

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVEMBER 5, 1975

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE

OF

JOSEPH J. SISCO

UNDER SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE BRIEFING ROOM

5:20 P.M. EST

MR. NESSEN: As promised, we have Joe Sisco, the Under Secretary of State, to give you a report not only on today's meeting, but since we didn't have anything on Sunday, Joe is going back over the entire visit and catch you up on the entire visit as well as today's specific meeting.

Q Is this on the record?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Was it true he thought Chicago was the greatest city in America?

MR. SISCO: I might say that we were all impressed, I am saying this on the record, Peter, for obvious reasons, because you and I are native Chicagoans, but it was an impressive show that Mayor Daley put on. It was impressive in every respect.

Let me just make a few brief observations and then open the floor to questions.

The two Presidents held their final meeting here a moment ago, as you know, after having held meetings earlier in the week here in Washington and likewise in Jacksonville.

We consider the visit of President Sadat as important, timely and very useful. First of all, I think the visit strengthened the close personal rapport that was established between the two Presidents initially at their meetings in Salzburg.

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Secondly, we believe the visit gave President Sadat an opportunity to see and know our country and our people better and vice versa, and, therefore, we believe that as a result of the visit country-wide, the opportunity given to the President to address the Joint Session of Congress today, this has contributed to greater understanding between the two Governments.

Third, I would say that the principal focus of the discussions between the two Presidents was on the simple question of where we go from here in the Middle Eastern diplomacy. I think it is fair to say that both Governments feel it is important that the process of peace continue with respect to the Middle East and, therefore, there was a substantial amount of the discussion focused on the diplomatic aspects.

On our part, we reaffirmed that we are prepared to undertake a serious effort to see whether we can get negotiations started between Syria and Israel. Secondly, we reaffirmed also our intention to continue consultations looking towards the possibility of a renewal of a Geneva Conference. And, third, as indicated by the Secretary of State in his statement before the UN General Assembly, we are also, and continue to be, prepared to explore any other informal meetings to get the process of peace moving once again in the aftermath of the recent Egyptian-Israeli Agreement and while the implementation process of that agreement goes on.

A fourth aspect of the visit, we feel that the visit and the talks contributed to a strengthening of the bilateral relationships between the United States and Egypt and in broadening the areas of cooperation between the two Governments. I would cite, in particular, the agreements that were signed earlier in the week -- a health cooperation agreement, a P.L. 480 agreement, an agreement on a museum exhibition, and an agreement on avoiding double taxation between the two countries and today's initialing by the respective Foreign Ministers of an agreement in principle in the areas of peaceful uses of atomic energy.

As most of you know, the agreement initialed today is expected to cover cooperation in the fields pertaining to peaceful uses of atomic energy, including design and construction and operation, research and power reactors. I will not go into the details because I think that the statement put out today is self-evident and a full explanation in and of itself.

I will take any questions now.

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Q Mr. Sisco, why was there no joint communique issued?

MR. SISCO: This question has been asked. I would not candidly attach any significance whatsoever to no joint communique having been issued. We felt and they felt that in view of the number of public statements made by everybody concerned, in view of the fact that the concrete results have all been signed on the basis of the specific agreements that I indicated to you, including the one initialed today, that really primarily what had to be said had really been said either in public statements or in the various announcements. So I would not read any kind of hidden designs that there were any contemplated or expected difficulties with writing a communique. Really, all of you have the concrete results.

Q Could I follow that up by asking -- you referred to public statements and there have been some public statements that are a little confusing in that President Sadat before he came here said he was going to ask the U.S. for arms. Today, and most recently, he said, "I did not come here asking for anything."

What was the situation and what was the response?

MR. SISCO: I think I can answer that very quickly, Marilyn. President Sadat indicated he was not coming here with any shopping list. That is the fact of the matter.

The question of arms was discussed in a general way. I think most of you are familiar with what President Sadat has said publicly insofar as his situation is concerned with respect to arms. He has said it in various interviews. That principally was the focus of the discussion on arms. There were no specific commitments made and there was no specific shopping list to address ourselves to.

Q Was there a general agreement to study the matter, or how would you phrase that?

MR. SISCO: I would not go beyond what I had to say, Marilyn, other than there was a general discussion of this and no specific commitments were made.

Q Well, sir, I would ask you without offending you what the President's response was and whether you could project for us the continuing dialogue on arms?

MR. SISCO: Well, we have said publicly on a number of occasions that we expected a general discussion of this question to take place. It did.

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We also said even before the visit, and as I am saying after the visit, that no specific commitments have been made. However, obviously this is an issue that in time will have to be addressed and we have said this heretofore. I am not adding anything new but this is really basically where it stands.

Q About the atomic reactor, what about that? Will they be getting other supplies and atomic energy from France and other places?

MR. SISCO: The question is will they be getting other supplies or other reactors. As you know, what was initiated today was an agreement in principle to cooperate in the field and as part of this cooperation initially what is involved are two power reactors not to exceed in total 1,200 megawatts. That is really what is involved under stringent safeguards.

What was initialed today, you should understand, is not actually the agreement. It was really the framework or the setting down of the principles on which a detailed agreement would be signed. It is largely the framework and I think it is important for me to make that point so that there will be no confusion because discussions with respect to the detailed agreement would have to continue.

