

Exchange Mail

DATE-TIME 07/23/2000 2:18:17 PM

FROM Laskowski, Gregory J. (WHSR)

CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED

SUBJECT SR647-FORMER SYRIAN ARMY'S CONTACTS WITH THE CIA
[UNCLASSIFIED]

TO Bartlett, L. June (EXSEC)
Bash, Brooks L. (EXSEC)
Bradtke, Robert A. (EXSEC)
Cooper, Colby J. (ADMIN)
Gire, Cynthia L. (EXSEC)
Gray, Wendy E. (NSA)
Haas, Dean J. (ADMIN)
Hilliard, Brenda I. (EXSEC)
Hurwitz, Marc I. (ADMIN)
Jacobson, Tracey A. (ADMIN)
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Tarver, J. Sean (WHSR)
vanderWalde, Kurt F. (WHSR)
Williams, Robert S. (WHSR)
Yarmchuk, Christina H. (WHSR)

CARBON_COPY

TEXT_BODY

FOR RIEDEL AND MALLEY

TRANSLATED_ATTACHMENT

SR647.doc
TIME OF TRANSMISSION: TIME OF RECEIPT:
WHITE HOUSE
SITUATION ROOM

PRECEDENCE
CLASSIFICATION:
RELEASER:

DATE/TIME:
231800Z JUL 00

MESSAGE #:
SR647

FROM:
WHSR
PHONE:

ROOM:

SUBJECT:
FORMER SYRIAN ARMY'S CONTACTS WITH THE CIA
PAGES:
5

PLEASE DELIVER TO:

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AF-1

BERGER

STEINBERG

CAMP DAVID

RIEDEL

MALLEY

SPECIAL DELIVERY INSTRUCTIONS/REMARKS:

F3159

FBIS 159JUL23 UNCLAS

SYRIA: TAKE 1 OF 2--Report on Former Syrian Army Chief's
Contacts With

CIA Officials

GM0007210036 Paris Al-Watan al-Arabi in Arabic 21 Jul 00 pp 16-
17

[Report by Riyadh Alam-al-Din from London]

[FBIS Translated Text] Western reports based on information

received from the United States have revealed that former Syrian Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Hikmat al-Shihabi, who has been living in

Los Angeles for some time, has made some contacts in Washington. Al-

Shihabi made these contacts about the future of the situation in Syria with US military friends, influential parties in the National Security Council, and CIA officials in late June. However, these moves were met with advice to keep quiet and avoid escalation, at least for the time being.

The reports, which were circulated on a narrow security scale in more than one European capital, said that the US meeting with Lt. Gen. Al-Shihabi was held at a villa near the CIA headquarters in Virginia

in an area that lies halfway between Langley (the CIA headquarters) and the Pentagon. The meeting lasted from 12:15 until 4:30 Washington

time on Friday, 30 June. It was attended by the official in charge of the Middle East in the CIA, an unknown personality from the State Department,

and some assistants to the official in charge of the Middle East in the CIA.

According to the reports, Al-Shihabi took with him a Samsonite briefcase, which reportedly had files in it. The files contained very dangerous information about the situation in Syria during the reign of the late President Hafiz al-Asad and prospects for the new reign under the leadership of Dr. Bashar al-Asad. The files also contained information about secret contacts held with some Arab and foreign organization

s. Information citing the reports said one of the most important files Al-Shihabi carried with him has to do with the Islamists' new standing

in Syria.

Information leaking from the report says that the dialogue between Lt. Gen. Al-Shihabi and US security officials near Langley dealt

with Syria's future. The dialogue also dealt with the extent to which the new president can control the situation and the future of the Syrian

army in the new reign. The US officials were careful to ask questions about the new trends in the Syrian leadership, especially the new faces,

and about the status of Lt. Gen. Ali Duba, Lt. Gen. Muhammad al-Khuli,

and former military commanders and the extent to which they can

influence
the new situation following their dismissal.

