on the war, and the Soviets should pay some price for picking up the pieces.

Mr. Sisco: What the present proposal does is simply to ask Israel to accept our formulation as the basis of negotiations. It does not press Israel to withdraw as in 1957. If we are going to disengage, I think we should do this after having shifted the onus to the Arab side in order to justify our continuing help for Israel.

I believe Secretary Rogers should tell Foreign Minister Eban that Israel must help the U.S. if the U.S. is to help Israel.

President: Eban needs to know that world support is eroding.

The businessmen I talked to yesterday emphasized the importance of doing something on the refugee question. Is there anything we can do?

Secretary Rogers: This was in the speech I gave last night. I believe this is as far as we can go.

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I would like to know what you mean by squeezing the USSR.

President: The question is what the UAR pays for its role in bringing on the war. If the UAR comes out of a settlement whole and gives only vague obligations to peace in return, the Soviets come out looking good and Israel has little in return.

Secretary Rogers: That also cuts the other way. The harder we squeeze the Arabs and the Soviets, the more our position in the area deteriorates.

President: I am thinking mainly here of distinguishing between the UAR and Jordan. I think perhaps we might squeeze Israel for a Jordan settlement.

Ambassador Yost: If the Arabs undertook the commitments to peace that are in the document that Mr. Sisco has been discussing with Ambassador Dobrynin, the UAR would have conceded what Israel has sought for 20 years.

Mr. Richardson: The problem is that the Arabs want territory and Israel wants a commitment to peace. If Israel got what it wanted, it would have only intangibles.

Dr. Kissinger: If Israel got a settlement this would simply bring Israel to the point where other countries begin their foreign policy. In most instances in history, wars have started between nations that have theretofore been at peace.

Harold H. Saunders

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