

August 5, 1970

**Memorandum of Conversation, Ambassador Rabin
and Mr. Kissinger, Wednesday, Aug. 5, 1970**

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Summary:

Ambassador Rabin and Henry Kissinger discuss the United States' new initiative for talks between Israel and the UAR, Soviet involvement in the Egyptian military, and Israel's request for additional equipment from the United States.

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English

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE: Wednesday, August 5, 1970

PLACE: Map Room

TIME: 5:30 p. m.

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Rabin
Minister Argov
Mr. Kissinger
General Haig

Ambassador Rabin opened the meeting by stating that he wished to summarize events that had occurred over the extended period since he had last talked to Dr. Kissinger. He stated that Israel had decided to accept the U. S. initiative in the terms by which they had responded formally to the Department of State. Israel had decided to respond positively, although with great skepticism and with the full realization that their positive response would incur very real political and even more serious military risks. Without President Nixon's letter to Prime Minister Golda Meir, Israel's reply would most certainly have been negative. Israel's skepticism is justified since the major issues of difference between Israel and the Soviets and the Egyptians have still not been resolved by the U. S. initiative and there is no indication of a willingness to compromise, especially on the following issues:

1. Concerning the form of the talks on which Israel's position is well known, the U. S. has made no effort to ask for direct talks.
2. The Soviet/Egyptian and other Arab state's demands for total withdrawal are upheld under the U. S. plan.
3. A U. S. demand for the solution of the Palestinian refugee problem under the formula of free choice, without any other preconditions is called for.

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On July 17, at the conclusion of Nasser's Moscow visit, the USSR/Egyptian communique, which was essentially negative on the major points at issue, was released. Knowing this, the Israelis have great difficulty in seeing what can be achieved through the initiative just launched by the U. S. In essence, the USSR/Egyptian position has not changed. It is the same as it has been within the two- and four-power forum for an extended period. The other side has rejected even the U. S. position, not just the long established Israeli positions.

Israel believes the Soviets accepted the U. S. initiative because their creeping involvement in military operations brought a sharp U. S. reaction as manifested by the President's television interview. The Soviets felt a crisis was developing and they decided to try the diplomatic route in order to reduce tensions and to project a better international image for the Soviet Union.

From the Israeli perspective, once the talks start, both sides will present their positions to Jarring who will go from place to place without there being direct contact between the parties concerned. He will learn that there is no give and will then make a report to the Secretary General of the United Nations. The situation will be the same as during the last round of peace efforts.

Dr. Kissinger pointed out that this time at least the world press was conveying that a new atmosphere had developed.

Ambassador Rabin stated neither of the parties most directly concerned will gain by the new round of negotiations but only the Soviets. The most serious consequence that has resulted from the U. S. initiative is that the Soviets have been able, under the cover of the U. S. initiative, to take two fundamental military steps:

1. On the night of June 29-30, they moved a system of ground-to-air missiles to a line 40 to 60 kilometers from the Canal. Israel was compelled to attack these sites, destroying between eight and ten, with a loss of five airplanes. The Soviets then gave a positive response to the U. S. initiative and at the same time realized that the Israelis were still operating as far as 15 kilometers east of the Canal since the SA-2 missiles were at the limit of their range in this defense configuration and thus, Israel could still silence some of the Egyptian artillery along the Canal.

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2. On July 26 Soviet piloted MIG-21s attempted to intercept Israeli aircraft, firing some seven air-to-air missiles.