The report says that Lt. Gen. Al-Shihabi was asked about the situation of the Islamists during the review of the Islamists' position, and whether it was likely that they would play any role in the future. Al-Shihabi replied that the [Muslim] Brotherhood was the weakest party at present and that new Islamic groups are the ones who are active at present. He added that regional and international parties will discover how strong these groups are when the time comes. He made use of a file in his briefcase, which contained the names of these groups, their places of influence, and names of leading figures in them.

Al-Shihabi also spoke at great length about economic conditions and the difficulties Syria suffers from, especially since there are major intentions to carry out modernization, which carries a heavy cost.

He warned that Islamic groups might find a loophole in economic conditions to create some kind of instability soon to assert their ability to take action. Following the end of the meeting, the CIA official in charge

of the Middle East promised to arrange a meeting between Al-Shihabi

and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger in spite of the circumstances, which Washington is experiencing now. These circumstances include the presidential elections and the possibility that important changes will take place in the [US] Administration and the top echelon.

As for Al-Shihabi's meeting with some military commanders at the nearby Pentagon building on the same day, it was more of a ceremonial meeting than a discussion of practical issues. During the meeting, Al-Shihabi extended congratulations on the US Independence Day, which was four days away, because the US Army does not have the right to interfere in political affairs, especially foreign policy.

The Western report went on to say that one week after the first meeting at the villa near Langley, CIA Director George Tenet called

Lt. Gen. Al-Shihabi. Tenet told Al-Shihabi that an officer from the CIA in Los Angeles will visit him carrying a classified message from the CIA Central Command. According to the report, the message

expressed
the wishes of higher authorities in the US Government that Al-Shihabi

not take any action or do anything, which disturbs the new leadership
in Syria or embarrasses the US Government. The message also

expressed

the hope Lt. Gen. Al-Shihabi would not sever all ties with Damascus.
The message said that if it is possible to hold certain dialogues, then
this would be better. The message expressed Washington's gratitude
for

Al-Shihabi's confidence in it. However, it also affirmed that
Washington

is in constant contact with Damascus. The US command expressed its
conviction

that the new leadership in Syria needs some time to demonstrate how
serious it is about dealing with the situation in the region. The US
command said that there is an inclination on the part of the US
Government,

which was reached after consultations with influential Arab countries,
to the effect that it is appropriate under the current circumstances
to back and support Syria's new president. This is meant to enable him

to make the achievements and deal with the developments that
concern

the region as a whole. The carrier of the message of the US command
said: We are informing you of this, just as we have informed Lebanese

groups, which are active in Washington and which we have asked to
wait

and deal with the new situation in Damascus. (MORE) 23 JUL 1548z
FBIS

What attracts attention in the report, which reached Western
circles, is the reference it made, to the effect that the CIA monitoring
agencies monitored a letter addressed to Lt. Gen. Al-Shihabi. The
letter,

whose source is Beirut, was sent to Al-Shihabi at the e-mail address
of one of his friends in Los Angeles two days after the meeting in
Washington.

The report did not say whether the US agencies decoded the encrypted

words in which the letter was drafted. However, the agencies found
out

who sent the letter.

The information says that Al-Shihabi has indeed suspended
his activity and contacts. European sources said Al-Shihabi apparently

based his moves on an assessment of the US position in the wake of
the

failure of the summit between US President Bill Clinton and the late

President Hafiz al-Asad in Geneva. At that stage, information said that Washington was preparing scenarios for retaliation against Damascus.

At the time, Al-Watan al-Arabi (issue no. 1209 on 5 May 2000), revealed

a meeting, which was held at Sandy Berger's office at the White House

and which was attended by security officials and members of the team

that accompanied Clinton to Geneva. The meeting was held based on a

request and clear instructions from the US President, in which he insisted

that his senior advisers and political and military officials of his administration conduct a review of all Syrian-US contacts. The US President

also insisted on conducting an assessment of the Syrian-Israeli track and the Geneva summit following the failure of this summit. The objective

of this is to present a clear, detailed plan to the US Administration and the President personally concerning the future method of dealing with Syria. This is meant to be able to adopt a new strategy to force Damascus to accept the proposals that were presented by Clinton in Geneva.

