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G. Scowcroft  
L. d. Roberts

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS

JORDAN

His Majesty, King Hussein I  
Prime Minister Zaid al-Rifai

UNITED STATES

President Gerald R. Ford  
Secretary of State Henry Kissinger  
Deputy Assistant to the President,  
Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft  
Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering (Notetaker)

TIME, PLACE - 10:30 - 11:30 A.M., April 29, 1975  
The President's Office, the White House

SUBJECT: The Middle East, U.S.-Jordanian Bilateral Relations

After an exchange of greetings, the President opened the conversation.

PRESIDENT FORD: I want to welcome you here again, Your Majesty. I look forward to using this meeting in order to get better acquainted.

I remember that you were the first Head of State I saw as President. We had an opportunity during our last meeting to expand the original contact which I had with you as Vice President. On the Middle East I know that you share with me my disappointment on what has happened. Leaving aside the events of last night (Vietnam evacuation), I want you to know that the Middle East still deeply concerns us. We are conducting an in-depth reassessment of our policy in the area. It will be the broadest possible look at the alternatives. This is being conducted from my own office and also from the State Department. But it is being carried out on a government-wide basis. I cannot tell you any precise conclusion because we have not gotten that far along yet. But in the absence of such conclusions, we believe it would be very helpful to have your own views, and I would be very grateful if you would give them to us. You have been in contact with President Asad, I know, and have also recently met with the Saudi Arabians. We look forward with interest to what you have to say, and I urge you to give us your candid and frank assessments.

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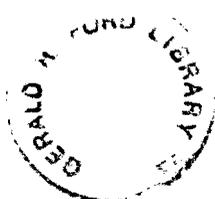
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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

State Dept. Guidelines, state review 3/8/04

By 1/1, NARA, Date 5/14/04

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CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER



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KING HUSSEIN: I am very proud and happy to be here again, Mr. President. We have had a long history of close relations. I am very proud of the relationship we have been able to develop with the United States over the years. That relationship requires that I speak very frankly with you.

We are very concerned about events in the area. Conditions are still deteriorating after the recent developments surrounding the Secretary's trip. From the Arab point of view it is a question of territory or peace. The combination for the Israelis of territory and peace is an impossibility.

Going back in time, after the October War, we saw some very encouraging work and forward movement in the area. Arab leadership before that time had been dominated by extremists. Since that time they have been able to revert to moderation. They have committed themselves to work for the establishment of a just and durable peace. But we were not very happy regarding the deterioration which has taken place. The Arab leaders and people are losing hope, and I find the situation very, very alarming. We may now be facing our last chance to make progress for the area and the world. There are many of us moderate leaders in the Arab world who are not likely to last very long if we fail this time in making progress. Also if we fail it means that war becomes inevitable. We believe we have done everything possible as far as Jordan is concerned to meet Israel halfway on the path of peace. For Jordan, unfortunately, this effort has been marked by a string of lost opportunities. More recently Egypt has had to face the same sad result.

President Sadat, we believe, faces great difficulties with his people and with his army, and these are compounded by economic problems. Because of the heavy military burden he carries, there is a lack of ability to divert Egypt's energies to reconstruction and rebuilding from the war and to meet the needs of the people.

We are all very admiring of the results of the work which Dr. Kissinger has accomplished, and all of the Arab leaders share in admiration and respect for him.

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: Don't say that to the Congress.

PRESIDENT FORD: I know the responsible members of the Congress agree with me and support the Secretary. However, the problem in these questions is with the Congress and not with the Secretary.

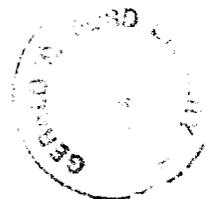
KING HUSSEIN: The last time we met in Amman we pleaded with the Secretary to do all he possibly could to bring about another step.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Mr. President, I asked King Hussein at that time how much effort we should put forward in order to achieve another step. He urged that we continue to do out utmost. He made it clear that there would be drastic results for the moderate Arabs all over the Middle East if we were not to succeed.

PRESIDENT FORD: We all recognize the Secretary made a maximum effort last time. You know I have publicly expressed my disappointment about the Israeli inflexibility and the lack of results in our last effort. I indicated that as a consequence our general reassessment was taking place.