On the 27th, they gave air-to-air cover to Egyptian strike aircraft hitting Israeli emplacements on the East side of the Canal. In this effort, Egyptian pilots operated east of the Canal, while Soviet cover aircraft remained west of the Canal. In this action, the Israelis pursued the Egyptian piloted MIGs some 80 kilometers west of the Canal. The Soviet piloted MIGs could not intercept because of the low altitude at which the Israeli fighters were operating. However, on the 30th of July, Soviet piloted MIG aircraft did intercept Israeli fighters along the Egyptian bank of the Gulf of Suez. During this engagement, the Israelis shot down four Soviet piloted MIGs. It is Israel's view that the Commander of the Soviet Air Force traveled to the UAR, as a result of these losses, to make an on-site decision as to what steps would be taken next. It is Rabin's personal view that the Soviets have decided to avoid air-to-air combat with Israel for the time being.

Dr. Kissinger asked for the Israeli appraisal of the Soviet pilots' capability. Ambassador Rabin replied that while they were reported by Israeli pilots to be more aggressive than the Egyptians, their skills were considered limited. The kills were accomplished by U. S. air-to-air missiles (Sparrows and Sidewinders). Subsequent to this action, on August 3, the Soviets moved a missile ambush to within 15-20 kilometers of the Canal. Israel estimates four sites were established -- three SA-2s and one SA-3. These sites provide the Soviets the ability to engage Israeli aircraft some 15 to 20 kilometers east of the Canal. The next day this ambush cost Israel one Phantom shot down and one damaged. As a result of the second series of escalatory steps, Israel now faces a new and more serious problem along the Canal.

With respect to the U. S. ceasefire proposal, it is the Israeli position that it is unacceptable if the USSR is allowed to put in place SA-2s and SA-3s closer than the 40-60 kilometer limit that existed prior to the Israeli acceptance of the U. S. position last Friday, July 31. If the missiles remain at their new locations, Israel will retaliate: (1) by striking them as soon as possible or (2) by hitting Egypt in areas where they are less immune to attacks.

Ambassador Rabin reported that he had talked to Pentagon officials (Deputy Secretary of Defense Packard and Mr. Pranger) and Assistant Secretary Sisco at State about the urgent need for additional military equipment.

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Dr. Kissinger stated that he understood that Israel could not use the Shrike missiles that they had asked for earlier. Ambassador Rabin replied that if the U. S. will provide the missiles we will all find out what their utility is. Ambassador Rabin stated that since his negotiations on additional military equipment had begun, very little beyond electronic equipment had been provided. Israel had recently received approval for additional Phantom reconnaissance and fighter/bomber aircraft but had received no answer to their request for drones and Shrike missiles and have been told instead that the U. S. had not completed its studies. Ambassador Rabin emphasized that it is essential that Israel have the necessary equipment needed to cope with the new threat. For this reason, they have need of four specific items:

1. Standoff electronic jamming equipment for E and C band radars.
2. C band radar canisters in pods.
3. CBU bomblets, which Israel guarantees will not be used against civilian targets.
4. Shrike missiles.

Dr. Kissinger then asked if we were to deliver this equipment, would the Israelis use it against the forward SAM sites before agreeing to the implementation of the ceasefire. Ambassador Rabin replied that Israel will not implement the ceasefire until they remove the forward sites or the United States is able to bring the Soviets to redeploy these sites to the 40 to 60 kilometers area. Ambassador Rabin added that Israel has not made public the Soviet escalation or the fact that they had successfully shot down Soviet piloted MIG-21s, at the request of the United States and in order not to engage the Soviets' prestige. He continued that Israel now needs the four items just mentioned or they will be required to take action without this equipment. Ambassador Rabin reported that he had spoken to the Prime Minister and was informed that Israel would hit the Egyptians in various forms and at various places in a manner convenient to Israel.

Dr. Kissinger stated that he would pass this information on to the President. Ambassador Rabin reiterated that Israel would move with or without U. S. help, emphasizing that the new sites closer to the Canal could be destroyed with less losses if the United States would provide the equipment requested. Dr. Kissinger asked if Israel would agree to accept the ceasefire if we made a commitment to provide the equipment but with delivery still pending. Ambassador Rabin responded that this would serve no useful purpose and that what was needed was to prevent a Soviet fait accompli in the form of an

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