It is also meant to compensate for the failure of the summit and take revenge for the US President for the effect of the setback and blow. US officials and analysts were unanimous that Clinton suffered this setback and blow at the hands of the Syrian president.

The source, which is familiar with what took place in the discussions of the session of the National Security [Council], said the discussions were conducted in a cloudy atmosphere and open hostility

against Syria. Samuel Berger, architect of the new US strategy in the Middle East and the strongest man in the US Administration, has started

to spread this atmosphere since Clinton's failure in Geneva was blamed

on Albright and Ross. Apparently, Berger was careful to draw up a "plan

of action" for a meeting on a retaliatory course in a manner that it was unthinkable to examine any ways to entice Syria to return to the negotiations, but rather to force it to do so. That is why Berger was quick to ask the attendees to present suggestions and scenarios for the best, fastest ways of dealing "a strong blow to the Syrian regime" that forces it to go back on its rejection, accept negotiation, and sign on the basis of the points presented by the US President.

However, the death of President Hafiz al-Asad and the preparatory

contacts that followed it encouraged Washington to postpone the retaliatory policy until the new president's inclinations emerge. However, in the opinion of Western sources, Lt. Gen. Al-Shihabi--through his understanding of the previous situation--apparently sought to make political efforts in the US arena. This prompted the US command to advise him to wait and give the new reign a chance.

Lt. Gen. Hikmat al-Shihabi is one of the prominent Syrian leading figures, who had enjoyed the confidence of President Hafiz al-Asad since 1970. He is also one of the qualified military men. He held

important military and security posts. He was the army's deputy chief of staff. In 1974, he assumed his post of chief of staff, which was held by Maj. Gen. Yusuf Shakkur. Al-Shihabi kept his post as chief of

staff until he was pensioned off by President Al-Asad. Al-Shihabi has been a member of the [Ba'th] Party's Regional Command since the seventh regional congress in 1980.

Two [number as published] years ago, Lt. Gen. Al-Shihabi led the Syrian military delegation during the peace negotiations in Maryland in the United States. These negotiations lasted more than 20 days and ended with a pledge by the Rabin government to withdraw to the 4 June [1967] borders. The document of this pledge was deposited with the US Administration. President Al-Asad had announced this document recently.
[Description of Source: Paris Al-Watan al-Arabi in Arabic -- Pro-Saudi news magazine]

Exchange Mail

DATE-TIME 07/23/2000 2:20:06 PM
FROM Laskowski, Gregory J. (WHSR)
CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED
SUBJECT SR648-SETTLERS SAY THEY WILL HUNKER DOWN IN CASE OF PEACE DEAL [UNCLASSIFIED]

TO

Bartlett, L. June (EXSEC)
Bash, Brooks L. (EXSEC)
Bradtke, Robert A. (EXSEC)
Cooper, Colby J. (ADMIN)
Gire, Cynthia L. (EXSEC)
Gray, Wendy E. (NSA)
Haas, Dean J. (ADMIN)
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Broadwick, Bonnie . (WHSR)

Cheramie, Don E. (WHSR)
Crowder, Stevan D. (WHSR/STP)
Ehrendreich, Joel (WHSR)
Erdahl, Douglas M. (WHSR)
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Gentile, Donald J. (WHSR)
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CARBON_COPY

TEXT_BODY

FOR MALLEY AND RIEDEL

TRANSLATED_ATTACHMENT

SR648.doc
TIME OF TRANSMISSION: TIME OF RECEIPT:
WHITE HOUSE
SITUATION ROOM

PRECEDENCE
CLASSIFICATION:
RELEASER:

DATE/TIME:
231810Z JUL 00

MESSAGE #:
SR648

FROM:
WHSR
PHONE:

ROOM:

SUBJECT:
SETTLERS SAY THEY WILL HUNKER DOWN IN CASE OF
PEACE
PAGES:
3

PLEASE DELIVER TO:

LOCATION

DELIVER TO

ROOM

PHONE

CAMP

MALLEY

RIEDEL

SPECIAL DELIVERY INSTRUCTIONS/REMARKS:

a0491

^BC-Israel-Summit,0765

^Settlers say they will hunker down in case of peace deal

^With BC-Mideast Summit, Bjt

^AP Photos JRL114,115

^By DINA KRAFT= ^Associated Press Writer=

JERUSALEM (AP) Peace deal or no peace deal, Jewish settlers

in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip said Sunday that they will refuse

to leave their homes no matter what is decided at the Camp David summit.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak, conferring at the summit with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, has said that up to one-quarter, or 50,000, of the 200,000 settlers may be left outside the umbrella of Israeli sovereignty

as part of an agreement.

