

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

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Exemption NND 009029
1997 NARA Date 10/30/00

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Simcha Dinitz of Israel
Military Attache General Mordechai Gur
Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
Peter W. Rodman, NSC Staff

DATE AND TIME: Tuesday, October 9, 1973
8:20 - 8:40 a.m.

PLACE: The Map Room
The White House

Secretary Kissinger: I need an accurate account of what the military situation is.

Ambassador Dinitz: I brought the General to do that. Let me say something and then we can have a few words alone.

Secretary Kissinger: All right.

Dinitz: We got a message which sums up our losses until 9 a.m. Israeli time. In planes, 14 Phantoms, 28 Skyhawks, 3 Mirages, 4 Supermysteres -- a total of 49 planes. Tanks -- we lost something like 500 tanks. Some were lost on the way.

Secretary Kissinger: 500 tanks! How many do you have? [to Scowcroft:] We should get Haig here. Well, we can give him the figures.

Ambassador Dinitz: This includes those that were put out of commission for a week or more.

Secretary Kissinger: How many do you have?

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Gur: 1800.

Dinitz: We lost 100 in the north and 400 in the south.

Kissinger: How did it happen?

Dinitz: It will become clear from the military situation.

Kissinger: So that's why the Egyptians are so cocky. Can I use these figures?

Dinitz: With the President.

Kissinger: Anyone else?

Dinitz: They were given to me for you.

Kissinger: How many have the Egyptians lost?

Gur: 4-500 in the Sinai, and the Syrians 400.

Kissinger: It is still about one-to-one with the Egyptians.

Gur: Yes.

Dinitz: Replacements to Syria are coming from Iraq. So far there are 16 Mig 21's and 32 Sukhoi-7's, all with pilots. As of yesterday, we observed an Iraqi armored division coming into Syria. There is also a request from Syria to Iraq for tanks. We have indications that they are on the way.

Egypt has received 18 Mig-21's from Algeria. There are also preparations for additional ones. Libya is giving hundreds of Strela missiles and a French anti-aircraft missile. Also there is an unknown number of planes. Another squadron of Hunters are coming from Iraq, and Me-6 helicopters. From the Sudan, an infantry brigade is expected.

Kissinger: Explain to me, how could 400 tanks be lost to the Egyptians?

Gur: We were in a very big hurry to bring them to the front line. That's why we say some were lost on the way to the battle.

Dinitz: Some got out of commission because of moving so fast.

Scowcroft: Do you know how many were battle losses?

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Gur: Some were hit by artillery fire on the Suez Canal. They have heavy artillery fire. We don't know the exact numbers. I assume the biggest number were put completely out of action. [General Gur then pulls out a map and sits beside Kissinger.]

Let me show you the situation. They crossed the Canal all along here from Qantara to the Suez. Now they have a line 6 to 8 miles from the Canal.

Kissinger: Miles or kilometers?

Gur: Miles. They crossed with five infantry divisions. In each division they have tanks, a total of 6 - 700. So they have a narrow strip all along with their backs to the water. On the main axis, they have armored divisions that are ready to exploit if the infantry divisions can open the road to the east.

We have blocked the road. We have not allowed them through to exploit. We succeeded in this yesterday and it is the same today.

Kissinger: How many Syrian tanks have been lost?

Gur: 400, and we 100. On the Golan Heights, in most of the line they are now out, and we are back to the situation they were in before the war. But one armored brigade is still inside.

Dinitz: Encircled.

Gur: They still have a passage out.

Kissinger: But they have not broken inside. The army is intact, not running.

Gur: Many big units are very severely harmed.

Dinitz: They have brought up their last armored division from the Damascus area.

Gur: They wanted to assure we won't cross into Syria.

Kissinger: Will you?

Gur: That we will have to see. The Iraqi armored division may come. It will take 2 to 3 days for their tanks to come.

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Kissinger: They won't be able to fight right away.

Gur: It depends on our air operations. On the Golan Heights, we're holding the same line, and will be able to straighten the line here without a big effort. And put them in the position where they will not be able to launch a big attack. This will help us concentrate on the south.

Kissinger: But when? That's the question.

Dinitz: I asked and have not received an answer.

Kissinger: On Saturday, you said Tuesday or Wednesday.

Dinitz: Yes, two days from Monday noon. Obviously something went wrong. It comes down to their ability to cross the Canal with armor, and the success of their anti-aircraft missiles which weakened our air effort.

Gur: We have two possibilities. One is to concentrate to drive their forces to pieces by an offensive, would be very costly because of the anti-aircraft missiles. The other possibility is to straighten the lines and make an effort a little bit inside, without air support.

Kissinger: They won't move.

Gur: They might. We have information they may go to the Mitla.

Kissinger: I think there will be a ceasefire call tonight.

Dinitz: Based on a return to ceasefire lines?

Kissinger: No. If you ask me. I have no evidence.

Yesterday I thought we had it won -- politically. Now with your bombing Damascus all hell will break loose in the UN. But that's water over the dam. I don't know what the local situation is.

OK. Now what can we do?

Dinitz: The decision last night was to get all equipment and planes by air that we can.

[A call comes in for the Ambassador. He takes it and Gur continues the briefing.]

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Gur: And we have mobilized all our El Al planes from here.

Kissinger: Where are you going to get it?

Gur: From here. All the equipment we asked for.

There was a problem with El Al markings flying in, and for security reasons.

Kissinger: That's a bigger problem now than we thought. I must tell you, don't go running around Defense. Scowcroft will handle it.

You can't get tanks from here.

Gur: We could get them from Europe and take them by ship. This will be helpful even if it is two to three weeks. We have crews ready for the planes and tanks. It's important; it's urgent. Your Air Force used to deliver it in civilian planes. Our pilots can get them.

Kissinger: But not in the middle of a war. [to Scowcroft:] See what we can do.

Gur: Planes we need.

Kissinger: You have to realize that to take planes from combat units will be in every newspaper in the world.

Gur: But we face fire.

Kissinger: I understand your problem.

I don't understand how it could happen. Our strategy was to give you until Wednesday evening, by which time I thought the whole Egyptian army would be wrecked.

Gur: We were in the same position. We didn't know how many would cross. Another thing. We need general information. I asked for information about Iraqi forces moving.

Kissinger: [to Scowcroft:] Call Colby and tell him to give them every bit of intelligence we have.

Gur: Thank you.

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Kissinger: We face massive problems. We expected a quick victory. Our whole strategy was to delay until Wednesday.

Dinitz: [Returning to discussion after finishing the call:] We now have another cable in. They say that 7 - 800 tanks are across the Canal of which 150 are in fighting condition.

We are concentrating now on a fast Syrian victory. With the Egyptians it will take longer.

The Soviets made a supreme effort of supply in the last minute before the war -- we have caught FROG missiles that were sealed with the date April 1973.

They have anti-tank missiles operating in the Canal.

There are 30 SA-6 batteries in both fronts. We pushed [back] two armored divisions of Syrians this morning, with heavy casualties [inflicted]. It looks promising.

On the Egyptian front, we have deployed defensive positions to contain the pressure for advance.

Kissinger: Good. Can I talk to you alone?

[Kissinger and Dinitz confer alone from 8:43 to 8:48 a.m.]

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