

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTONINFORMATION

September 10, 1970

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *AK*

SUBJECT: Mid-Day Report on the Hijacking Situation

The following are the major developments since my memorandum to you this morning on the hijacking situation.

Negotiations

The PFLP has conveyed a provisional counter proposal to Rochat. You will recall that, with our encouragement, the British, Germans and Swiss all agreed to hand over the fedayeen in their custody only if all the passengers were released. The PFLP now proposes to permit the immediate evacuation of all the women, children and sick from the three aircraft (one report also says from the hotel) in return for the release of the fedayeen held by the British, Germans and Swiss (7 persons plus one corpse). The remaining male hostages would be released only in exchange for a yet unspecified number of fedayeen held by the Israelis. This counter proposal is to be confirmed this afternoon after clearance by the PFLP with all the splinter groups of the fedayeen. The PFLP now confirms that the deadline on its ultimatum is 6:30 p.m. EDT Saturday.

Rochat thinks that such an initial evacuation would be a positive step and would perhaps even assist in the negotiations for the men. He points out, however, that this would mean that the remaining male hostages would be used to exact from the Israelis the release of probably about 600 Palestinians. Our embassy in Tel Aviv comments that the Israelis will not necessarily oppose the proposal because of its humanitarian aspect and lack of discrimination by nationality or religion. The most important factor, however, may be the precise commitment required by Israel in releasing the fedayeen prisoners.

The ambassadors of western states involved, including the U. S., are meeting in Bern this afternoon to consider the counter-proposal.

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO, Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
June 22, 2004

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Condition of Passengers

The condition of the hostages at the site of the aircraft has improved somewhat from yesterday with the arrival of further provisions and sanitation facilities. Health conditions are expected to improve further with the transport to the landing strip later today of additional Red Cross medical supplies and equipment. We are assured by the Red Cross that those passengers still on board the aircraft are physically well, although showing signs of strain and tension.

As for the passengers now in the hotel in Amman, their supply of comestibles is supposedly adequate for 10 more days and the utilities are still in operation. An earlier report that the hotel had fallen into the hands of the fedayeen has fortunately proved incorrect, although, of course, the fedayeen are still treating them as hostages for bargaining purposes. Some passengers from the BOAC plane that was hijacked yesterday have begun to arrive at the hotel.

Situation in Amman

Amman was reported by the embassy to be quiet and subdued this morning. Experience, however, has shown that if there is to be shooting it does not usually begin until middle or late afternoon. There was only the sparse and occasional shooting in Amman this morning.

Two embassy officers are still missing and presumably in the hands of the fedayeen. A third officer, earlier reported missing, has turned up unharmed and was only unable to contact the embassy yesterday rather than having been picked up by the fedayeen.