Such a deal would give the Palestinians the state they seek, but Jewish settlers consider the land their biblical birthright.

Settler leader Zeev Hever said most of the settlers will stay put even if an agreement stipulates that they have to evacuate their homes.

"We are not scared off. We are going to stay on the ground,"

Hever told Israel's army radio, "I'm not sure that everyone (will stay), but the overwhelming majority will."

Hever did not say whether settlers would physically resist evacuation efforts by Israelis soldiers.

The settlers have said, however, that they are preparing for the worst, including the possibility of violent confrontations with local Palestinians. They have asked the government for more bulletproof

vests and some settlements have stocked up on battle gear including night-vision equipment.

About a dozen members of Betar, a hard-line youth group, brought a herd of sheep to the prime minister's residence Sunday. "We will not go like sheep to the slaughter," chanted the group as they held onto the sheep with leashes.

Whether or not the summit succeeds, Israeli security officials are preparing for various potentially violent scenarios.

Environment Minister Dalia Itzik said that at Sunday's cabinet meeting, the head of the Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, told ministers that there had been threats on the lives of both Barak and Arafat from hard-line extremists. The intelligence chief added that

to date there had been no attempts to carry out these threats, Itzik said.

Eldad Yaniv, a spokesman for Barak, said that the prime minister had spent most of the weekend alone in his cabin grappling with the choices he would have to make in the week ahead.

"We are at the beginning of a week that is both a historic and fateful crossroads for Israel this is not just a phrase this is really what is happening," Yaniv said.

The Haaretz newspaper reported that Barak had reviewed a series of polls he commissioned on the public's willingness to accept proposals

made at Camp David.

According to the report, the polls showed that Israelis substantially favored a "package" deal that would include far-ranging concessions,

apparently including giving up some sovereignty in Jerusalem a

heretofore

taboo subject. The report did not publish precise numbers.

Leaked reports that Israel would consider sharing Jerusalem have intrigued Palestinians. The leader of the militant Islamic Hamas group, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, reiterated a long-dormant pledge to call a temporary truce with Israel should a peace deal be signed that answers

all the Palestinians' demands; east Jerusalem as their sovereign capital,

a state in the entire West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the right of return for its refugees.

Barak associates have said that Israel might accept a U.S.

bridging proposal that would extend limited Palestinian sovereignty to parts of east Jerusalem.

Justice Minister Yossi Beilin, an architect of the breakthrough peace accords that led to the marathon summit outside Washington, led

a tour through traditionally Arab east Jerusalem Sunday, captured by Israel during the 1967 Mideast war.

During the tour Beilin said it was time for Israel to unburden itself from controlling some of Palestinian neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city.

"What is most important is to see the lack of importance and meaning of these villages for Israel. They fall outside the core of our Jerusalem and we have to differentiate between our Jerusalem and the Jerusalem that is not ours and never was," said Beilin. The seemingly intractable issue of Jerusalem nearly derailed the summit last week. Barak has pledged to keep the holy city united although the Palestinians say they will only sign an agreement that gives them full sovereignty of the city's eastern sector.

