

September 6, 1982

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WEINBERGER AND PRESIDENT MUBARAK, Saturday, September 3, 1982, 9:35 to 10:40 a.m., at Ras al Tin Palace, Alexandria, Egypt

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ATTENDEES:

U.S. Side

Secretary Weinberger  
Ambassador Atherton  
Major General Smith

Egyptian Side

President Mubarak  
Deputy Prime Minister and  
Minister of Defense, Field  
Marshal Abu Ghazala

1. After the initial exchange of pleasantries, Mubarak asked about our Israel visit. As the Secretary began his response by saying the Israelis were not at all pleased with the President's peace initiative, Mubarak interrupted to comment, "They are never happy about anything." The Secretary explained in detail the Israeli position as presented to him by Prime Minister Begin in Nahariya three days earlier. Although Begin contended that the President's proposal went beyond Camp David, the Secretary had told him that it was clear to the US that it did not. The Secretary had told Begin that throughout his long association with President Reagan, he had learned that the President does not make up his mind lightly, and when he does, he does not waver. Mubarak believed it would be very good to begin negotiations, and that refusal to do so by Begin would be a grave mistake. Secretary Weinberger agreed and pointed out that it appeared that the President's proposal was receiving a favorable reaction in other countries.

2. Secretary Weinberger continued that in addition to its content, Begin was also concerned about the procedure through which notification of the President's plan was made. He was chagrined that the President went on national TV to explain the proposal before others had a chance to study it, and he was equally upset by the fact that King Hussein had been notified prior to Begin's notification. The Secretary had pointed out that Secretary Shultz had worked very hard on this plan and that during its development, many people were consulted, including a number outside of government. Mubarak wondered whether Secretary Shultz would soon be making a tour of the area, and the Secretary responded that he hoped Secretary Shultz would be able to find the time to do this.

3. Mubarak believed it important that the Israelis understand that their security depends on more than their fighting ability alone. Unless they do, other Arab nations will be forced to move towards the Soviets in an increasing degree. For his own part,

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Mubarak recognized that the Soviets are the second superpower, but he did not intend to fight them. Nevertheless, he is very interested in maintaining a special relationship with the US. During the period of Soviet assistance to Egypt, the Soviets wanted to direct everything and this was strongly resented by the Egyptians. Now, Mubarak continued, the image of the US in the Middle East has been tarnished by the Lebanon crisis and that is why Egypt was so glad to have the President's peace plan. He considered the timing of this initiative to be very good, but he recognized that the PLO will probably use the initiative against Egypt. Mubarak also told the Secretary that Kadhafi is forming a group of some 60 terrorists (including Iranians, Palestinians and Libyans), in order to take action against Egyptian, US, and Saudi Embassies in Europe.

4. Turning to Lebanon, Secretary Weinberger informed Mubarak that both the Israelis and Syrians indicated they wanted to leave Lebanon, but to do so they will need help. The Secretary also noted that opinions are split in Israel and that, for example, the Labor Party favors the President's initiative.

5. Mubarak considered the mechanism for proceeding in accordance with the President's initiative to be of utmost importance. He reported that the Soviets have said that the US peace plan is simply something to keep the people in the Middle East busy.

6. Returning to Lebanon, the Secretary reported that the US Marines would be out within a matter of weeks. Mubarak considered it good that the US had participated with the French and Italians in the MNF. The Secretary stated that Soviet equipment apparently did not perform very well in Lebanon, and Mubarak responded that a large part of the problem was that the Syrians have no experience and very little training; he was not surprised that they didn't perform well. Secretary Weinberger then commented on the air battle in which the Israelis had scored such an overwhelming victory. Ambassador Atherton noted that the Israelis are pressing Lebanon for an early peace treaty, and Mubarak said he believes that if the Syrians and Israelis were to leave Lebanon, the Lebanese could then sit around the table with all the factions and work out their problems.

7. Secretary Weinberger then briefed Mubarak on his meeting with Lebanese President-elect Gemayel. Mubarak's view was that it would be important for Gemayel to "give a good show" at the beginning because image is particularly important in this case. Mubarak thought Gemayel will be a good leader and friendly to the US.

