
MEMORANDUM

TO: DR. SAEB ERAKAT

FROM: NEGOTIATIONS SUPPORT UNIT

SUBJECT: MINUTES OF MEETING WITH ASST. SEC. DAVID WELCH (16 JUNE)

DATE: 17 JUNE 2005

On 16 June, Asst. Sec. David Welch met with Dr. Saeb Erakat at the NAD office in Jericho. Following are minutes of that meeting, which lasted approximately one hour.

ATTENDEES:

U.S.: Asst. Sec. David Welch (*DW*), Gamal Hilal (*GH*), and C.G. David Pearce (*DP*) (accompanied by two additional consulate staff).

PLO/NAD: Dr. Saeb Erakat (*SE*) and Khaled Elgindy

MINUTES:

Dr. Saeb began the meeting by briefing Welch and the others on the previous day's meeting with Dov Weisglass, in which they discussed Gaza coordination, Sharm implementation, and other agenda items for the upcoming meeting between Abu Mazen (AM) and Sharon (AS). [**NB:** Most details of the Erakat-Weisglass meeting, which are available in a previous NSU memo, are omitted here.]

SE: The meeting between Abu Mazen and Sharon will take place on 21 June. Agreement has been reached on reiterating Sharm commitments, handover of additional towns (Bethlehem and Qalqilya), and deportees. There are secret talks about prisoners imprisoned for 20+ years (Palestinians provided list of 20 names and will have an answer by Sunday).

DW: Prisoners is something we've put a lot of attention on.

SE: We gave the Israelis a memo on the need to provide a "soft landing" for Gaza [copy given to DW]. Regarding settler housing units, Sharon prefers to demolish them but is prepared to pay all clean-up costs to Palestinians – this was the first time we've gotten a definitive answer from the Israelis.

SE: We will also announce the reinstatement of all previous committees, even the TIPH (Hebron).

DP: Do you think this big committee structure will work?

SE: We need it to work. You should help us make it work.

SE: Regarding the venue [for AM-AS meeting], I suggested Jericho and the Israelis suggested AS's office in W. Jerusalem, so we agreed on a compromise: AS's ranch.

GH: Didn't AM object to this *on the record*? He did. I was there.

SE: AM is fine with this.

SE: We also agreed to discuss the issue of Shobaki and Saadat.

DW: This sounds promising.

DP: The 20+ prisoners issue is also positive.

SE: Yes, but we don't know. It's very sensitive and we don't want to say anything now.

DW: Everyone's been pressing on this [prisoners issue] for some time.

DW: Okay, so how can we help?

SE: You can help on Gaza "disengagement" – the three items we've requested for creating a "soft landing" (airport, Rafah, safe passage). The problem is, the day after, the drums of elections will bang in Israel. Everything must be done *beforehand* – otherwise, the airport will become like the Jericho handover.

DW: Is there a way to express this request in more general principles that the U.S. could articulate and either side would either accept or not dissent to?

SE: Certain measures can be taken to make it work but we should not take long-term measures.

DW: It seems to me how you define success the *day before* becomes very important.

SE: Yes. The elections have now been delayed. We should wait until the end of "disengagement" to pass the new election law, which will put elections in Dec./Jan. (60 days later). The *day after* and *day before* will reflect on those elections.

SE: Nasr Yousef says his weapons are outdated. In one incident, his men did not have enough ammunition for 10 minutes of shooting. But the Israelis are worried these weapons will one day be used against them. Gen. Ward knows what's going on. It's a matter of *security vs. access*.

DW: Gen. Ward's assessment may not be exactly what you want. The main security problems are internal. You have shootings – even here in Jericho. Excuse me for saying so, but why don't you shoot some of *those* people?

SE: The shootings in Jericho were the result of rumors about cuts in salaries for security people being trained. So they went to Abu Ala's winter house. All those who took part in the incident have been rounded up.

GH: For how long?

SE: Who knows.

DW: So what can we do?

SE: Is it an accurate assessment that confrontation is inevitable?

DW: We'll ask Gen. Ward but the issue is whether the national authority will impose what it says on "one authority, one gun". So far, we have only words.

- SE: Nasr Yousef is a very honest and determined man. He tells me confrontation is inevitable. He also tells me these militias are part of the security apparatus (“emirs”, etc.), but that 99% of Palestinians are with us and will support us. I believe him.
- GH: Even if this is accurate, the rhetoric of AM and AA is that there will be no confrontations with Hamas, no disarming, etc.
- DW: This is a very important issue for us. The Roadmap talks about “dismantling” terror organizations. So having the foreign minister of the PA come out and say that it is legal under international law to maintain weapons ... So it’s not a problem for the Israelis alone; it’s a problem *with us*.
- SE: I understand. I hear that Rice is not meeting with Qidwa.
- DW: That’s correct.
- SE: She is meeting with Dahlan. That’s good.
- DW: I was a little surprised at the amount of time the most senior PA officials are spending abroad. I know AM is spending more time there, but if Gaza Disengagement is in two months, why don’t you move the bulk of the government to Gaza?
- SE: There are arguments that given all this happening, we should not turn our back on the West Bank and actually beef up our presence there. But your point is well-taken. However, I would not raise this because the whole West Bank/Gaza connection is very sensitive right now – the idea of “Gaza first, Gaza last”.
- DW: We have no intention of separating between the two. On the contrary, we’ve gone out of our way ... Pres. Bush words during AM’s visit to Washington were significant.
- SE: It was very significant, and it helped AM a lot. It was clear that they were done by people who know what they’re talking about. We appreciate it very much.

[END]