APE- 007/23/2000 13:51:10

Exchange Mail

DATE-TIME 07/23/2000 3:18:20 PM
FROM Laskowski, Gregory J. (WHSR)
CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED
SUBJECT SR650-PLO OFFICAL SAYS NO PROGRESS [UNCLASSIFIED]
TO

Bartlett, L. June (EXSEC)
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TEXT_BODY

TRANSLATED_ATTACHMENT

SR650.doc
TIME OF TRANSMISSION: TIME OF RECEIPT:
WHITE HOUSE
SITUATION ROOM

PRECEDENCE
CLASSIFICATION:
RELEASER:

DATE/TIME:
231900Z JUL 00

MESSAGE #:
SR650

FROM:
WHSR
PHONE:

ROOM:

SUBJECT:
PLO OFFICIAL SAYS NO PROGRESS
PAGES:
2

PLEASE DELIVER TO:

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RIEDEL

MALLEY

SPECIAL DELIVERY INSTRUCTIONS/REMARKS:

F3169

FBIS 169JUL23 UNCLAS

WEST BANK & GAZA STRIP: Palestinian Official Says 'No
Progress' in Camp

David Talks

GM0007230140 Ramallah Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1800 GMT 23
Jul 00

[FBIS Translated Text] Al-Tayyib Abd-al-Rahim, secretary

general of the Presidency, has said that no progress has been achieved so far in the Camp David summit, particularly in the basic issues. This came in a speech Abd-al-Rahim delivered on behalf of the president at the celebration held by the Egyptian representative office this evening

on the glorious July revolution anniversary. The secretary general of the Presidency stressed the need for complying with the international legitimacy resolutions and with the terms of reference of the peace process. [Description of Source: Ramallah Voice of Palestine in Arabic

-- Official radio station of the Palestinian Authority led by Yasir Arafat]

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(ENDALL) 23 JUL 1853z FBIS

Exchange Mail

DATE-TIME 07/23/2000 3:19:12 PM

FROM Laskowski, Gregory J. (WHSR)

CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED

SUBJECT SR651-ISRAELOBSTACLE TO CAMP DAVID SUCCESS
[UNCLASSIFIED]

TO Bartlett, L. June (EXSEC)
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FOR RIEDEL AND MALLEY

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WHITE HOUSE
SITUATION ROOM

PRECEDENCE
CLASSIFICATION:
RELEASER:

DATE/TIME:
231913Z JUL 00

MESSAGE #:
SR651

FROM:
WHSR
PHONE:

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SUBJECT:
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ISRAEL: TAKE 1 OF 3--Ashrawi: Israel Obstacle to Camp David
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Arabic 22 Jul
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[Text of Interview With Hanan Ashrawi, Member of The Palestinian

Legislative Council, by Iman Masarwah in Ramallah on 22 July]
[FBIS Translated Text] [Masarwah] How do you view the
future of the peace settlement after Camp David?

[Ashrawi] There is no guarantee that the Camp David summit
will succeed because of the difficulty of the topics under discussion.
These topics are crucial for the Palestinian people and for the region.
The main obstacle standing in the way of the future negotiations is
the Israeli mentality and policy. The Israelis are trying to dictate
concessions to the Palestinians. They came to Camp David carrying
their
well-known red lines. Meanwhile, the Israeli government is
demanding
a permanent solution on the basis of these red lines. Unless the Israelis
change their strategy and orientations, there can be no real solution.

Baraq wants to end the conflict with the Palestinians. However,
he is not prepared to discuss the reasons for this conflict on the basis
of international legitimacy and Palestinian rights. He probably can
get a formal and transient solution, but he will not get real peace.
I believe that there is danger in reaching partial or incomplete
solutions.
In the final analysis, these partial or incomplete solutions will
boomerang
and the situation in the region will explode.

[Masarwah] What is the alternative in case the Camp David
summit fails to reach a solution?

[Ashrawi] The terms "failure" or "success" are relative terms.
However, it is clear that US President Bill Clinton wants to attain
an accomplishment, even if it was a formal or partial settlement, to
forestall collapse. If the door is kept open for some kind of an
agreement,
such as a framework agreement, or a transient agreement, or another
agreement of any sort, such an agreement could be presented as an
indication
of the success for the summit.

There are two types of failure. The first type is when no
convergence point could be reached. In this case, other options should
be considered. Moreover, the domestic house should be put in order
again,
a reply to the failure should be made, and preparations should be
underway
for another attempt.

