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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON



INFORMATION

September 9, 1970

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *HK*

SUBJECT: Mid-Day Situation Report on Hijacking Situation

Below are described the main developments since my memorandum to you this morning.

The Situation

1. Red Cross representative Rochat has told us that the time limit on the guerrillas' ultimatum has been extended but that it is indefinite how long it has been extended. At the same time, he stated that he is fearful that we are approaching a very serious night but he wanted to reassure us that the Red Cross is exerting every effort to move as rapidly as possible in negotiations with the PFLP.

2. A Red Cross medical team and personnel are now with the hijacked planes on a continuing basis.

3. The British Overseas Airways Corporation flight that was hijacked at Bahrain enroute from Bombay to London stopped in Beirut and flew on to the same airfield in Jordan where the other two hijacked planes are being held. It landed there at 11:05 a.m. EDT. Reportedly there are only a small number of Americans aboard.

4. The situation in Amman has deteriorated seriously. Fedayeen communications reported artillery and rocket fire coming from the royal palace, Jordanian headquarters and official buildings. King Hussein, in an apparent effort to get a grip on the situation has issued an order entrusting to the army Chief of Staff "all authority of the armed forces" to restore the peace. The army, however, according to the most recent reports has still not entered Amman to drive out the Fedayeen. The Jordanians have to consider the possibility that the hostage passengers will be used to restrain their actions as well. The guard around the Intercontinental Hotel where the passengers in Amman are being held has been increased, and the passengers there are in the basement shelter area. The British Foreign office reported

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PA/HO, Department of State  
E.O. 12958, as amended  
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this morning that it lost contact with its embassy in Amman. We have had no such problem. The British have alerted their evacuation machinery.

5. The Swiss have followed up the U. S. approach in Bonn with a strong demarche to the West Germans to hold firm and not agree to release their prisoners unilaterally. A late report from Bonn indicates that Chancellor Brandt and other concerned ministers have decided to continue "for the time being" their concerted approach through the Red Cross and therefore to refrain at present from isolated actions to reclaim the German passengers. The Germans, however, have reserved the right to make a new decision if imminent new danger arises -- presumably a reference to breakdown of control in Amman itself.

6. We understand indirectly through Red Cross sources that PFLP representatives have given Rochat a list of 300 Fedayeen held by the Israelis who must be released as a precondition to release of the prisoners still in F and PFLP hands.

7. Heikal, Nasser's Minister of Information and close confidant, told Minister Bergus in Cairo that he had personally conveyed to Fatah -- the main middle-of-the-road Palestinian organization -- an ultimatum that unless it publicly denounced the hijacking operations of the radical Palestinians, as the UAR had done, the UAR would consider Fatah in the same category as the radicals and act accordingly.

8. The Red Cross in Geneva has formally conveyed a note to the U. S., Swiss, German and British representatives there of the beginning of Rochat's mission in Amman. It specifically stated: "In case of a non-coordinated liberation of Palestinians, the Committee would be obliged to renounce the mandate which has been confided to it."

9. The UN Security Council has been convened at 3 p. m. today to consider the hijacking problem. This issue was debated in the General Assembly last year but this is the first time it will be placed formally before the Security Council.

#### Further U. S. Planning

At the WSAG meeting this morning we reviewed contingency plans designed to (a) extricate the hostage personnel, (b) evacuate American citizens from Jordan if the situation there deteriorates further, and (c) intervene

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to support King Hussein if he requests us to do so.

-- Plans are complete for military evacuation of U.S. citizens in situations where we are either unopposed or opposed. The operation could commence within 48 hours using forces from Europe if these forces were not already on alert. The JCS is looking now at ways in which forces could be put in alert status with a cover which would avoid risk of disclosure. From full alert the operation could commence within 6 to 8 hours. Because forces from the U.S. would require considerably longer, we would plan to use forces from Europe.

-- These same plans can be used to evacuate the hostages from the Fedayeen-held airfield. No one, however, favors initiating such a step except in the extreme case in which there is conclusive evidence that the hostages would otherwise be killed. If it comes to this, however, and the Jordanian forces cannot or will not do the job, it would be preferable to use U.S. rather than Israeli forces -- an Israeli operation would likely trigger a major conflagration.

-- Plans also are ready for intervention to support Hussein if he asks us to do so. There are two principal problems:

-- How long would we have to sustain this operation? The forces available are limited to the brigade in Europe and the 82nd Airborne Division in the U.S. Our strategic reserve thus would be committed and long-term support of an operation, which might escalate to include the involvement of Iraqi and Syrian forces, would be increasingly difficult given the need for total resupply by air. The JCS are looking hard at the implications.

-- What should be the King's position after we left. An illustration in that case would be Israeli forces. The King already has asked that the Israelis help him if he needs it -- we think it preferable that the Israelis do so in these circumstances rather than the U.S. But this would take more help from us behind the Israelis (a) to keep the Russians out and (b) to give the military equipment support they would need. Lebanon also would have its troubles with the Fedayeen in these circumstances and they, too, would need equipment support from us.

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--Equipment packages for the support of an Israeli intervention and for the support of Lebanese resistance to the Fedayeen are being drafted now. The JCS also are looking at what it will take in U. S. posture to hold the ring against the Russians if the Israelis move to support Hussein at his request.

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