

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

SECRET

September 9, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: Hijacking Status

Where the Passengers Are

No confirmed list of the hostages is available. A few more than 300 passengers have been involved altogether. Over half are U.S. citizens. Israelis and dual nationals have been estimated at 30-50. About 125 of these passengers, mostly women and children, have been brought to the Hotel Intercontinental in Amman. However, the Red Cross representative, after talking to Palestinian leaders, says these passengers are not free to leave Amman, even though the hotel itself is surrounded by Jordanian government forces. He reports that the hostages are being well treated.

The Diplomatic Situation

You will recall that Monday night, the U.S. agreed to participate in a concerted U.S. -U.K. -Swiss -West German effort through the Red Cross. At a meeting Tuesday in Bern, the British, Swiss and West German representatives confirmed their governments' agreement that the Red Cross might offer release of the seven fedayeen prisoners they hold if the guerrillas turned over all passengers and the two planes to the Red Cross. Meanwhile, Red Cross representatives had arrived in Amman. Following are the main developments since the foregoing:

1. Below are the main points made by Red Cross representative Andre Rochat in a report to British, West German, Swiss representatives in Amman following his first round of talks (two meetings with Jordanian Prime Minister Rifai and a long discussion with the Palestinians

-- The situation is "extremely serious". He is "not at all convinced it will end successfully We may face a tragedy There is perhaps one chance in two we will get everyone out."

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-- He intends to be "extremely firm" in sticking to the terms of his mandate. He warned that if any attempt is made to move away from the multi-national approach as outlined in that mandate, the Red Cross representatives "will withdraw completely and leave the place."

-- He concludes that the Jordanian Government fully supports the Red Cross position. As for the Palestinians, "The first meeting seems to be the beginning of something positive." Rochat planned further meetings today, including meeting with the hostages.

-- The guerrillas' position on release of guerrilla prisoners in Israeli hands is that "not one person will leave the planes if the Palestinians are not satisfied" on this point. [Comment: The meaning of this point is not clear since the official Palestinian demands stated that all but the Israeli and dual national passengers would be released in return for the seven fedayeen prisoners in Europe.]

-- The Red Cross has a plane (capacity 90) at its disposal for as many trips as necessary for as long as necessary to evacuate released hostages. "We do not need help in this regard."

-- He is "100 percent sure that the deadline will be postponed for at least 72 hours" after initial expiration. He later said he did not have assurances to this effect and revised his statement to say he is positive that "no one will be killed tomorrow afternoon unless by accident."

-- He does not want yet to deal separately with the hostages already released from the planes, but he conceded this might be brought up again if the internal security deteriorates seriously.

2. Secretary Rogers yesterday called in all Arab Chiefs-of-Mission in Washington to make an appeal solely on humanitarian grounds for the safety of the passengers. He emphasized that, while we do not hold Arab governments responsible, public outrage around the world would be great if innocent passengers were harmed.

3. Under Secretary Johnson last night sent a message to the U.S. Charge in Amman saying "it seems to us here that there might be some

value, if King Hussein is willing, for the commander of the Jordanian troops surrounding the site of the aircraft to get across to the PFLP personnel at the aircraft a warning that if they carry out their threat to destroy the aircraft and passengers, the Jordanian forces will do their utmost to assure that none of the PFLP personnel escape from the scene alive."

4. An approach has been made in Bonn urging the West German government not to release their fedayeen prisoners unilaterally. They appear, as do the Swiss, to have received separate approaches from the fedayeen setting a separate deadline for exchange of their prisoners for their passengers. The West Germans appear to be increasingly nervous over the approaching deadline, and the Cabinet is meeting this morning. They have been informed of Rochat's insistence that the multi-national approach be maintained.

5. According to Jerusalem radio this morning, Israel intends to ask the British government today to detain the woman hijacker in its hands until Israel can submit a request for her extradition. The British informed us yesterday that they are willing to release her as part of the U.S. -U.K. -German-Swiss response to the fedayeen demands. Israel continues to insist that nothing be done that will result in partial release of those detained -- leaving only the Israelis (and presumably American Jews) in fedayeen hands. There is no indication Israel may be willing to release any fedayeen in its hands.

6. The British have proposed to the U.S., Swiss and Germans a UN Security Council meeting to consider the hijacking problem. We and the Swiss have reacted favorably.

U.S. Military Actions

I have arranged for the following actions by U.S. military forces:

-- Six C-130 aircraft are being moved to Incirlik, Turkey to be available for evacuation purposes. They will be one hour and 30 minutes flying time from the field in Jordan where the hijacked aircraft are being held. (See attached map.) They are expected to be in place by 11:30 a.m. EDT.

-- The attack aircraft carrier Independence, accompanied by four destroyers and an oiler, is southeast of Crete and steaming toward the Lebanon-Israel coast. It will reach a position 100 miles off the coast by shortly after midnight tonight. This force will be joined by two additional destroyers. (See attached map.)

-- The battle staff of the U. S. Strike Command at McDill Air Force Base in Florida has been activated to monitor the situation.