The second type of failure is serious, in my opinion. In

case an agreement is reached under pressure and is rejected by the Palestinian people, it will be the people who will pay the price, because it will be them who will implement the agreement. If the people are not convinced of the solution, they will not accept it or implement it. This will lead to further domestic and external imbalance. Thus the agreements should be fair if the people were to accept them.

[Masarwah] The Israelis are preparing themselves for the phase that will follow the failure of the Camp David summit. They are supplying the settlers and the army with weapons. How do you view this?

[Ashrawi] This is part of the Israeli policy, which is incompatible with the requirements of peace. The Israelis are still opting for the military solution. The reinforcement of the army and the settlements and other military preparations could lead to confrontations that will have grave consequences. These preparations are part of the provocative actions that are intended to generate confrontations. Supplying the settlers with laser-guided weapons and illuminating bombs and training them on their use are part of the preparations for the confrontation. Nonetheless, the Israelis will be confronting an unarmed Palestinian people.

I believe that this kind of action is not only provocative and illegal, but it also constitutes a distortion of the Israeli situation. It means the formation of outlaw groups who will challenge the political decision-makers. Leniency with the Israeli settlers led to the murder of the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin. Such developments will create a dangerous situation on the domestic front whereby secure and stable life would vanish and outlaw militias would emerge. On top of all this, all these military preparations and fortifications are intended to confront an unarmed people, not a regular army. This will produce grave consequences for the Palestinians and the Israelis. We should assert here as we have always done that the Palestinian people are not an easy prey to be devoured.

[Masarwah] Why is there a media blackout imposed on the negotiations?

[Ashrawi] This negotiating style has been started by the

United States as a result of studies on the politics of negotiations. According to this method, total seclusion is necessary and no external influences are allowed to interfere in the negotiations. Therefore, this style of negotiations is based on total seclusion and media blackout

and on not allowing full participation in the negotiations. In other words, political pluralism is not allowed to express itself.

I find it very weird and astonishing that the United States, which claims to be a democratic country, has rejected the participation

in the Camp David summit of the PLO Executive Committee members, who constitute the foundation for the Palestinian decision making.

I am not part of the negotiating process. The head of the Palestinian Authority [PA] requested that I help him together with the Palestinian delegation outside Camp David, and this was my task. Otherwise, I would

have been isolated like the remaining members of the delegation.

Because

of the nature of my assignment, I was freer than the remaining official

Palestinian participants. However, the situation for the Israelis was completely different.

The Israelis have sent to Camp David a media team of well over 50 persons. They have also sent a number of ministers, in addition

to the permanent team, which consists of advisers. This has enabled the Israelis to do their job and to control the media, despite my persistent

work and attempts to convey the Palestinian views at the Camp David summit.

[Masarwah] What were the substantive questions, which constituted the crux of the differences with the Israeli side?

[Ashrawi] I believe that the crux of the differences was over all the questions. There is nothing that could be called a partial agreement because all matters are interlocked. We cannot talk about Jerusalem without talking about the borders, water, the refugees or security. Therefore, I can say that all points were points of differences.

As far as the issue of the Palestinian refugees is concerned, Israel has refused to shoulder its ethical, legal, and humanitarian responsibilities or to recognize their right of return or payment of reparations according to UN Resolution 194. Israel is justifying its attitude by saying that the refugee issue is one that involves reparations

and this is the responsibility of all countries, not of Israel's alone.

As far as the borders are concerned, Israel has refused to recognize UN Security Council Resolution 241. It even unilaterally demanded amendments to the resolution and sought to impose the fait accompli. It also wants to annex the settlements. We believe that the settlements are illegal. Furthermore, they have been built on Palestinian land. The idea of the exchange of land, which was raised by the Israeli delegation, was not equitable. It was 1 to 3 in Israel's favor, particularly as Gaza is over-populated and an exchange for the Negev land would be disadvantageous for the Palestinians.

As far as the issue of Jerusalem is concerned. It is the issue that brings the situation to a head. Israel bases its policy toward Jerusalem on its three well-known "no's," and on the assumption that Jerusalem is a unified city. This policy and assumption are contradictory with international legitimacy and leave no room for any solution.

