

**The original documents are located in Box 124, folder “Syria” of the Ron Nessen Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

### **Copyright Notice**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Ron Nessen donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

3. What is the Administration's response to Hafez el Assad's assertion that Syria will not be willing to sign a final peace treaty with Israel until the U.S. recognizes the PLO?

3/5/75

GUIDANCE: As you know, Sec. Kissinger is leaving today for the Middle East. The purpose of his trip is to try to bring the conflict among the various parties closer to an overall settlement of differences and to establish a basis for peace and stability in that troubled area. I would rather not comment on President Assad's remarks as this delicate stage of negotiations begins.

June 10, 1975

KHADDAM VISIT

Q: Why is the President meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam on June 20 as announced at the State Department yesterday? Will he be conveying Israeli proposals received during Rabin's current visit?

A: The President has made clear that he wants to consult with as many of the parties as possible in the context of our continuing efforts to review all options for bringing peace to the Middle East. Following the President's meeting with King Hussein of Jordan, President Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Rabin of Israel, it is logical that the President would also want to have discussions with the Syrians. For this reason the Foreign Minister of Syria has been invited to Washington.

Q: Why is the President not meeting with President Asad?

A: It was mutually agreed by both sides that the best means of exchanging views at this time would be for the Foreign Minister to come to Washington.

Q: Does the President have plans for meeting Asad?

A: You may recall that the President after assuming office renewed the invitation for President Asad to visit the US which has been extended by former President Nixon. No firm dates were set and there are no present plans for this. However, the President is interested in a future

meeting at a mutually agreeable time.

Q: Does the fact that the Syrian is coming suggest that the President expects that there will have to be early new movement on the Syrian front and not only just on the Egyptian front?

The Khaddam visit is a part of the consultative process. As we have said on numerous occasions, we want to consult with all concerned before making any final decisions as a result of the reassessment.

Q. Will Khaddam's visit signal the end of the reassessment period? The President has talked about ending it after the Rabin visit but it has obviously been extended to include the Syrian visit. When will the President make his final policy decisions and announce our Middle East strategy? Are other visitors expected after Khaddam?

A. We have never put a terminal date on the reassessment and we have always made clear that the President wanted to consult with as many parties as possible. I have nothing further to give you on the precise date for the end of the reassessment or on further visitors.

Q. Why is Khaddam coming?

A. The President has already met with King Hussein of Jordan, President Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Rabin of Israel. It is logical that he would want to meet with a Syrian representative in the context of getting the views of all the pertinent parties.

June 18, 1975

VISIT TO WASHINGTON OF SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM

Looking ahead at the President's schedule, His Excellency Abdul Halim Khaddam, Foreign Minister of Syria, will come to Washington for talks with the President and Secretary of State Kissinger on Friday, June 20. Foreign Minister Khaddam will meet with the President on Friday at 4:00 p.m. His visit is in response to our invitation for President Asad to send a representative to Washington for discussions on the Middle East situation. His visit will enable the President to get a first-hand assessment of Syrian views in the context of our policy reassessment and it will also enable the President to renew his acquaintance with the Foreign Minister who last met with the President on August 23, 1974.

Q's and A's attached.

Q: On the basis of talks with Rabin, is there any hope the President can convey to Khaddam for movement on the Syrian (Golan) front? Will the President be conveying specific Israeli ideas for some progress on the Syrian front?

A: I am not going to get into details on the Middle East negotiations or on what will transpire in a meeting which has yet to take place. The President's meeting with the Foreign Minister is in the context of the others he has held--to have an exchange of views and receive a first-hand assessment of the Syrian perspective.

Q: Is there anything the President can tell Khaddam on the Palestinian problem? Will they discuss reports of increased Syrian-Jordanian collaboration? Will they discuss the serious problem between Iraq and Syria? Will they discuss US-Syrian bilateral relations?

A: I have no specifics to give you, ~~in advance of their meeting.~~

Q: Will the President's consultations with pertinent parties include the Palestinians? And if not, why not?

