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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE
OF
HENRY A. KISSINGER
SECRETARY OF STATE

MOUNTAIN HAUS

12:03 P.M. MDT

MR. NESSEN: Let me read you two statements, and then Henry will be here to brief.

Secretary of State Kissinger will travel to the Middle East next week, leaving Washington on August 20. The discussions the United States has been conducting with the parties concerned, looking toward an interim agreement, have progressed to the point where the parties and the President believe it would be useful for the Secretary of State to travel to the area in an effort to bring the talks to a successful conclusion. The Secretary's visit to the Middle East will include several Arab countries and Israel.

The President has asked me to read you a statement.

The President says that he has worked many hours with the Secretary of State analyzing and assessing the situation in the Middle East, and the President has now directed the Secretary of State to return to that region in an effort to bring the discussions to a successful conclusion.

The President is hopeful that the parties will successfully conclude an interim agreement, which not only would be in the best interest of the parties involved, but also in the best interest of the entire Middle East region, and indeed of the whole world.

The President is sure that all Americans join him in wishing the Secretary of State success on this critically important mission.

The Secretary of State.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We will go straight to the questions.

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Q Mr. Secretary, can you tell us some of the issues that remain outstanding that you are going to be working on?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We have made good progress on many of the issues. We have agreement in principle on some of the lines, but some details remain to be negotiated.

We still have to work out the protocols and the details of the various disposition of forces after another interim agreement has been made.

There will be complicated issues of civilian administration, and there are one or two issues of principle there remaining outstanding. However, it is the President's judgment, the judgment of the parties and my own that in the light of the good will that has been shown by both parties in recent weeks, in light of the progress that has been made, the remaining differences are surmountable, and this is the attitude with which I am going there.

Q Mr. Secretary, would you say that peace is at hand in the Middle East?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I haven't used that line for four years. (Laughter)

Q Where are you going, exactly?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Wait a minute. You don't think I am finished with a 30-second answer. I haven't even placed my verb yet. (Laughter)

This, of course, is not a peace agreement. This is an interim step toward peace between Egypt and Israel, if it should succeed. The issues between Israel and the other countries remain to be resolved, and the United States remains committed to a just and lasting peace, as called for by the United Nations security resolution.

Both the United States and Israel and all the other parties that we are in touch with agree that this will not be the end of the process, but a stage in the process. Nevertheless, if it succeeds, it will be, and it can be, a very big step. It would be the first agreement that has been made between an Arab State and Israel not under the immediate impact of military hostilities, the first one that will require some complicated arrangement of cooperation.

Therefore, we hope that it will be a step toward that just and lasting peace, which we are committed to try to bring about.

I think, Fran, you had a question.

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Q What countries are you going to, exactly?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I am going first to Israel. From there I will go to Alexandria, where President Sadat will be. Then we will have a shuttle, which we do not think should be as extended as the recent shuttles have been because many issues of principle have already been settled, but while I am in the Middle East, I expect to visit Damascus, Amman and Saudi Arabia to discuss with the other Arab countries our conception of progress toward peace in the Middle East.

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Q Can you tell us who suggested a U.S. monitoring team in the Middle East, and isn't this fraught with danger, and I would like to know if it is tied to any money agreements of aid to Israel?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The idea of possible monitoring team has as yet not been finally decided. It is an issue that was first raised and which we have made clear we would agree to do only if both of the parties join in.

We have also made clear that the American participation would be of an entirely technical nature, that is to say, we would man certain kinds of warning equipment whose results would be given to both sides and the United Nations.

In other words, it would be an extension of the U-2 flights we are now undertaking at the request of both parties. Any Americans that are going to the Middle East would go only if approved by the Congress. It would be volunteers. They would have no military mission of any kind, and their primary function, their exclusive function would be to give warning information to both sides and to the United Nations and their numbers would be very small.

Q Who suggested it and is it tied to any aid?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The issue of warning stations depends on the issue of the aid. The issue of the aid in turn to Israel has been discussed with Israel for many months, as we have, for that matter, discussed aid programs with Arab countries for many months.

We will submit in September, I would expect, an aid package for the entire Middle East, including Israel and those Arab countries that have been the recipients of aid last year and this has been entrained as part of the reassessment, in any event.

Q How much money does it entail?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The President has not yet made the final decision about the amount that we will request from the Congress, but this grows out of technical studies that we are undertaking jointly as to the needs of the parties and particularly the needs of Israel.