The Palestinians, meanwhile, are basing their position on the fact that east Jerusalem is part of the territories occupied in 1967. However, the Israelis began to create an alternative to Jerusalem

by expanding its borders and returning some of the suburbs to the Palestinians

. These ploys cannot deceive anyone, particularly the fact that Israel wants to give the Palestinians the functional responsibilities of the Arab suburbs of Jerusalem without giving them the right of sovereignty over these suburbs. The Israelis even proposed the creation of two municipalities of Jerusalem, but subject to the greater Israeli municipality of Jerusalem.

The Israelis also wanted to divide the old city of Jerusalem functionally and to deal with the old city as the place accommodating the holy shrines. They would allow the Palestinian flag to be hoisted on the Muslim holy places, such as the al-Aqsa Mosque. They would also allow the opening of a road for worshippers between Abu-Dis and the al-Aqsa Mosque. This was an important reason why the Palestinians turned down these notions. Moreover, some suggestions were raised to postpone discussion of the Jerusalem issue and to conclude a functional agreement.

However, we do realize that there is no guarantee for anything that is postponed. This is why the postponement is dangerous.

[Masarwah] What are the Palestinian options for the solutions proposed by the Israelis at the Camp David summit?

[Ashrawi] The Palestinian options are clear and simple. We have made historic concessions when we accepted only 22 percent of the land area of historic Palestine. Up till this moment, the Israelis have not appreciated the importance of this compromise and flexibility. We have spoken about the 1967 Palestine, not the Palestine before that. We have entered the negotiations with the minimum of demands. We have not made any maneuvers concerning these demands. Nevertheless, they still want us to sign the so-called "golden signature." If Baraq wants to terminate the conflict, he should tackle the causes of this conflict.

Our position is clear. We are committed to the resolutions of the international legitimacy; namely, Resolution 194 on the Palestinian refugees, Resolution 242 on the borders, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the UN resolutions relevant to Jerusalem and the settlements. As an Awqaf institution and individuals, we own more than 70 percent of the land area of the holy city of Jerusalem.

There is another important issue. They are talking about security from a purely military point of view, as if they want to achieve peace while they are preparing for war. The Palestinians also want security, but peace should come first. Security cannot be achieved through militarization, armies and weapons, but by tackling the root causes of the conflict. In Lebanon, the security belt proved to be futile.

[Masarwah] What is your perception of the future relationship between the opposition and the PA if the negotiations fail?

[Ashrawi] It is not necessarily failure that should determine this relationship. I believe that political pluralism is very much desired. I say that there is political pluralism, and this is our right. We are

not a people who should live under a centralized repressive regime, and will not accept to live as such. These differences of views should interact. They should interact in a legitimate way and our concepts should be devised on the basis of an integrated Palestinian perception.

We should forge national unity if we are to have a national consensus. This should be done on the basis of reaching a national understanding.

The opposition should play a constructive role in forging this national

unity. We should build our state on the foundation stone of our institutions,

their efficiency, and the laws governing these institutions.

The best way to do this is through free elections, starting from the local government and proceeding to parliament and to the presidency.

These elections should be fair and free. All rights and freedoms should

be guaranteed, including the right of political and intellectual affiliation

and the right to differ with others. Since national interest is our ultimate goal, we will need all kinds of thought. We should respect these differences, which should be taken into consideration when the general Palestinian position is formed.

In case of failure of the Camp David negotiations, inter-Palestinian cooperation should be strengthened. Everyone should shoulder

his responsibility. Therefore, I strongly argued for the presence of PLO members in the negotiations, because the responsibility is political.

I believe that the situation requires that we should unify our stands until we reach the point of national consensus.

[Masarwah] How do you view the US role?

[Ashrawi] The US role came as a result of Israeli pressure

It also came as a result of an Israeli and US need. The US role is linked to the strategic alliance between Israel and the United States and to the role that Israel plays in shaping US policy.

Although Clinton and Albright are seeking to reach an agreement, they are biased in Israel's favor. It is very clear that the pressure is concentrated on the Palestinians. We have to understand and evaluate

things on a rational basis. We also should call for formulating a future strategy that insists on the equality of rights.

