



~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

VIA ALPHA CHANNEL

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

DOC # 153

Office of the Secretary of Defense **305C-3552**
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS **10 DEC 1979**
Date: 16 SEP 2015 Authority: EO 13526
Declassify: X Deny in Full: _____
Declassify in Part: _____

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Reason: _____
MDR: 15 -M- 1726

SUBJECT: US Access to Facilities in Egypt (U)

~~(TS)~~ By your note on the report of the 30 November meeting between Ambassador Atherton and Egyptian Vice President Mubarak, and separately in a telephone conversation with me, you asked for a report on how the US could, and whether we should, help develop naval and air base facilities for Egypt on the Red Sea, usable by the US in future emergencies. This memorandum contains a preliminary analysis.

~~(TS)~~ Recent events reinforce my conviction that an expanded US military presence in the Middle East/Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean region is a strategic necessity. In the long term, the appropriate level of such presence will require access to a small number of selected air base and port facilities in the area. I will shortly submit my proposals on these broader measures to enhance our flexibility for rapid deployment and sustained operations in the area.

~~(TS)~~ In the shorter term, as you know, we are in the process of obtaining a very modest foothold in Egypt by virtue of the limited access to Wadi Kena Air Base extended by the Egyptian Government. We have proceeded quietly to insert a base warm-up team and necessary equipment to support operations by two E-3A AWACS aircraft. We will soon withdraw the personnel but leave behind under Egyptian Air Force caretaker status, the modest support infrastructure items now in place at this Egyptian field. Thus, we will be able to introduce E-3As into Wadi Kenna with supporting personnel with little notice and be able to conduct operations shortly after arrival.

~~(TS)~~ During our consultations with Vice President Mubarak regarding Wadi Kena, he repeated President Sadat's earlier suggestion of the desirability of having the US upgrade the Red Sea port/airfield complex at Ras Banas (Berenice). Preliminary information (see attachments) indicates that this

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL
Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Ctr, WHS
Date: SEP 16 2015

Signed

~~EXEMPT PER 50 USC 3053 (a)(1)~~
~~DD-40-816 Date 20 March 2000~~
~~Remove Declassify On 31 DEC 2028~~
~~Other Agency Query TBD~~

10 Dec 99

VIA ALPHA CHANNEL

Para 2 301c(6)&(7)

COPY 1 OF 3 COPIES.

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

15-M-1726
DE 111

Downing Center
301-341-517
301-341-517

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

VIA ALPHA CHANNEL

2

complex is very austere and would require a substantial effort to develop a permanent base. Both the port and airfield lack a potable water source and a reliable fuel supply system. The harbor would require some dredging in order to berth destroyers and frigate-sized ships at the single dock. On the other hand, a collocated port and airfield (less than three miles apart) on the Red Sea would offer some attractive operational possibilities. Moreover, the remote location (140 miles from the nearest significant population concentration at Aswan) would serve both US and Egyptian political interests.

(S) It would be premature to define a concept of operations for the use of Ras Banas at this time. We will have to weigh the costs versus the benefits of two options. One is a substantial investment of money for base development at this austere airdrome. The other is a more modest investment of funds to improve existing facilities at a less remote, but more developed air facility such as Wadi Kena. I will be able to give you a more definitive recommendation in this regard after we have analyzed the findings of the facilities survey team which I recently sent to Egypt with Vice President Mubarak's concurrence.

(S) Further, we should recognize that there are likely to be significant political limits on our use of Egyptian bases which we will need to weigh against the costs of making those bases useful to us. My conversations earlier this year with President Sadat and Vice President Mubarak lead me to believe that they wish to avoid the permanent presence of US personnel. They have emphasized to me the political liabilities associated with foreign presence and their desire not to repeat the experience with the Soviets, who sent a large number of military personnel to Egypt. Their concept has been that the US would improve Ras Banas for Egyptian use in normal times and US use in an "emergency". We will need further to explore whether these limits to their political tolerance for our presence still apply.

(S) In the near future, I will provide in cooperation with the Department of State a detailed proposal for how we should respond to the Egyptian suggestion.

Harold Brown

Attachments

cc: Secretary of State

DECLASSIFIED IN FULL
Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WSS
Date: SEP 16 2015

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

VIA ALPHA CHANNEL