A: Secretary Kissinger has already answered this question in the negative.

[In Secretary Kissinger's press briefing at the White House on June 12--right after the President's meeting with Rabin--he was asked the following:

Q: Dr. Kissinger, when you speak of touching base with other representatives, or other groups, do you include the Palestinians?

A: No.]

~~We have always made clear the negotiations with the Palestinians is really not a live issue since the PLO does not recognize Israel's right to exist, and since the whole issue of the Palestinians is a matter to be resolved in negotiations by the parties themselves.~~

Q: Will the Syrians--through Foreign Minister Khaddam--speak for the Palestinians in the meeting with the President?

A: We are not going to answer questions on behalf of the Syrians.

Q: Will Ambassador Eilts--US Ambassador to Cairo who has returned for a detailed report on the Rabin visit in order to brief President Sadat--hand around through the Khaddam visit so that he can brief Sadat on the Syrian views as well?

A: You will have to check with State.

Q: Will Ambassador Eilts meet with the President while he is in Washington?

A: There are no present plans for this.

Q: Will Ambassador Eilts be carrying back specific Israeli proposals for Egypt to consider on a possible new effort to bring about an interim agreement on the Egyptian front?

A: Ambassador Eilts has been recalled to Washington so that he can be fully briefed on the Rabin Visit and he will return to Egypt to confer with President Sadat in the context of the further diplomatic exchanges we have indicated would take place. But I am not going to get into the details.



400  
525

B. Sisco  
Amb Rich Murphy  
Amb Sabah Kabbani  
F. M. Khaddam. P.  
K.

WHITE HOUSE STATEMENT FOLLOWING MEETING  
BETWEEN PRESIDENT FORD AND SYRIAN DEPUTY  
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS ABD al-HALIM KHADDAM, June 20,  
1975.

Isa Sabbagh  
Scribe: Samih  
Abu Fares.

President Ford and Foreign Minister Khaddam met  
in the Oval Office for 75 minutes. The  
meeting was also attended by Secretary of State  
Kissinger and \_\_\_\_\_ on the American side, and  
\_\_\_\_\_ on the Syrian side.

As you know, the President's meeting with Minister  
Khaddam followed the Minister's meeting and working  
lunch with Secretary Kissinger at the Department of State.

The President appreciated this opportunity to renew  
his acquaintance with Foreign Minister Khaddam and the  
opportunity it provided both sides to review the current  
situation in the Middle East. The President and Foreign  
Minister Khaddam exchanged views on the roads which might  
be followed in order to maintain momentum toward a  
negotiated settlement in the Middle East. ~~Such a settle-  
ment must, of course, include all parties to the conflict.  
The exchange was extensive and constructive and the Presi-  
dent believes both sides have benefited from it.~~ The  
President asked Foreign Minister Khaddam to convey to  
President Asad his conviction that all parties in the Mid-  
dle East must do everything possible to avoid stagnation  
in the process of moving toward peace in the Middle East,  
and his determination that the United States will make  
every effort to help in this process and to assure that  
there is no stalemate.

drop

While the principal matter discussed was the over-  
all Middle East situation, Syrian-United States bilateral  
ties were also reviewed.

The President and the Foreign Minister noted that this  
week marks the first anniversary of the resumption of dip-  
lomatic relations between Syria and the United States,  
June 16, 1974. They expressed their mutual pleasure at the  
evolution of relations between the two countries. The  
President reassured Foreign Minister Khaddam of the United  
States' interest in the further expansion and deepening of  
ties between the two countries.

Americans  
Undersecretary Joseph Sisco  
Ambassador Richard Murphy  
Lt General Slowcraft

Syrian side  
Ambassador SABAH KABBANI  
interpreter: Isa Sabbagh  
scribe: Samih Abu Fares

Q. Does this meeting conclude the Administration's Middle East policy reassessment?

A. This meeting is one in a series of consultations which we are having with the parties and I expect that this process of consultations will continue through diplomatic channels prior to any decisions being reached.

