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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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NATIONAL SECURITY PLANNING GROUP MEETING

DATE: Tuesday, October 18, 1983
LOCATION: White House Situation Room
TIME: 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

FROM: Robert C. McFarlane *RCM*

I. PURPOSE

To review our strategy for Lebanon including what steps we might take next within Lebanon and in the context of our broader strategy for the Middle East. To review our options and obtain your approval for specific actions we might take in furtherance of our strategy.

II. BACKGROUND

A strategy paper has been prepared by State and circulated to the principals. We do not have the concurrence of either DOD or CIA. From the arguments presented at last Friday's NSPG on the subject, I think we can anticipate several objections from Cap and the JCS.

The most contentious issue is the recommendation that we should deepen and enhance our strategic cooperation with Israel. As you know, Cap and Jack Vessey are concerned that close cooperation with Israel damages our interests in the Arab world and that we seldom get anything in return for our help from Israel. Strategic cooperation with Israel is clearly in our interest; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] But it is also reasonable that Israel recognize and support our interests which include stable relations with moderate Arab states and our goals in Lebanon (i.e. withdrawal). As we discussed with you last Friday, flexibility on withdrawals from Lebanon need not and indeed must not imply weakness on Israel's part. Even as we encourage Israeli withdrawals on the ground, we should accept that firmness (and even occasional violence) on their part toward Syria, and Syrian surrogates (e.g. PLO) represent the strongest incentive for Syria to withdraw.

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Our approach to Israel on Lebanon must include both points: further withdrawal but also understanding on our part that if they are threatened they must act. If couched in these terms, Cap and the Chiefs may find enhanced cooperation with Israel more palatable and, if we get results on the ground, (i.e. withdrawal), we should be able to rally more European and Arab support for our efforts in Lebanon. It is most important that in our approach to Israel we do not make an explicit linkage between further withdrawals from Lebanon and enhanced strategic cooperation. Strategic cooperation can pay important long-term dividends, but only if the Israelis see it as something that is durable and directed at the growing Soviet threat rather than a quid with which we from time to time are prone to bargain. We should couch our arguments for more flexibility in Lebanon in terms of our need to rally more Arab and European support for pressure on Syrian withdrawal, which is a core objective for both of us.

Our position on the Iran-Iraq war is also extremely sensitive. My sense is that we should reassure the Saudis and Gulf states by being prepared to discuss contingency planning with them.

[REDACTED] I do not think we should undertake actions which could be seen as a clear "tilt" toward Iraq, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] As hostile as the current government of Iran is, that country remains a strategically decisive one; we do not therefore want to burn all of our bridges, particularly to those elements which will be of interest to us in any post-Khomeini succession struggle.

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Prepared by:
Philip A. Dur

Attachments

- Tab A - Agenda
- Tab B - State Strategy Paper on Lebanon