

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

INFORMATION

5640

SECRET/SENSITIVE (XGDS)

October 9, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR:

SECRETARY KISSINGER

FROM:

WILLIAM H. QUANDT w.b.2.

SUBJECT:

Middle Eastern Issues

Today's developments suggest that our generally optimistic estimates of the outcome of the fighting could be wrong in several key areas. I mention these only because I sense that we have been caught by surprise too often in the last few days and we may now be at the point of having to face up to some difficult decisions.

The important facts that seem to emerge from today's fighting are the following:

--Israel, while generally regaining the initiative, is taking heavy losses and fighting seems likely to drag on for several more days.

--Threats to American citizens, which previously has not been noted in the Arab countries, have surfaced in Lebanon. If Israel bombs civilian areas in Damascus and Cairo, anti-American sentiment could flare up rapidly. [See Ambassador Buffum's cable at Tab A.]

--Oil from Iraq and Saudi Arabia that is normally shipped by pipeline across Lebanon and Syria is blocked. Kuwait is calling for the use of oil as part of the battle.

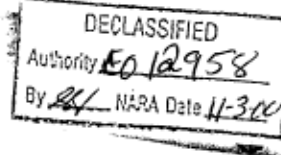
--Reports that Israeli bombing has caused Soviet casualties in Damascus raise the possibility that Soviet moderation could rapidly shift to a policy of military support via arms shipment to Syria and Egypt. [See Tab C.]

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DECLAS - Date Impossible to Determine.

BYAUTH - Dr. Henry A. Kissinger

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--Urgent Israeli arms requests raise an acute dilemma of acting either too soon or too late in terms of our later ability to deal with either Arabs or Israelis in any future peace settlement effort.

--Jordan seems to be drawing closer to possible involvement in the fighting, to judge from the highly emotional tone of King Hussein's reply to your message. [Tab B]

In light of these possible developments, the following decisions may have to be faced soon:

1. Evacuation of American citizens from Lebanon. This could probably still be done by commercial carriers in a relatively orderly manner. Timing is obviously of critical importance.

--On the one hand this would signal heightened US concern at a time when we may want to present a more confident image. If a ceasefire is achieved tomorrow, there may be no need for such a move.

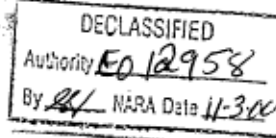
--On the other hand, if the Arabs face an massive defeat in the next few days, it may be better to begin to get Americans out of Lebanon tomorrow, before attacks on them begin.

2. Ceasefire

--As fighting goes on indecisively, our own interests become increasingly exposed and Jordan runs the risk of being drawn in. Most of our Ambassadors in the Arab world seem to feel the best outcome we can hope for now is an immediate ceasefire.

--Until the Israelis have recovered lost territory, there may not be much we can do to stop them, even if we chose to do so. The balance of gains and losses on this issue is increasingly close. If we call for an immediate end to the fighting, we will irritate the Israelis, which may mean a loss of influence in future negotiations. If we do not manage to end the fighting soon, however, our relations with the Arabs and possibly even the Soviets could suffer.

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--If we act too early or too visibly on this key issue, we will insure attacks on US citizens and an oil embargo in key Arab states.

--If we refrain from action at a time of genuine Israeli need, we cannot expect much Israeli confidence in us after the fighting is over.

4. The Soviet Role

If the Israelis inflict casualties on Soviet citizens in Syria or deal a devastating blow to the Arabs, the Soviets will be under strong pressure to react by resupplying arms to their clients and generally striking a more militant posture.

5. Oil

If oil exports to Western Europe from Arab countries are cut by 1.6 m.b.p.d. as reported, we must expect an announcement of export controls on oil products from Europe. This will create shortages in the US this winter. We should be prepared to issue a statement on rationing if necessary in the next few days.

The key problem that emerges from this analysis is whether we should consider altering our position on a ceasefire. In favor of doing so in the direction of simply stopping the fighting as soon as possible are the prospects for increasingly serious threats to US interests if the fighting is prolonged many more days. The price of pushing for a ceasefire in place would probably be an agreement with the Israelis on strong military and diplomatic support after the ceasefire, which may complicate later efforts at an overall settlement. On balance, however, this might be judged worth the cost, unless tomorrow the Israelis can recover lost territory. By Thursday, we may need to consider a shift in our policy on this key issue. As painful as it might be, the alternatives may not look all that attractive.

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