Q Mr. Secretary, along side whatever agreements may be reached between Egypt and Israel, will there also be third-party agreements between the United States and both of these parties and what will their nature be?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We still do not have any actual documents that have been agreed to between the parties. All we have are certain agreements in principle about the outlines of a possible agreement.

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In the disengagement agreements, there was a formal agreement, then there was a protocol that was attached to that agreement, then there was separate understanding between the parties in which the United States acted as an intermediary and transmitted assurances from one party to the other.

Everything in which the United States is involved will be submitted to the Senate, the Foreign Relations Committee and to the House International Relations Committee. There will be no secret understandings that are not submitted.

Q Mr. Secretary, have you set yourself a time limit for this particular trip?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I have to be back on September 1 or 2 to speak at the Special Session of the General Assembly. That I have to do in any event no matter what the state of the negotiations is.

Now it is theoretically possible I might go back to the Middle East from there, but I hope that we can make sufficient progress in ten days. But I don't want to operate against a deadline. These issues, even when there is agreement in principle, the issues are enormously complex and there are so many different aspects of civilian as well as military arrangements that have to be made that I would hate to tie myself too closely.

Mr. Beckman?

Q I have two questions.

One, can you tell us if the American volunteers will be armed, and secondly, when your earlier shuttle failed, I seem to recall your saying you wouldn't go back unless there was a 90 percent chance of success.

Is there a 90 percent chance of success?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: You have to remember even if you say there is a 90 percent chance of success, if it fails, it fails 100 percent. We think there is a good chance of success whether you express it at 80 percent or 90 percent, that is just guessing at it. We think there is now a good chance of success, or the President would not have authorized my return.

What was the other question?

Q Will the American volunteers be armed?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We have not yet worked out this arrangement. If they are armed, it would be only for self-defense. It would not be for military operations. It would only be personal arms for really very immediate self-defense. They will not be authorized, under any circumstances, to conduct military operations or to defend themselves against military forces. If they have arms, it would be against marauders, but they are not there for a military function, and we are talking about very small numbers of about 100 or so.

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Q Mr. Secretary, will this force be a unilateral American force or will it be part of a United Nations force?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: It is very difficult for me to talk about something that has not yet been agreed to and finally worked out. In any event, there will be a United Nations force standing between Israel and Egypt in a zone of a greater depth than has ever existed between the hostile forces in the Middle East.

So, these would not be in direct contact with either of the hostile parties. They would work more closely with the United Nations.

Q Has the United States agreed in principle to compensate Israel for the loss of the Sinai oil fields?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We are discussing with Israel not so much compensation for the Sinai oil, but arrangements for alternative supplies of Sinai oil if Israel has difficulty arranging them for itself. We will take into account, in arriving at the economic aid figure, the additional foreign exchange requirement for Israel in the purchase of oil.

Q So, we are going to pay for the replacements? That is what it amounts to?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: It isn't going to be done exactly on that basis, but it will be taken into account.

Q Mr. Secretary, if I may change the subject, could you explain to us the situation surrounding the transfer of Ambassador Carter out of the State Department?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: To the best of my knowledge-- and I am not always told everything in the State Department-- Ambassador Carter has not been transferred out of the State Department. We have avoided any comment on a situation which, quite frankly, has not always been reported with full accuracy.

The problem that arises in the case of terrorist attacks on Americans has to be seen not only in relation to the individual case but in relation to the thousands of Americans who are in jeopardy all over the world. In every individual case, the overwhelming temptation is to go along with what is being asked.

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On the other hand, if terrorist groups get the impression that they can force a negotiation with the United States and an acquiescence in their demands, then we may save lives in one place at the risk of hundreds of lives everywhere else.

Therefore, it is our policy -- in order to save lives and in order to avoid undue pressure on Ambassadors all over the world, it is our policy -- that American Ambassadors and American officials not participate in negotiations on the release of victims of terrorists, and that terrorists know that the United States will not participate in the payment of ransom and in the negotiation for it.

In any individual case, this requires heart-breaking decisions.

It is our view that it saves more lives and more jeopardy and that it will help Ambassadors, who can then hide behind firm rules rather than leave it to the individual decision.

I think Ambassador Carter is a distinguished Foreign Service -- he is not a Foreign Service officer. He is a distinguished Ambassador, and he has served well in Tanzania. I do not want to engage in a debate in which his concerns are very easily understandable and which we are trying to handle in as compassionate a manner as we can, and without penalizing any individual concerned. But, there are important issues of principle involved here.