Q Has President Ford accepted in principle President Sadat's invitation to visit Egypt, and what is the outlook for such a visit?

MR. SISCO: Well, there isn't anything concrete on that with respect to any specific date. I know that the two Presidents agreed that they would remain in very close contact over the coming weeks and months, but there is nothing specific on any plans.

Q Does that mean that President Ford has not accepted the invitation?

MR. SISCO: I think there has been and is an interest on the part of the President with respect to a possible visit to Egypt, but the point I am making is that nothing specific was agreed to in this regard.

Q There were points of conflict between the two Presidents. President Ford spoke out against the anti-Zionism resolution in the United Nations and President Sadat said some things anti-Jewish and anti-Zion at the National Press Club. Also President Sadat spoke rather intensively on several occasions about support for the Palestinians -- in some cases he mentioned the PLO and in some he didn't. President Ford pointed out what the U.S. policy was about the PLO and its position.

How do they resolve these things, or what do they say about them that you can tell us?

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MR. SISCO: Well, first of all with respect to the Zionism matter, I think each side's view is very clear in this regard. You noticed, for example, that President Sadat said in his address before the Congress that there are matters on which views are going to agree or converge and there are other matters where this is not the case.

With respect to the position on Zionism as reflected at the UN, I think you are very clear as to what position Egypt has adopted and what position we have adopted.

With respect to the second part of your question, the question of the Palestineans, I don't think I can really add to what President Sadat had to say to the Congress. It was very clear as to the nature of the appeal that he made.

As far as our position is concerned, one, we have always said that in any durable peace the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians would have to be taken into account.

Insofar as the question of the actual participation of the PLO at any conference, again you know what our position has been. We have felt and continue to feel that the inhibiting factor here is that the PLO has failed to acknowledge and recognize Security Council Resolution 242 and Israel's right to exist.

So what it amounts to is that in this regard the Egyptian view is clear and so is the U.S. view and our policy has remained unchanged.

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Q I have two questions. First of all, was it understood at the outset of the talks that there would be no communique or was that decided during the visit?

And my second question is, what concrete steps are in the making on the American side in order to further any Israeli-Syrian accord?

MR. SISCO: We had considered tentatively the question of whether a communique had to be issued but we left it open right from the beginning for determination in the course of the talks and we mutually agreed there was really no need for a communique based on this since we have put out the essential results.

I want to be very categoric. We then didn't even address the specifics in any communique and I want to be very clear that the fact that no communique was issued is not to be taken that we started the process and that some huff or some difference arose. We didn't do that.

Let me take the second part of the question. With respect to the on-going efforts to achieve negotiations, we are going to review the situation now at the State Department in the light of these talks. As part of that, we have called back our Ambassador from Damascus and we will, as part of that internal consultation, begin -- today is Wednesday, I think probably near the end of this week we will review the situation in the light of these talks.

Q What can you say about the efforts to arrange a meeting between President Ford and President Asad while the President is on his European trip?

MR. SISCO: There are no immediate plans for such a meeting and, Peter, I would not expect a meeting to take place.

Q Mr. Sisco, has the U.S. Government decided what position they will take on the Egyptian resolution in the General Assembly?

MR. SISCO: No, in fact I can't say that we have really studied the text. I gather that a resolution has been submitted in the last 24 hours. We will have to give that careful study.

Q Is that on Palestinians, too?

MR. SISCO: It is basically, Marilyn. I haven't seen the text but basically it is along the lines of what President Sadat indicated in his General Assembly speech. I understand it is a question of the Palestinians participating in a Geneva Conference "on equal footing." As I said, I haven't seen the text and we have not studied it.

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Q Given the American position on the Palestinians, why does that take study and consideration?

MR. SISCO: For one thing, I think it is pretty well for us to look at the text before one decides how one is going to vote, but obviously this text is going to be looked at from the point of view of what American policy is and I hope I have made what American policy is very clear in response to Joe Polakoff's question.

Q May I ask you another question about the Suez Canal and free transportation? Is there some statement on the part of Egypt on that?;

MR. SISCO: She asked whether she could ask a question with respect to Israel cargoes going through the Suez Canal. My response is that, as all of you know, this question of Israel cargoes going through the Canal was part and parcel of the agreement signed between Egypt and Israel. That principle has been implemented, as you all know.

Q Mr. Sisco, would you take a question on another subject?

MR. SISCO: I have got my hands full and I would rather not get into anything else.

Q You wouldn't rule out that some general agreement was made on arms, and could you clarify that in any way?

MR. SISCO: I don't think I can be any more categorical than I was. I said, one, the nature of the discussions was general, and, secondly, I was categorical in saying no specific commitments were made. I can't be more categorical.

Q The question was asked if some general agreement was made and you said you would not go beyond your previous statement.

MR. SISCO: There is no general agreement and my answer is "no," if you read into what I said that I was trying to keep that open.

Q When do you expect Mr. Rabin to come to Washington?

MR. SISCO: I have no late information on that.

Q Did you discuss with Mr. Sadat the date of passage of another ship in the Canal?

MR. SISCO: No, this has not come up.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

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(AT 5:35 P.M. EST)