KING HUSSEIN: It seems now that Israel is more interested in territory than in peace. We do not believe that the reason for Israeli inflexibility was the often-talked about weakness in the Israeli Government. The Israelis are masters at long-range planning. We conclude from their actions that their plan is to secure the area. They have been able to obtain and build up great military strength superior to what they have ever had before. But with all that military strength, they cannot guaranty a peace in the area. Continuing the situation of no war and no peace does not help either.

We cannot tolerate failure in the area. Jerusalem will continue to be occupied and the Israelis will continue to create facts by further building. The occupied territories will also be changed further with settlements erupting all over the West Bank, Golan and Sinai. In our view further failure must be equated with an eruption of war. The weapons are there to create this sort of



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catastrophe. And more important will be the fact that failure must be equated to a loss of hope.

Over the long term as we compare our numbers and resources to theirs we can see no other reason for the emphasis on building a military machine of such proportions unless they want to use it. If war is the only way, sooner or later it will inevitably involve us. All the Arabs are still interested in moving toward peace, but hope is fast disappearing. We wonder, frankly, Sir, whether the failure on a small area in Egypt means that nothing more can possibly be accomplished elsewhere in the West Bank, with the Palestinians, or on the Golan. Our answer, given the present situation, must be negative.

We must also consider where we go from here. As for Jordan, I am really worried for the first time about the possibility of a further loss of Jordanian territory. Israel might want additional territory and we are a possible target. For example, if the Israelis would like to bargain Jerusalem against other holy places, we are in a direct path to Medina and Mecca. We are also on the road to the oil fields. I must be able to meet my realistic defense requirements; I must have adequate weapons, especially air defense. I will need them as soon as possible. I am under real pressure from my own people. I do not know what I can do.

I know you have had similar views from President Sadat on events in the area. In Saudi Arabia it was certainly the desire of King Khalid to continue the very best relations with the United States. We are all appealing to you to do all possible to keep talks going and to avoid rapid deterioration in the situation.

In Saudi Arabia conditions are much better than I had thought they would be. We all suffered a loss with Faisal's death and the disappearance of the last of the first generation of Arab Kings. Khalid recognizes his limitations and has delegated much of the responsibility to Prince Fahd and the others around him. They seem to be closely cooperating with each other and determined to meet the desires in their country for peace and progress. I am more optimistic about Saudi Arabia.

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Prince Fahd asked me to convey one thought directly to you. He is still deeply concerned about reactions in his country to any statements about possible U. S. intervention regarding the Saudi oil fields. There was an extensive and severe public reaction to this, and he asks if you can do everything possible to hold the publicizing of these statements down.

PRESIDENT FORD: I don't think there have been any statements recently since the one made some time ago.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Prince Fahd is very sensitive on this issue. In March there was an article in Harper's magazine by someone labeled as a defense analyst from a think tank. The article was written under a pseudonym and presented the arguments for taking over the oil fields. It caused a severe reaction in Saudi Arabia.

KING HUSSEIN: As for Syria, I have seen Asad recently twice. He seems really dazed about what might happen next. On the one hand he anticipated a possible advance as a result of the Secretary's recent trip. But on the other hand they do not know quite what to do about things; they are not perfectly clear about how to handle the present situation.

We believe that Syria is a possible target for Israeli attack. In that event we believe the Israelis would use both flanks to overwhelm rapidly the Syrians. One of those flanks is composed of Jordanian territory. We do not exclude the fact that we may be a target as well.

The Iraqis, as you know, have resolved their dispute with Iran. There continues to be a small crisis between Iraq and Syria over the Euphrates water. Hopefully that can be settled. But there continue to exist very many questions over the future role of the Iraqis in the area.

Considering Geneva we have to look at the question of do we go there, and if so what happens. We are deeply concerned that failure in Geneva will be tantamount to bringing on a war. At Geneva we believe the Palestinians have to participate and that all Arabs feel this way.



There is also the question of whether attempts should be made to go to the United Nations or to the Security Council to seek a new mandate for Geneva. It would make it more possible then to move comfortably to Geneva and provide a possible solution to what we do next. Also some limitation on the participants at Geneva might well affect the chances for failure. However, we cannot have the U. S. put into a position where it can no longer play the central role which it now does in the Middle East.