-- Appropriate contingency plans for Europe and the Middle East are currently being reviewed.

-- I am convening a senior WSAG meeting at 11:30 this morning to complete alternative politico-military contingency scenarios for the crises.

How Events May Evolve

1. A major factor will be whether Rochat has indeed succeeded in slipping the deadline.

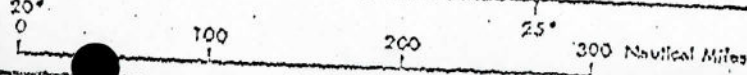
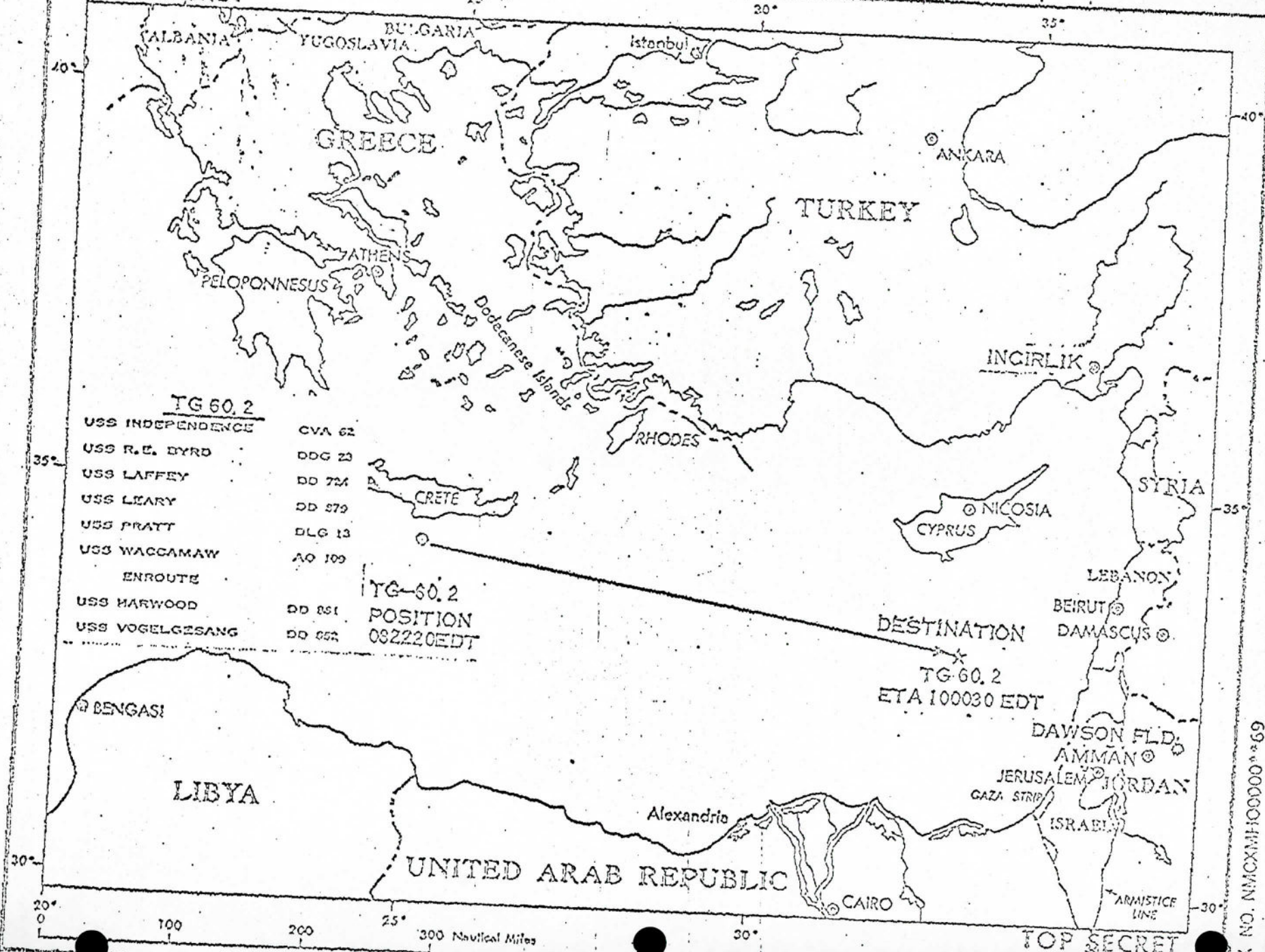
2. Whatever the timing, it seems likely that Rochat in his negotiations will be confronted with a Fedayeen demand that Israel release some of the Fedayeen prisoners it holds. At that point pressures will develop in two directions:

-- There will be pressure on the British, Swiss and Germans to break the multi-national front and bargain for the release of their passengers. The U. S. would be under pressure not to jeopardize the lives of some passengers for the sake of others.

-- There will be pressure on Israel (to some degree from the three European governments and presumably from the U. S.). Rochat may be able to suggest to Israel some broadening of the exchange. [You will recall that this was the eventual solution in the TWA hijacking case a year ago.]

Attachment: Map

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