BACK UP Q's and A's

Q. What position did the President take on Israel's Labor Party statement that the Golan Heights must remain a part of Israel. in his talks with the Foreign Minister? Did Khaddam represent Palestinian views to the President?

Did the President sense any change in the Syrian position to make him optimistic following this meeting? Is there hope for progress on the Syrian front in addition to progress on the Egyptian front?

A. These talks were useful for the President to review all of the approaches for further progress with the Syrians; just as he has done with officials of the other parties. There were no specific agreements reached on future courses of action.

Q. Was the matter of a subsequent agreement between Israel and Syria following a successful second stage Sinai withdrawal discussed?

A. As in the case of our other consultations, it would not be appropriate for me to go into details. In general, the discussions dealt with possible approaches to further progress toward a negotiated settlement. There were no specific agreements reached on future courses of action.

June 22, 1975

MIDDLE EAST: SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

Q: What can you tell us about your talks with the Syrian Foreign Minister?

A: We had very worthwhile and cordial discussions and exchanged views on the roads which might be followed in order to maintain momentum toward a negotiated settlement in the Middle East. I asked Foreign Minister Khaddam to convey to President Asad my conviction that all parties in the Middle East must do everything possible to avoid stagnation in the process of moving toward peace in the Middle East and my determination that the United States will make every effort to help in this process and to assure that there is no stalemate.

I also reassured Foreign Minister Khaddam of the United States' interest in the further expansion and deepening of bilateral ties between the two countries.

October 14, 1975

POSSIBLE FORD MEETING WITH ASAD:  
NEXT STEPS ON THE GOLAN?

Q. You have said that there is nothing to announce on a Ford Asad meeting at this time. Would the President like to meet with the Syrian President?

A. The President would, of course, be happy to meet with

President Asad at a mutually convenient time, but, to repeat,  
*I have nothing further to give you at this time*  
[there are no current plans for such a meeting.]

Q. Is the United States prepared to engage in step-by-step diplomacy between Israel and Syria for a Golan disengagement? Is such a U. S. role being actively explored?

A. The United States stands prepared to play a role in any Syrian-Israeli negotiations if the parties request our assistance. Naturally, we're interested in having the momentum for progress toward an overall settlement maintained. We will continue to consult with the parties on ways in which we can be helpful.

October 16, 1975

ASAD VISIT

Q. Is there any news on the prospects for a meeting between Presidents Ford and Asad?

A. We have nothing to give you at this time.

Ford - Asad Meeting

Q: What can you tell us about the possibilities of a Ford-Asad meeting this fall? Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmy indicated that a meeting was being arranged.

A: We have nothing to give you on that at this time. Should anything develop, we will let you know.

FYI ONLY: The preliminary groundwork to explore the possibilities for such a meeting has suffered a setback with Fahmy's public comments. We should not contribute to speculation about a meeting with comments from the White House, hence the simple, non committal response set forth alone.

10/13/75

November 26, 1975

SYRIAN RENEWAL OF UNDOF

**Q:** Have the Syrians communicated to you or the US Government any decision on whether they will renew the mandate for the UNDOF peace-keeping forces which expires on November 30? Are we trying to persuade Damascus to renew?

**A:** I am not going to get into a discussion of either our diplomatic exchanges with the Syrian Government or what Syria may or may not do.

We hope that the mandate for the US observer forces on the Golan front will be renewed as a practical contribution towards the peace-making process. We support the efforts of Secretary General Waldheim in seeking a renewal. We have made clear our determination to pursue the peace process with full vigor and we hope that all parties will do everything they can to assist in this process.



March 3, 1976

"SECRET AGREEMENTS" in SINAI II  
ACCORD

- Q. Does the US have secret agreements with President Sadat, as he has said in a press conference, concerning Syria and the Palestinians (i. e. that Israel would not attack Syria and that we would make every effort to ensure Palestinian participation in the negotiating process)?
- A. As we have made clear repeatedly, all undertakings and agreements were spelled out in greatest detail at the time the Sinai II accord was presented to Congress. ~~Nothing~~ Nothing was kept secret in those consultations, following which the Congress voted overwhelmingly to approve the agreement.