8. Mubarak returned yet another time to his theme that it is important to change the image of the US in the area, because people are not confident in the US and that is why the President's initiative is so important. The Secretary responded with a statement of

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his strong admiration for the President who, more than anything else, wants peace in the Middle East. Mubarak cautioned that we should not permit the Soviets to have any part in building the peace plan -- we should not give them an opportunity for anything.

9. The Secretary referred favorably to Mubarak's recent article in the Washington POST, and then made his oft-mentioned point that the US needs more than one friend in the area. Mubarak agreed and said that if the US befriends only Israel, the Soviets will clearly move in.

10. Ambassador Atherton then asked for Mubarak's view of how best to make sure that this opportunity is not missed by the other Arabs. Mubarak responded that the Arab Summit would be important in this regard, and he urged us to contact the Saudis, Jordanians, and Tunisians. He cautioned that we should not put this proposal "in the cage of the Fahd plan", and that the Saudis would need reassurance. Finally, he made a strong pitch that it was extremely important that the US contact Saddam Hussein immediately. He also said we might use Siad Barre, and that he would speak personally with Numeiri who was visiting Cairo the next day. Ambassador Atherton responded that we've already contacted these countries. Mubarak felt that this was nevertheless a case in which we should not rely on the traditional means of communication -- some special effort was required. In response to Ambassador Atherton's question about whether Mubarak would help, Mubarak said he was doing his best, that he is contacting everybody, and that he wants very much to sell this initiative. Ambassador Atherton pointed out that the US would not be negotiating its own position. It was imperative for the Arabs to understand this, for it is they who must negotiate with Israel. The Secretary added that it was Begin's view that the US should not even have a position -- that we should instead be an honest broker. Mubarak then repeated his recommendation that we immediately contact Saddam Hussein, for he believed doing so would enhance Iraq's influence in the Arab League meeting.

11. The Secretary asked if Mubarak needed additional information on the President's initiative, and Mubarak indicated that he had seen the President's speech on TV and was satisfied that he knew the relevant details.

12. The Secretary told Mubarak how much he appreciated the opportunity to work with him and Abu Ghazala. Strong US/Egyptian ties were very important to us. Mubarak appreciated this, but he then reminded us that the non-aligned movement idea was Egypt's. In reviewing its history, he used India as an example of a country leaning to the Soviets, and he could not help but mention Cuba. Egypt wanted to retain good relations with the US and he promised that, being a frank person, he would let us know if something were wrong in our relationship. He said he had done so with

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regard to US actions in Lebanon, and he was very pleased with our peace initiative. He counselled that we stick with it and repeated the importance he attached to the mechanism for forthcoming negotiations. Ambassador Atherton felt that the objective was to get negotiations to begin with more than Egypt at the table, and Mubarak counselled that we put pressure on Hafez Assad.

13. Turning to the only other subject discussed in this meeting, Mubarak asked how we were doing on credits for the Egyptian armed forces for next year. The Secretary responded that all of us are working hard on it and that we would do our best to secure Congressional approval. Mubarak made an impassioned plea that we not reduce our contribution to Egypt. He would, of course, like to have an increase, but it was extremely important that the level not be reduced. Secretary Weinberger explained the Congressional timetable for consideration of the bill and said that he is hopeful, but that there would undoubtedly be a delay.

14. Mubarak then asked why we don't take Syria on our side -- "Why don't you make an effort?". When asked whether that would be possible, Mubarak thought it would be difficult, but worthwhile. Ambassador Atherton observed that we did have an Ambassador in Damascus and that we do have formal relations with Syria.

15. In response to Ambassador Atherton's request for Mubarak's views on what would be the best outcome from the Arab Summit, Mubarak responded "Nothing". The Ambassador suggested that a communique saying that the President's initiative is a positive subject for discussion might be a useful outcome. He believed that the Israelis would be happy if the Arabs were to impose pre-conditions on acceptance of the President's plan, and it was important that there not be any. Mubarak responded it would be important to explain this point to the other Arabs.

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