PRESIDENT FORD: While we have made no decision as to what we will do and you should be sure that in going ahead none of our views are pre-determined, there are a number of things which I can say to you.

First, as I made clear in my State of the World speech April 10, the U. S. is firmly committed not to allow stagnation or stalemate to take hold. We were all badly disappointed at what happened on the Secretary's last trip when we made a maximum effort. But I can assure you that we are committed not to permit drift or stagnation or stalemate in the Middle East.

While we are still thinking through whether and how to go to Geneva, we believe that it is mandatory that we make progress toward peace. The Israelis will have to play their role. We believe there can be no move toward military activity by them. I have said the same thing to them as I am saying to you and the others in the area. There must be no military action also by the Arabs. Military conflict now will destroy any possibility of constructive action by our joint efforts.

Also, as I noted in my CBS interview with Eric Severeid and some others, as we see it there are probably three possible ways of proceeding. First, we could attempt to resume the presently suspended negotiating effort on an interim step. As we go along this seems less and less promising. Secondly, we could try for a broad or total settlement, and we are exploring this possibility as we reassess our position. Third, under the umbrella of a broad settlement, interim negotiations and agreements could be reached in an effort to try to implement that concept.



These are the three basic options which we all face in the area. But I can assure you that any return to military conflict--through Israeli pre-emption or Arab attack--will be very disruptive of what has to be done.

KING HUSSEIN: Unfortunately, there is no guaranty that military action will not take place.

PRESIDENT FORD: I agree, something like that might happen. But it will destroy our role if it does.

KING HUSSEIN: Also, if there is no progress toward peace, those who have been moderate may not be in the area for very much longer. I sincerely believe this is so. I am only one of them. But should war come, we may not have the same faces continuing on in the Arab world and there would be new faces; they would be much less moderate.

There is the same danger in a continuing state of no war, no peace. We are frankly afraid of the possibility that the Israelis will attack. They are very strong and their preparations are obvious to us. The U. S. has supplied the Israelis with extensive military equipment. The argument has always been used that this is a means of providing for leverage. Now that situation reflects on both the United States and on the rest of the world in the efforts toward seeking peace. It is really not our place, Sir, to interfere in an internal issue like your military supply relationship with the Israelis, but on the other side the danger appears to be great. We must meet our own deficiencies in military equipment as soon as possible and this particular plea relates to our need for air defense.

PRESIDENT FORD: We are very cognizant of and sympathetic toward your military needs. As you know, last year we asked the Congress for \$100 million grant aid and \$30 million in military sales credits as well as some \$70 to \$80 million in economic aid for you. Congress, I firmly believe, has been very short-sighted in its reaction to our request. As you know, the full total of our aid request was cut very heavily by the Congress. I am convinced that it was not aimed by the Congress at Jordan. I want to assure you we very much

understand your problems and want to be as cooperative as possible. I will be following this up with you tonight on some of the details, or quite possibly you will be having lunch with the Secretary, and he can work with you on it.

As for our budget for next year--the President's requests--we are asking again for \$100 million in grant aid and \$30 million in military sales money and roughly \$80 million in economic aid. This is an indication of the President's commitment to Jordan. We must however convince Congress that they should not be as short-sighted in the next year as they are in the present. I know that you will be meeting over the next few days members of the Congress. We hope that you will point out to them as you have to us the volatility of the situation in the Middle East. I hope you can stress to them the great need for the United States to be firm and equitable in our arms and aid programs. We must help to keep a balance in the Middle East until we can get the peace and territorial settlement. The Congress clearly respects you for your background and for your moderate approach.

KING HUSSEIN: Thank you, Mr. President.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: There is one point on which His Majesty can be of great help. I hope he will stress with the Congress, as he did for us, what will happen to the moderate leaders, particularly Sadat, if no further forward movement is possible. The Israelis are in the middle of a massive campaign selling Sadat as a radical. I know His Majesty views Sadat as a moderate who badly wants progress.