Q What is going to happen to Ambassador Carter? He has the impression he has been transferred out of the State Department.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think that Ambassador Carter would be better advised to deal with the responsible officials of the State Department than to engage in an independent publicity campaign of his own.

We are reluctant to put forward our view of the situation because we do not believe it would help anybody. We are trying to maintain a principle that terrorists cannot negotiate with American officials, and we are doing this in order to protect the thousands of Americans that could become victims all over the world if we once started that process, and not only the American terrorists and students, but also American officials.

Q Mr. Secretary, one more question on this. I understand that President Ford wrote a letter to President Nyerere of Tanzania thanking him for his cooperation in this problem?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: That is right.

Q And that that cooperation included releasing two of the terrorists of the organization that kidnapped the four young students. Now, isn't that cooperating with terrorists?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: After the event, President Ford did indeed write this letter, and in each individual case it is a matter of judgment of how rigidly that line is drawn and at what point one believes that the line has been breached.

In any event, Ambassador Carter has not been transferred out of the State Department.

Q But out of his post?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I really am trying to avoid a detailed discussion of the issue, I think in the interest of all parties concerned.

Q Can we get a kind of outline of what the accords have been in terms of what has been printed? Is that the passes and the oil fields?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I don't think I can go into something in which there are so many items that have only been agreed in principle, and so many items that are not yet agreed to at all.

Some of the things that have been printed are roughly accurate. Some of the things that have been printed are not accurate. I would not go firmly with any one of them.

Yes?

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Q I was going to ask the same question. Are the reports of the agreement in principle for a pullback from the passes and the oil fields in exchange for a guarantee of non-belligerence accurate? Is that the general scope of the agreement?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I do not think the issue of a formal issue of non-belligerence is now before us, and I think it would be better not to go into the precise details of the geographic separation until we are a little further ahead in the negotiations.

But it is known, of course, that the negotiations have involved the passes and the oil fields, and, as I have already pointed out in answer to another question, that some of the economic discussions with Israel involved the problem of how to deal with Israel's foreign exchange problems in the absence of the oil fields, so that is a speculation that would be proper.

Q Are you going to see Mr. Gromyko on this trip?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I don't expect to see him, no, not on this trip. I expect to see Mr. Gromyko next when he comes to the General Assembly in the middle of September.

Q Between now and then, will there be any special arrangements or efforts to keep the Russians posted?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We will stay in touch with the Soviet Union and keep them generally informed.

Q As you pointed out, if there is an interim agreement, can you give us a more specific idea of the territories Israel may have to give up?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: As I pointed out on other occasions, in a lasting peace, a lasting peace will have to settle the frontier of Israel not just with Egypt, but with all of its neighbors. It will have to take into account the Palestinian problem. It will have to spell out in great detail the reciprocal obligations for peace on the part of the Arab countries. And it will have to include guarantees, international, multilateral, bilateral, whatever may be devised for the final arrangements.

This interim agreement, which we are now talking about, is a step, we hope a significant step towards this, but it will still be only a partial -- we will only have traveled a part of the road.

Q Mr. Secretary, in answering Jim Naughton's question, you said the formal issue of non-belligerency, which is not a question here, but what is Israel going to need in the way of some guidance, and what is Israel going to get? You have talked about the oil fields and the passes.

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: I do not think I ought to be into the provisions of an agreement which has so far been negotiated in a rather cumbersome process through Washington in which there are no documents yet agreed to by both sides, but only some concepts and general lines, and that will all be apparent when the agreement is negotiated, hopefully in the not too distant future.

Q On the question of compensation or whatever it may be called for the loss of the oil fields, are you talking about American compensation, American aid? Are you talking about Arab aid or some other form?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I have the impression, but I have to confirm that when I get out there, that the Arabs are not yet ready to compensate Israel for any loss of oil revenues.

We are talking about the fact that in setting the aid level for Israel, we will take into account the foreign exchange losses that Israel will suffer if, as a result of the agreements, it gives up the oil fields.

I think I will take one more question.

Q Can you give us any idea of whether you heard from the Israeli Cabinet this morning?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: This announcement is based on the decision of the Israeli Cabinet to invite me to come to Israel.

Q Is there any question about it? This morning there was a question about it.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Yes, there was in the sense that the Israeli Cabinet had to approve what the negotiating team and we worked out during the course of last week and, until the Israeli Cabinet had formally approved the results of last week's negotiations, we could not announce that a shuttle could, in fact, take place.

Q When are you leaving here?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I am leaving here tomorrow afternoon, and I am leaving Washington Wednesday around midnight..

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 12:26 P.M. MDT)