

Meeting Minutes
Erekat – Otte
February 6 2007
NAD Jericho

Initials of frequently mentioned names:

AM: President Mahmoud Abbas
SE: Dr. Saeb Erekat
CR: Sec. Condoleeza Rice
JS: Exc. Javier Solana
KD: Gen. Keith Dayton
MO: Amb. Marc Otte
BM: Exc. Banki Moon
ES: Gen. Ephraim Sneh
TT: Turjman & Turbowicz

MO:

Secretary Rice (CR) is committed to pursue the concept of “building the house and then furnishing it through negotiations”. She described this to the President (AM) in the private meeting during the last trip. Solana (JS) will brief you in detail. There are no expectations of ambitious efforts: best expectation is for the trilateral to kick off a process with US facilitation to allow the two sides to elaborate the “house” that can then be “reverse engineered” with negotiations.

The idea is to establish a Palestinian state, and purposefully avoid permanent status. The US has agreed to have the Quartet involved at every step. CR will shuttle on to Berlin from the Middle East on her next visit. The Europeans will accompany this effort with concrete contributions in the short term: SSR assistance, capacity building, coordinating role on governance. General Dayton’s (KD) role is on security and the AMA. TIM is a flexible mechanism which can be modified to provide more “windows” for funding, in accordance with the vision of AM.

KD believes that SSR should be based on strong civil police supported by a gendarmerie type of force. This is basically the NSF and “in a way” the PG.

I met Ephraim Sneh (ES) on the police issues. We have a team of 13 plus locals. If you want us to work with the USSC our mission needs to be accredited (armoured cars, coordination with IDF, freedom of movement etc). ES has been talking to KD and has promised to intervene.

The “political headline” is that we should move from crisis management to conflict resolution, the goal being end of occupation. The US has no clear definition or concept of end of occupation. The US does NOT want to talk about the other parameters at this time.

The other “headlines” are that the “method is negotiation” and that the Quartet should be more engaged.

SE: Can you clarify where the US currently stands on the National Unity Government (NUG)?

MO: US position is identical to Israel: It is not sufficient to have the “right programme” – if the Prime Minister is Hamas it won’t fly.

SE: I will meet with CR this week and will have a direct connection to Mecca.

MO: CR is more flexible now. There are increasing tensions between the State Dept. and the White House, especially tensions with Abrams.

I asked Abrams about chances of success. He said we have to protect Olmert and his political survival. He said that “bold steps” are therefore difficult – we need to support both leaders for their domestic standing.

Even AM is “nervous” about engaging on permanent status, according to CR.

SE: Who is saying this? This is not accurate. We are ready.

MO: You absolutely have to be clear on this with the Americans – with CR. These may be ways of “protecting themselves”. The atmosphere in Washington even outside the administration (Indyk, Ross, etc.) does not give much credibility to this push. CR is therefore a bit on her own and will advance carefully.

On the UN side, BM is positive, and will support the EU position and contributions.

SE: I asked BM to engage T. Larsson as he seems to have no middle east people with him. He should recruit him on his team.

MO: He still does not have a team.

SE: I will try to see him on the weekend.

MO: Let’s move to NUG: how do you evaluate the current efforts?

SE: Proposal is as follows:

- MOI: independent
- Finance: Salam Fayyad

- MOFA: Ziad Abu Amr
- Haniye remains Prime Minister

There is a six point document that outlines the programme of the government, and separates the government from the political parties. It will be discussed in Mecca and the Saudis will take it to their friends in Texas. We are sceptical about this process given real factors.

MO: So there is no real commitment on the part of the Saudis?

SE: No way to tell. However, if AM continues to be treated this way by all the parties he should resign.

I met with the Israelis (Turjeman and Turbowicz "TT") to prepare for the Washington trip. Many of the people in Washington are more Catholic than the pope – more Israeli than the Israelis.

From the meetings with TT, they made the following points:

- Trilateral meeting is a one time only meeting
- Trilateral should not undermine bilateral track
- The Israelis do not object to unofficial channel to probe end game – TT will act as bilateral contacts in informal setting (in response to a question from Otte's assistant SE said this is not a back channel).

I have demanded that if this were to be the process we should have a weekly joint report to the Quartet as a compromise which will maintain the role of the Quartet. I will request this process with CR.

There are two approaches: "Either the principles – one page; or define the end game in a box and go with you to define the way stations" (??).