KING HUSSEIN: Yes, I had already planned to do that.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: (continuing) Otherwise all of the leaders will slide in the direction of the Syrians and the Iraqis and it will have enormous consequences.

PRESIDENT FORD: Your Majesty should keep on saying what you believe; that if no progress is made war is inevitable. If October of 1973 is repeated, there will be an oil embargo and a world energy crisis with worldwide repercussions. Congress should see these issues. They have great respect for your views.

KING HUSSEIN: We will make these points to them. On arms, as you know, we are now completing a several years' program of assistance. My first priority is now to meet all of our requirements on air defense. I believe I can get financial help from Saudi Arabia to meet these needs, but I must have the weapons soon--not three or four years from now.

PRESIDENT FORD: I know you are referring to Redeye, Vulcan, and Hawk. You should know that we want to be as constructive as we possibly can. I want to talk some more with the Secretary on what additionally we can do. There is deep concern on air defense which we know is vitally important to you now. Given the greater speed and sophistication of military aircraft today, you must be able to respond to air attack. We will be as forthcoming as we possibly can. Hawk is currently being upgraded and we do not have all of these that we want in our own forces. We do want your people to do the training on Hawk, and we would like to begin this as quickly as we possibly can, whatever the answers are on the issues of the numbers and how soon we can provide the weapons. The Secretary is now working on our best appraisal of what we can do. These systems are vitally important to our own defense and are not fully available to our own forces. We want to talk to you about the details, perhaps tonight or tomorrow with the Secretary.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We understand you want three Hawk batteries and we are working on that question now.

KING HUSSEIN: We want 14 total.

PRESIDENT FORD: On the Vulcan we gather you want some number of battalions now; is two of the four total battalions right?

PRIME MINISTER RIFAI: Yes, that is what we would like.

PRESIDENT FORD: 270 Redeye missiles seem to be less of a problem and we will provide those.

KING HUSSEIN: 1973 really exploded on us, and we had a feeling after it was all over that it led to something better. But we feel that no good could come of another conflict right now.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I take it you very much fear attack by the Israelis.

PRESIDENT FORD: Imminently?

KING HUSSEIN: No, but it could come.

PRESIDENT FORD: I take it you do not anticipate a frontal attack.

KING HUSSEIN: Even if Syria is a target, we believe the Israelis would try to move around the flanks. We also need to keep in mind that there has been a significant qualitative change in the weapons available to Syria and Iraq, and we need to improve our capability for the future.

PRESIDENT FORD: I take it that your economy continues to improve, that your phosphate income will increase.

KING HUSSEIN: Yes, exports are going ahead and the railroad to Aqaba is nearly complete. The future looks quite good in this respect.

PRESIDENT FORD: This is encouraging.

KING HUSSEIN: On Oman, as you know, I recently went there for a visit. We were approached by the Omanis for help with the rebellion in Dhofar. Also, there seems to be some increasing pressure on South Yemen to call off its support of the rebels. But the urgent point is the way the British friends seem to be conducting their operations there. I want to say very frankly to you, Sir, that they have left many parts of the world and they will have to leave Oman, but we believe that they should do so in the best possible way.

PRESIDENT FORD: Has their help been less than it should be?

KING HUSSEIN: That seems to be exactly the case. It is exploitative, and perhaps even malevolent.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The British are in Oman in their last colonial war. They seem to want to perpetuate their presence while at the same time taking no risks with the loss of life. It is not a very effective way of pursuing the job.

KING HUSSEIN: Even more than that, we have good reason to believe that some of the British mercenaries have tended to create incidents-- they have become the rebels themselves in the sense that they harass our forces.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Really, I had not heard that.

PRESIDENT FORD: What progress are you making now?

KING HUSSEIN: It is a very funny war. In the area in which our soldiers are moving there are probably only ten to fifteen insurgents-- they are more like bandits.

PRESIDENT FORD: When we talked with the Sultan, he seemed to be satisfied that progress was being made.

KING HUSSEIN: Saudi Arabia, too, believes that there must be as much support as possible for Oman. On the difficulties with the British, the Sultan faces some important choices. If they continue on, he may well have to ask them to leave, or his own people--his own officers who see all this going on-- might move against him.

