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Q's and A's on the Sultan of Oman's Visit

Q. Why is he coming? Is his visit related to US concern about the security of oil supplies in the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf?

A. The US has had diplomatic relations with Oman at the tip of the Arabian Peninsula since 1833, longer than any other country in the Peninsula. Given the good relations between our two countries, there has been interest on both sides in a visit such as this and the Sultan's travel in Europe over the past month provided a suitable opportunity for him to come to Washington and meet with the President. That is how this visit evolved over the past several weeks. (Do not go beyond)

Q. Will they discuss oil? Does the Sultan want US arms to combat the communist insurgency in his country?

A. I am not going to discuss specific issues that may or may not be raised. As I have indicated, this is the first visit by the Sultan to the US and thus his first meeting with the President. It is an opportunity for a general exchange of views on relations between our two countries and on the general situation in the Middle East, a matter of great concern to both countries.

1-8-75

6. Can you confirm an AFP report from London that the U. S. requested use of a British air base off the coast of Oman?

GUIDANCE: Refer to State Department.

FYI ONLY: The U. S. is consulting with Britain for occasional use of a British landing strip on an island off the coast of Oman.

1/30/75

7. Why is the United States asking for landing rights on an island near Oman and why is the U.S. giving arms to Oman?

1/22/75  
Guidance: We have raised with Omani Government officials our interest in having permission to have U.S. military aircraft to use British landing facilities on Masira Island occasionally or for aircraft emergencies. This subject is now under discussion with both Oman and the UK. We do not envisage a permanent U.S. presence but rather an occasional and emergency aircraft use only in support of the more frequent and regular U.S. Navy presence in the Indian Ocean area.

U.S. arms policy in the Gulf area is designed to help our friends in that area meet their legitimate security needs. We have had long standing military supply relationships with several Arab states in support of these defense needs and the efforts of some regional states to assume responsibility for the stability of the area. I am not prepared to discuss the details of our modest military sales program to Oman but suggest you check with the State Department for whatever details may be available.

FACILITIES IN OMAN

Q: Why is the U.S. talking to Oman about the use of facilities at Masira Island? Will the U.S. use any "base" it establishes on Masira in a new Middle East war, or to secure the oil fields by force in that area? What is the real purpose in our interest in the Persian Gulf and how broad will our military involvement there be?

A: The U.S. is not establishing any "base" on Masira Island.

Let me put these reports in perspective. We have more ships and aircraft visiting the Indian Ocean area in line with our stated policy of establishing a more regular U.S. military presence in that area. Because of this, we have raised with Omani Government officials our interest in having permission for U.S. military aircraft to use British landing facilities on Masira occasionally or for aircraft emergencies. This is the extent of our discussions with Oman and the UK on this issue. It remains under discussion with both governments, and Committees of Congress are being informed. We do not envisage a permanent presence but rather occasional and emergency aircraft use only.

Q: How do you define "emergency"? Do you rule out the use of Masira in connection with possible U.S. military intervention in a new Middle East crisis?

A: I do not see the kind of situation you have described arising and I have made this clear repeatedly. We have simply expressed interest in occasional or emergency aircraft use in connection with the increased use by the U.S. Navy of the Indian Ocean area.

Q: Is the sale of TOWs and other military equipment to Oman the quid pro quo for getting landing rights? Will the U.S. station personnel and advisors in Oman, including helping in the Dhofar war?

A: Our policy in the lower Gulf area has been to help our friends in that area meet their legitimate security needs. This policy is well known and we have military supply relationships with several of the Gulf states. In that context we have agreed to a modest program of military sales to Oman. This is not related to the Masira issue. While we may send occasional teams of training specialists for new weapons, there has been no discussion about permanently stationing any advisors in Oman, or in any way involving U.S. personnel with internal Omani events.

[FYI: Two U.S. specialists are to go to Oman to train Omanis on the use of the TOW on a one-time basis. There could be similar teams in the future as the needs of our military sales relationship require.]

