

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL INFORMATION
6526

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September 5, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: DR. KISSINGER
FROM: SAMUEL M. HOSKINSON 
SUBJECT: Munich Situation as of 5:30 EDT

The latest unconfirmed news report is that the terrorists and the hostages have been taken to the Munich airport. No further details are yet available. The terrorists reportedly continue to stand firm on maintaining that the remaining Israeli hostages will be killed unless Israel agrees to release some 200 Arabs currently under detention for political offenses. Meanwhile, all Olympic competitive events have been suspended pending the outcome of the negotiations and final decisions on the continuation of the games reportedly will be made tomorrow.

Our embassy in Tel Aviv reports that the Israeli public appears stunned. They expect that if more Israeli lives are lost the reaction in Israel will be extremely bitter and could transcend the fedayeen issue and bring on a souring of public attitudes toward any efforts to reach peace with the Arabs. The West Germans, at all times a sensitive subject in Israel, also could be expected to come in for their share of Israeli bitterness. Nor does the embassy think that the Israelis are very likely to forgive their own security forces for allowing an attack on the team, given reported prior warnings of the German security services.

State is at a loss over how to apply effective leverage on the terrorists. The best they could come up with today was a cable to the major European capitals plus Jidda and Kuwait (the big financial contributors to the fedayeen) calling on them to use whatever influence they may have in Arab capitals or elsewhere to bring pressure to bear on the terrorists. Secretary Rogers and Department spokesmen have also made the appropriate remarks of outrage in public. We have offered our assistance to the Israelis, but so far they have not asked.

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CLASSIFIED BY Samuel M. Hoskinson
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO
YEAR INTERVALS AND DECLASSIFIED ON DEC 31, 1990

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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[Handwritten initials/signature]

ACTION
September 6, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: DR. KISSINGER
FROM: SAMUEL M. HOSKINSON
SUBJECT: Munich Killings

[Handwritten signature: Hoskins]
[Handwritten signature: Kissinger]

As you know, all of the Israeli Olympians held hostage by the fedayeen terrorists were killed last night when West German security forces attempted to kill or capture the terrorists at an airport on the outskirts of Munich. This is by far the most dramatic and outrageous incident since fedayeen radicals hijacked five aircraft over Labor Day weekend two years ago.

Attached is a memo which you can provide the President for his use during the meeting this morning with you, Secretary Rogers and others on this incident. It stresses the operational measures we might take at this point. The hard reality, however, is that there is really very little we, or any major power, can do to rectify this situation or make sure that it will not happen again. We can attempt to focus world moral indignation and press for tighter international security measures, but we will remain vulnerable to the dedicated extremist.

This being the case, it would seem best at this point to strike a statesmanlike posture; deeply concerned but not over reacting. We will want to do everything reasonably possible to help avert similar tragedies in the future, but should not let our sense of outrage lead us into actions which could jeopardize other important interests which we have in the Middle East. We will want to identify with Israeli sorrow and bitterness, but it would not be in our interest to do this in a way that closes off our options to work with both Arabs and Israelis to produce a peace settlement.

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