PRESIDENT FORD: We are very sympathetic to the Sultan and with his problems, though I understand that you hope to discuss this in your meetings with the British.

KING HUSSEIN: Yes, very much so. We have told them fully of our feelings. The problem in the area is very simple, we seem to have been misled by the British. They are getting enormous sums of money from the Omanis which seems to have seriously affected their financial situation.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: How much do the British get from them?

KING HUSSEIN: They have an annual revenue of about one billion, 200 million. Right now they need \$80 million to carry them over. Their defense budget has just risen to 180,000,000. That is over \$500 million. That is three times our own defense budget for a force of 5,000 men. Prices are escalating and the Omanis are in difficult shape. It is a very sad situation.

PRESIDENT FORD: And it is also not the way for the British to solve their domestic economic problems.

KING HUSSEIN: We will tell all this to the British when we see them.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: May we tell all of this to the British? They will be coming here May 7-8.

KING HUSSEIN: Yes, we would be very pleased if you would. I will be seeing President Sadat in Jordan immediately on my return on May 15. Is there anything I can tell him from you here?

PRESIDENT FORD: I would be grateful if you would assure him that we are indebted to him for the efforts that he has made. We feel that he has been very forthcoming in the negotiations. We want to keep a very close relationship with him. We are determined that there will be no stagnation or stalemate in our efforts in the Middle East. We want to continue with him and others in the area to do our best to avoid the war which you and our other friends feel is so difficult.

KING HUSSEIN: There is another fear that people have. They are concerned that the forces that seem to be pushing up in Southeast Asia might raise pressures for a very harmful reaction in this country. Yes, I am worried about the possibility of an over-correction in the direction of the Israelis.



PRESIDENT FORD: I take it you are talking about forces in the United States. The reaction will be very hard to forecast. It is a traumatic experience for the United States. I believe that in the U.S. when it is all over people will be very embarrassed by our failure. My own view, and I know it is that of the Secretary, is that if Congress had backed us when it counted earlier this year we would have avoided the present situation. The people of the United States, however, have not yet sifted out their own reactions and this process may be delayed by several months.

However, even the people who are strongly anti-Vietnam in the United States still believe this country should remain a world power. They agree that this country should not back off and the United States should play a strong role in world affairs. The elements in the Congress which had a bad experience on Viet-Nam are not now as strong as they were. As long as I am here in this office I will continue with a strong role for the United States in world affairs. This is mandatory for us. The people will follow on this, and if they do the Congress will come around. But this is a sad day for this country.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I expect, too, there is a concern that the United States might over-react. This, of course, depends upon how any war in the Middle East might get started. If Israel pre-empts, we will oppose this and get Congressional support. If the Arabs make a flagrant push for war, we will support Israel. But one of our great concerns is that we are absolutely determined not to have a stalemate.

KING HUSSEIN: I am very afraid that if war starts, people will forget the reasons, especially if it is caused by Israeli intransigence.

PRESIDENT FORD: If Israel acts in flagrant fashion, there will be an adverse public reaction. But also the reverse will be true if the Arabs do the same thing. Our public does not want a war and believes there must be another way to settle the question. But it is a very fluid situation and it depends also who initiates the conflict and how it is

started. The war in Vietnam has made us sick and tired of war, but in a crisis we will stand up. But at the moment you understand why it is difficult to determine our reactions.

KING HUSSEIN: This is a very bad period for me. After my grandfather struggled so hard for the country and after 1948 then I looked ahead to build it up. But in 1967, as you know, we lost a good bit of it. We are moving ahead again now and it is very sad for me to think of the possibility of another war.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I remember in 1973 if Israel had accepted your ideas--Your Majesty made them a very reasonable proposition--there would never have been a Rabat Conference. You have been the most moderate and statesmanlike of any of the people I have called upon in the area, and have always continued to be a staunch friend of the United States.

KING HUSSEIN: We believe we have been your best friend in the Arab world and now, of course, we also want to keep our lines upon to our Arab friends as well as to you.

PRESIDENT FORD: I want to assure you that we will continue our very best efforts to give you full and friendly support. Meeting with you and working with you has been very helpful. And we would, of course, like to have any further evaluation and information you would care to provide us.