Everything in the Road Map applies except for provisional borders, but we can create a "security border" and covert all areas B to A. This merges the third further redeployment with convergence. [The phased evacuation slides prepared by the NSU were shown and explained].

I explained the plans to TT, who were not enthusiastic and had reservations. They asked about refugees. I pointed out the Clinton Parameters.

TT said the Israelis were carefully watching Gaza: they will absolutely not implement any West Bank evacuations without a genuine one gun / one authority situation, because Israel will not even entertain the possibility of a Gaza-type scenario in the West Bank.

We are reticent to present concrete plans to CR without more concrete measures.

MO: CR intends the trilateral to probe whether principals will give a political negotiations mandate to their people.

SE: We are ready. The Arab states need to be. They need to change their policies. We want a demilitarised state, with NATO forces –we want to be part of NATO...

MO: ES told me that there can be a majority in the Knesset, but nothing will happen if you don't have law and order – and you need to build a consensus.

SE: I agree: we need security forces, not militias – we don't want the Iraq model. You should be careful with this.

MO: Yes. That is why KD considers police as key.

SE: The forces need to change the chain of command. Once certain changes were made in the NSF they performed honourably and professionally in Gaza.

MO: The EC still needs assurances that the police is detached from the MoI in terms of chain of command.

SE: This is a problem given the Basic Law.

MO: KD thinks that we can find creative solutions involving the governorates.

SE: We should respect the Basic Law.

MO: Many of our own member states are concerned about upholding this constitutional issue – so we need an interior minister we can work with. On the other hand, there are some people in Washington who are quite happy with the fighting, who almost want to “fuel the fire”.

SE: So, why should we have no bullets while our adversaries are well equipped and paid? This is an illogical policy. We have the NSF, PG and Intelligence that is legally under the President's authority. The Preventive Security is not relevant here. As for police, they should be strengthened.

MO: In order to succeed, you need police forces in the streets – hence the need to resolve the NUG issue.

SE: Yes. According to Basic Law.

MO: Now, The EC is ready to beef up the Border agency. We are committed to normalisation at the Rafah Crossing, and to help with Karni. We need to start the programme.

SE: We are working on these issues through the various committees, and appreciate expansion of European role.

MO: CR will appreciate to see as much concrete results as possible before the trilateral on the 19th.

CR is also “intrigued” about the Arab-Israeli track in parallel to give Israel guarantees that Arabs are moving in the right direction – how they would implement normalisation with Israel.

SE: We have serious problems with the role of the Arab states. [Examples of recent problems eg. movement of security equipment]

MO: We should consider a “basket approach” with the Arab states—That is why your mission to Washington is crucial.

SE: We should not overload the politicians – CR’s – wagon with details, while Elliot is guarding things. I would rather deal directly with the Israelis.

MO: You can give her an idea of the end game and the stages.

SE: OK.

MO: She is not a negotiator who gets bogged down in details – no need for detail, but need to show a programme.

SE: We are ready for PS. The NSU is ready with creative solutions.

We need the President to take measures on “one gun” – this is a must. We need to put professional and reliable people in place in commanding positions in the security forces in order to create a proper chain of command – and we need to remove the corruption.

MO: All this should be a strategy in parallel [with the above].

SE: Again, we are ready on all PS issues. But we need to deal with the “one authority” issue before it becomes meaningful.

[Discussion on Iran and Syria]

MO: We have to be careful how we characterise the siege on the PA: mainly Israel and US. Europeans have TIM and other contributions and have actually contributed more since siege.

SE: Siege is mainly Israeli issue.

MO: But the Israeli and US positions are identical. Livni saw AM in Davos, and had only one message: any NUG without explicit recognition of Israel's right to exist and renouncing of violence will make you part of the international siege. This is the same message from the Americans.

Regarding the potential break in the Quartet consensus (the "Syrian strategy") the US has "great influence in certain European capitals. Including the EU Presidency" [MO then said he did not say this].

SE: I met Merckle in Davos. It seems her advisors are worse than the Israelis.

MO: Make sure that AM calls rest of the capitals and not only Washington: Solana, Lavrov, Moon... CR needs to use the Quartet as leverage for support because she lacks support in Washington.

Agree to establish contact with Quartet regularly is good idea. All communication is good.

It would be good for AM to meet the Quartet ministers (could be a way to put in place the regular meetings).