Many people have viewed the United States as our savior,

or as the country which will re-arrange the conditions of the region. I believe that we should accept the positive challenge. We should present our issues firmly and confidently, enter into this strategic dialogue, and regulate Palestinian and Arab action.

We should work on this dialogue and on intellectual and political engagement, which is weak now. We should strive to strengthen this dialogue and engagement. We need the whole world. We should not exhaust our resources, but should work with the US public on the basis of the common values.

We should have self-confidence, because we are the lawful owners of a right and a cause, and therefore, we should not be afraid.

[Description of Source: London Quds Press (Internet Version-WWW) in Arabic

-- Independent news agency headquartered in the UK; devotes special attention to Palestinian events and Arab-Israeli peace process; received via e-mail] Attachments: qudspress.htm (Attachment not included)

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^BC-MIDEAST-SUMMIT-ARAFAT

^Arafat enlists Arab and Moslem support on Jerusalem

By Wafa Amr

THURMONT, Md., July 23 (Reuters) - With one eye on his people and the other on fellow Arab and Moslem leaders, Yasser Arafat is determined

to resist pressure at the Camp David talks to give up claims on Jerusalem,

the toughest issue blocking a final deal.

Palestinians officials said on Sunday that Arafat's unwavering determination to end 33 years of Israeli occupation of Arab East Jerusalem

was strengthened by a flurry of political activity in the Middle East by some Arab leaders on Jerusalem.

Arafat insists he has no mandate from the Arab and Moslem world to give away what they see as Palestinian rights in the city. Officials said he had enlisted the support of Arab and Moslem rulers to fend off U.S. and Israeli pressure to show flexibility on Jerusalem.

``A clear Arab position on Jerusalem will back Arafat's stance at Camp David. Concrete steps must be taken by the Arabs and Moslems

to show Clinton that Arafat's ability to manoeuvre is nil," a senior Palestinian official said.

Progress at the Camp David talks hinges on resolving the status of the city sacred to Jews, Moslems and Christians.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak travelled to Saudi Arabia on Sunday where he met King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah on the troubled

Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

His one-day visit came hours before the Camp David summit was expected to enter a decisive phase with the return of U.S. President

Bill Clinton on Sunday after a three-day absence.

Palestinian sources said the Saudi-Egyptian meetings focused on the Camp David deadlock over Jerusalem.

Western diplomats said they were worried the Arab move would tie Arafat's hands.

"We will not change our position on Jerusalem, even if that means we leave here without an agreement," a senior Palestinian official

in touch with negotiators at Camp David told Reuters.

ARAFAT UNDER PRESSURE TO BEND ON JERUSALEM

He said Arafat was coming under "tremendous U.S. pressure to be more flexible on the issue of Jerusalem, but we stand firm on our stance that unless we get full sovereignty over East Jerusalem, there will be no peace and no deal."

Barak continues to insist on full Israeli sovereignty over the holy city.

It is one of several emotive final status issues that have inflamed the 52-year-old Arab-Israeli conflict.

Israel occupied East Jerusalem, along with the rest of the West Bank, and Gaza, in the 1967 war. It swiftly annexed it in a move

rejected by the international community.

One official said Arafat, secluded at Camp David, had been worried at the lack of Arab and Moslem public support earlier on in the talks as he single-handedly fought pressure to give up claims on East Jerusalem.

Before leaving Japan, where he attended a Group of Eight economic summit, Clinton said the leaders were working hard at Camp

David and that some progress had been made in talks on the core issues

of borders, refugees, settlers and Jerusalem.

But a senior Israeli source told Reuters that despite Clinton's optimism, the mood in the Israeli delegation was sombre. "Barak is in a very gloomy mood," the source said late Saturday.

Hassan Abdel-Rahman, the Palestine Liberation Organisation representative in Washington said: "The talks are still difficult and there is no progress because Israel continues its attempts to change the agreed terms of reference of the peace process, i.e. U.N. resolution

242."

The resolution called on Israel to withdraw from territories occupied during the 1967 Middle East war. Israel contended it did not mean all the territory.

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