Beyond this, I am not going to get into a debate over public ~~statements~~ statements made by the parties involved.

May 27, 1976

SYRIAN RENEWAL OF UNDOF?

Q. What is the reaction to Secretary Waldheim's statement in Damascus that Syria intends to renew the mandate of the peace-keeping forces on the Golan without any political conditions?

[As of 11:00 a.m. there is no official confirmation of the Syrian decision]

A. We have heard press and radio accounts of Mr. Waldheim's statement but as yet we have no official knowledge of the Syrian decision. Naturally, we would welcome such a Syrian decision to renew the UNDOF mandate without political conditions, just as we welcome Israel's decision to renew. We regard UNDOF as important for the maintenance of calm and the creation of conditions propitious for further progress towards a peaceful settlement, based on Resolutions 242 and 338.

SYRIAN RENEWAL OF UNDOF

Q: Are you pleased with Syria's decision to renew the mandate of the peacekeeping forces on the Golan front which was due to expire at the end of this month? Will there be new progress on Syrian-Israeli negotiations in the period ahead?

A: We welcome the decision by Syria to renew the mandate of these peacekeeping forces without political conditions just as well welcome the Israeli decision to do so. We regard UNDOF as important for the maintenance of calm and the creation of conditions propitious for further progress towards a peaceful settlement based on Resolutions 242 and 338. We will continue our contacts with the parties to explore ways in which further progress in the negotiations can be achieved.

FYI: [A Security UN Council is meeting this morning -May 28- to pass resolution extending mandate.]

SYRIANS IN LEBANON

Q: News and wire reports are suggesting that Syria has escalated its intervention in Lebanon by sending in 2000 troops. Can you confirm the story, and how do we feel about the Syrians' continued role in Lebanon?

A: We have noted an increase in activity along the Northern border, but we cannot confirm whether the troops there are Syrian regulars or whether there has actually been a net increase in troops levels. (1) As for our view on the Syrian role in Lebanon, I would refer you to the State Department's most recent reiteration of our policy (Briefing, May 27 (1)): [ We believe that Syria has played a constructive role in mediating between the parties in Lebanon in search for a political solution. And (2) we are opposed to military intervention which carries with it the danger of igniting a new conflict in the Middle East. I do not think that represents any change. ]

Q: What about movement on the Syrian Front? Whas the Palestinian issue discussed?

A: President Ford and President Sadat had an opportunity to broadly review the situation in the Middle East from various aspects, including that of Syria and the Palestinians. It would not be useful to go into details of their talks.

Q: What about providing Egypt with bilateral assistance. Were specific figures mentioned?

A: Bilateral issues, including US assistance to Egypt, were discussed. I have nothing specific for you at this time, however.

Q: Will any agreements with Egypt be reached during this vis it?

A: A number of agreements in the field of culture, health and PL-480 assistance will be signed by Secretary Kissinger and Foreign Minister Fahmy later today. You will have to go to State for details.

*at 3/14 at DOS*

*Said Simon will also sign a*

*taxation agreement*

*will Minister of Economy & Economic Development*

*Mohammed Shafic Zaki*

X

## UPDATE

### ASAD MEETING

Gwertzman in the New York Times today has a far more fully developed story than any so far on the background on a Ford-Asad meeting. We should continue to say in response to all questions that:

"We have nothing to give you at this time. Should anything develop, we will let you know."

FYI ONLY: The prospects for such a meeting are uncertain at best. With Asad's recent trip to Moscow, the Syrians' anti-Sinai accord statements and some threatening remarks on the possibilities of an UNDOF renewal, events at present dictate only the most general, noncommittal response from the White House.

### GRAIN DEAL:

On any questions on the prospects for a grain/oil agreement we should continue to maintain our present line that Under Secretary Robinson is in Moscow and the negotiations are progressing, but we have nothing further to give you at this time.