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Authority EO 12958
By MBNARA Date 66/05/02

MEMORANDUM

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7:00 AMTHE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 6, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: BRENT SCOWCROFT

FROM: WILLIAM B. QUANDT

SUBJECT: Arab-Israel Tensions

Ambassador Keating met with Prime Minister Meir this morning and was informed that Israel had received information from totally reliable sources that Syria and Egypt are planning a coordinated attack against Israel today in the late afternoon. In addition, she confirmed that Soviet dependents and some advisers are being evacuated from Egypt and Syria. She has asked that we inform the Soviets and the Egyptians that:

- Israel is not planning to attack Syria or Egypt. It has called up "some reserves" on a contingency basis, but has not declared a general mobilization.
- Israel is aware of military dispositions in Egypt and Syria and knows that in any war they will lose, even if Israel will suffer some casualties.

Mrs. Meir assured Ambassador Keating that Israel does not intend to launch a preemptive attack and is genuinely interested in avoiding war.

Other information of note is that Cairo appears normal this morning, with no sign of special military precautions. We do, however, have confirmation that as many as 1,000 Soviet dependents have left Egypt. Some reduction in the number of Soviet advisers in Syria is also apparently underway. In addition, we know that the Egyptian forces, as part of their current fall maneuvers, are on a high state of alert and that Syrian forces have been repositioned along the Golan Heights cease-fire lines.

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Several possible interpretations of the evidence can be made:

1. Egypt and Syria, despite the military odds against success, do intend to initiate hostilities as a way of forcing international attention to the Middle East and activating the use of oil as a political weapon against the United States. The Soviets have gotten wind of this and are evacuating dependents and some advisers. In so far as Soviet advisers are included in the evacuation, the effectiveness of an Arab attack is likely to be somewhat degraded and the risks of Soviet involvement will lessen.
2. A major crisis is under way in Arab-Soviet relations, and under the cover of a war scare, Soviet advisers are being expelled from both Egypt and Syria. There have been numerous strains in Arab-Soviet relations recently, and King Faisal has been pressing hard to convince Sadat and Asad to cut their ties to Moscow.

Our intelligence services have continued to downplay the likelihood of an Arab attack on Israel and still have no signs that such action is imminent. They appear to favor the alternative explanation of a crisis in Arab-Soviet relations.

If hostilities are imminent, we should immediately consider the following actions:

- Demarche to the Soviets and Egyptians to convey Prime Minister Meir's message and to add our own statement about the need to avoid hostilities.
- Activate first steps for possible evacuation of U. S. citizens from key Arab countries (Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabis)
- Convene oil task force to prepare on a contingency basis for cutoff of Arab oil.
- Consult with Israelis and Jordanians on steps to be taken in the event of hostilities. In particular, we want to make sure that Jordan does not get drawn in.
- Ask the Shah of Iran to use his influence with President Sadat to discourage a resort to force.
- Alert U. S. forces in the Mediterranean and Europe for possible action in the Middle East.