

September 18, 1985

First Middle East Division, 'Briefing Material for the Prime Minister [Nakasone]: Problem of the Release of the American Hostages'

Citation:

"First Middle East Division, 'Briefing Material for the Prime Minister [Nakasone]: Problem of the Release of the American Hostages'", September 18, 1985, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, File No. 2017-0631. Translated by Stephen Mercado.
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Summary:

This briefing material for the Prime Minister of Japan summarizes Ambassador Nakayama's meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Shara where Syria resolved to continue assisting in the release of the American hostages in Lebanon and Ambassador to the United States Matsunaga's conversation with President's Assistant McFarlane where the United States expressed thanks for Japan's role in the crisis and discussed the release of one hostage.

Original Language:

Japanese

Contents:

Original Scan
Translation - English

対総理ブリーフ用資料

極秘第 146 号

極 秘

無 期 限

10 部の内

6 0 9 / 号 8

米国人質解放問題

近

1. 中山大使は14日～18日シリアを訪問し、シャラ外相と会談した。同会談において大使より本件問題の最近の状況につき質したところ、先方は、要旨次の通り述べた。(なお、アサド大統領は、当初中山大使と喜んでお会いしたいとの意向)であったが、17日大統領府(ア)はシャラ外相との会談の報告に満足している旨及びシリア・ジョルダン首相会談、レバノンにおける情勢変化等のため、中山大使のシリア滞在中に会見することは困難となった旨連絡越した。

(1)本件に関する日本政府の強い関心及び人道的見地からの日本政府の努力を十分理解しており、こうした日本の関心の強さを知ってからシリアは本問題に関しより一層努力するようになった。今後ともシリアは本件問題の解決に努力する。

(2)しかし、レバノンの複雑さに加え人質問題自体の難しさがある。人質の生命の安全をあくまで確保すべしとの条件がより問題を難しくしている。自分は近い将来本問題が解決するものと見ている。

2. 16日、在米松永大使が、マクファーレン大統領特別補佐官と会談した際、本件に関する先方の発言次の通り。

(1)日本政府に行っている工作及び反応が、最もENCOURAGINGかつHOPEFULなものであることに大統領との間で意見の一致を見た。大統領は重ねて、日本政府の労につき感謝にたえない旨述べていた。

(2)米国人一名の釈放のニュースにつき、自分らが得ている情報によれば、これは事実であり、朗報としてうけとめているが、その背景等については未だ的確な状況を把握しておらず、目下のところ、本人を安全に救出し家族と再会させることに全力をあげているところである。しかし、この釈放を公表した場合に、そのことが他の人質の問題にいかなる影響を与えるかが、まだ予断することができないので、今のところ発表することはしない方針である。

(注) 15日付外電によれば、7名の米国人人質の内の一人ベンジャミン・ウェア(長老派協会牧師兼教育者、レバノン在住30年、61歳、84年5月8日誘拐される)が、14日、イスラム聖戦機構により解放されたとの情報がある。

Secret No. 146

Briefing Material for the Prime Minister

Problem of the Release of the American Hostages

September 18, 1985

First Middle East Division

1. Ambassador Nakayama visited Syria from the 14th to the 18th and met with Foreign Minister Shara. In that meeting, when the Ambassador posed a question in regard to the recent situation regarding the matter in question, the other side spoke as follows. (In addition, President Assad had at first been happy to meet with Ambassador Nakayama. However, word came on the 17th from the Office of the President that Assad was satisfied with the report of the meeting with Foreign Minister Shara and that, due to a meeting between the prime ministers of Syria and Jordan, a change of the situation in Lebanon, and such, it had become difficult to see Ambassador Nakayama during his stay in Syria.)

(1) In relation to this matter, we well understand the Government of Japan's strong interest and the Government of Japan's position based on a humanitarian point of view. Knowing the strength of Japan's interest, Syria has decided to make even more of an effort in relation to this problem. Syria will continue working towards a resolution of this problem.

(2) However, in addition to the complexity of Lebanon, there is the difficulty of the hostage problem itself. The condition of protecting to the utmost the security of the hostages makes the problem more difficult. I myself see the problem being resolved in the near future.

On February 16, in a conversation that Ambassador to the United States Matsunaga had with President's Assistant McFarlane, the latter spoke as follows:

(1) I agree with the President that the work and response of the Government of Japan is most encouraging and hopeful. The President has repeatedly said that we cannot thank the Government of Japan enough for their hard work.

(2) Regarding the news of the release of one of the Americans, according to the information that we have obtained, it its true. It is good news for us, but we still do not have a firm grasp on the background to it. For now, we are doing everything we can to re-unite that person with his family. However, as we still cannot say what effect announcing this release would have on the other hostages, our policy is not to announce it at this time.

(Note) According to a foreign dispatch of the 15th, there is information that Benjamin Weir, one of the seven American hostages, (a pastor of the Presbyterian Church and a teacher, a 30-year resident of Lebanon, 61 years old, abducted on May 8, 1984) was released on the 14th by the Islamic Jihad Organization.