

NND 969024
By SDT/USW Date 2/3/97



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Washington, D.C. 20520
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May 8, 1971

TO : The Secretary ^{OFFICE OF THE ASST. SECRETARY - AF}

THROUGH: J - Ambassador Johnson
S/S **B**

FROM : AF - C. Robert Moore *clm*

SUBJECT: F-5s for Libya - ACTION MEMORANDUM

DISCUSSION:

Following your conversation with Ambassador Palmer and Mr. Newsom on the question of the aircraft for Libya, it would appear that we have three choices: (1) to delay further; (2) to seek further assurances from the Libyans; and (3) to decide not to deliver the aircraft.

Ambassador Palmer continues to believe that delivery of the aircraft is important to the US-Libyan relationship and that a negative decision may precipitate a substantial set-back to our efforts to improve cooperation. At the same time, he believes strongly that he cannot continue to put the Libyans off as we have for the past year, particularly in light of growing Libyan pressures for a yes or no answer.

After further consultations with him, we are inclined to regard the idea of requesting further assurances from the Libyans as inadvisable. Although it is quite possible that the Libyans would be willing privately both to give and to honor such assurances, Qadhafi's statements on the Mirages cast doubt on the regime's willingness publicly and unequivocally to confirm them. To explain to the press or Congress, even on a background basis, the fact that they could not really be moved from Libya efficiently could only breed resentment with the Libyans. There is also the question of whether we would feel the general area situation and state of domestic opinion

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May 1971
AP/N
Mr. Suddarth
informant

DEF 12-5 Libya

AF/DD Newsom : AF/W : JJB Lake : af : rjp

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would warrant a positive decision. In other words, Ambassador Palmer would be opposed to requesting the assurances unless we were prepared promptly to deliver the planes provided the assurances were both positive and publicly useable.

We therefore believe that we should say no to the Libyans on the remaining eight aircraft, taking advantage of the changed circumstances clause in the original contract. We would express our willingness to provide all necessary help for their utilization of the remaining aircraft, but express the view that it is in our common interest to phase out our military relationship.

We anticipate some perhaps strong expressions of unhappiness on the part of the Libyans but do not feel it will result in any break in diplomatic relations. We can probably anticipate that should any difficulties arise on the Mirage arrangements, the Libyans will obtain aircraft from the Soviets, probably using our refusal as an excuse. We should be prepared to explain the rationale of our decision to the Egyptians in Cairo.

DOD dissents from this decision and argues for a postponement of it if a favorable decision to deliver the planes cannot be made. Its argument for a postponement is based on the desirability of us knowing more about the key aspects of the newly-formed Federation of Arab Republics. We share Ambassador Palmer's view that he must have a decision on this matter by the time he returns to Tripoli at the end of May - which would be at least three months before the September 1 plebiscite called to ratify the establishment of the Federation. We therefore regard DOD's desire for further delay as impractical, in addition to disagreeing with it on substantive grounds.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you sign the attached instruction to Ambassador Palmer.

Attachment:

Outgoing cable
AF/DDNewsom:AF/N:JJBlake:nf:rjp
5/5/71 x22530

Clearances: *RSK*
NEA:Mr. Sisco (draft)
PM:Mr. Pickering (draft)
L:Mr. Salans (draft)

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