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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6883
 INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
 AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
 AMEMBASSY CAIRO
 AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
 AMEMBASSY JIDDA
 USELO RIYADH
 AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 DAMASCUS 02165

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, OVIP (ATIYEH, VICTOR), SY

SUBJECT: OREGON GOVERNOR ATIYEH MARCH 28 CONVERSATION
 WITH SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT).

2. SUMMARY: OREGON GOVERNOR ATIYEH'S 90-MINUTE DISCUSSION ON MARCH 28 WITH SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER FARUQ SHAR' DEALT MOSTLY WITH LEBANON. THE MINISTER SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE LAUSANNE CONFERENCE HAD NOT SUCCEEDED, SYRIA WAS NOT PESSIMISTIC, BECAUSE THIS LONGSTANDING PROBLEM WILL TAKE TIME TO RESOLVE, AND THE PARTIES AT LAUSANNE SEEMED MORE THAN EVER TO REALIZE THE NEED FOR RECONCILIATION. HE PRAISED PRESIDENT GENAYEL FOR HAVING ACTED AS A FAIR CHAIRMAN AT LAUSANNE, AND SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE LEBANESE EXTREMISTS, WHO WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS, NOW APPEARED TO BE ISOLATED. SHAR' SAID PRESIDENT ASSAD IS DETERMINED TO HELP THE LEBANESE ACHIEVE THEIR SOVEREIGNTY AND UNITY. HE ENVISIONS THE SEQUENCE OF A SETTLEMENT AS: AGREEMENT AMONG THE LEBANESE ON PRINCIPLES FOR REFORM, THEN ESTABLISHMENT OF A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY WHICH WILL WORK FOR REFORMS AND ALSO WORK "WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY" TO ACHIEVE UNCONDITIONAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL; AND FINALLY THE GOL WILL ASK SYRIA TO WITHDRAW AND IT WILL DO SO. SHAR' REPEATED THE FAMILIAR SYRIAN LINE THAT THE US GAVE ISRAEL A GREEN LIGHT IN THE 1982 INVASION OF LEBANON AND THEN "RENEGED" ON A CEASEFIRE COMMITMENT (THE CHARGE REBUTTED THIS). SHAR' SAID SYRIA DOES SEE A VITAL ROLE FOR THE U.S. IN THE MIDEAST GENERALLY (WITHOUT THE US THERE CAN BE NO PEACE) BUT THE U.S. SHOULD PROVE BY ITS ACTIONS THAT IT IS UNBIASED. COMMENT BY DEPTEL. END SUMMARY.

3. ON MARCH 28, OREGON GOVERNOR VICTOR ATIYEH MET FOR 90 MINUTES WITH SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER FARUQ AL-SHAR'. GOVERNOR WAS ACCOMPANIED BY CHARGE, AND FOUR MEMBERS OF HIS PARTY, INCLUDING HIS PRESS AIDE, A BUSINESSMAN OF SYRIAN ORIGIN, AND TWO JOURNALISTS (CHANNEL 6 TV NEWS ANCHORMAN MICHAEL DOHAHE, AND OREGONIAN NEWSPAPER STAFF REPORTER ALAN DTA). MINISTER WAS ACCOMPANIED BY DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS DR. SAMI GLAIEL, AND NOTE TAKER.

4. THE MINISTER WELCOMED GOVERNOR ATIYEH WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE FACT THAT ATIYEH'S PARENTS CAME FROM SYRIA. GOVERNOR ATIYEH CONGRATULATED THE MINISTER ON HIS RECENT APPOINTMENT TO HIS POSITION AND SAID HE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO HIS FIRST TOUR OF SYRIA IN 55 YEARS AND A VISIT TO HIS ANCESTRAL VILLAGE.

5. GOVERNOR ATIYEH INITIATED THE SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION BY ASKING THE MINISTER WHAT SYRIA EXPECTED TO HAPPEN IN THE LEBANESE SITUATION FOLLOWING THE LAUSANNE CONFERENCE. SHAR' RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT ALTHOUGH THE LAUSANNE CONFERENCE HAD NOT SUCCEEDED, SYRIA WAS NOT PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE LEBANESE SITUATION BECAUSE SYRIA HAD NO ILLUSIONS THAT A CONFLICT OF SUCH LONG STANDING DURATION COULD BE SOLVED "IN EIGHT DAYS". SHAR' SAID SYRIA WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE LEBANESE WOULD COME UP WITH A SOLUTION BECAUSE THEY RECOGNIZED NOW MORE THAN EVER BEFORE THAT IF THE FIGHTING CONTINUES EVERYONE WILL LOSE.

6. SHAR' SAID THE NEED FOR RECONCILIATION WAS VERY OBVIOUS AT LAUSANNE, AS WAS THE FACT THAT THE LEBANESE PARTIES ARE SERIOUS ABOUT MAKING PROGRESS ON IT. SHAR' SAID SYRIA WOULD CONTINUE TO DO ITS UTMOST TO EXERT INFLUENCE ON ALL SIDES TO ACCOMPLISH A COMPROMISE SOLUTION ACCEPTABLE TO EVERYONE.

7. SHAR' THEN EXPANDED AT SOME LENGTH ON HIS REMARKS ABOUT THE LONG-STANDING NATURE OF THE CONFLICT. HE SAID THE PROBLEM WAS NOT ONE BETWEEN ALL CHRISTIANS ON ONE SIDE AND ALL MUSLIMS ON ANOTHER, BUT RATHER WAS CAUSED BY EXTREMISTS ON BOTH SIDES, AGGRAVATED BY ISRAELI AMBITIONS IN LEBANON WHICH HE SAID WENT BACK TO THE EARLY 1950'S AND THE DAYS OF SHARETT AND BEN-GURION. SHAR' REFERRED TO THE ISRAELI INCURSION OF 1978, REPEATED ISRAELI AIR RAIDS INTO LEBANON, AND INCREASED ISRAELI PRESSURE ON THE LEBANESE SINCE 1976 "UNDER THE PRETEXT OF SECURING THEIR NORTHERN BORDERS." SHAR' SAID ISRAELI USED THIS EXCUSE IN JUNE 1982, AND IT WAS JUST A PRETEXT FOR INVASION BECAUSE THERE HAD BEEN NO VIOLATIONS OF THE CEASEFIRE ON THE LEBANESE-ISRAELI BORDER FOR A YEAR PRIOR TO THAT BECAUSE OF THE CEASEFIRE ARRANGED BY AMBASSADOR HABIB. THE ISRAELIS, SAID

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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 USELO RIYADH
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SHAR' ENTERED LEBANON IN JUNE 1982 TO DRIVE THE PALESTINIANS OUT OF SOUTH LEBANON, BUT THEN THEY DID NOT ACCEPT A CEASEFIRE, EVEN AFTER THEY HAD ACHIEVED THIS GOAL. SHAR' SAID THAT THROUGH AMBASSADOR HABIB SYRIA ACCEPTED A CEASEFIRE PROPOSAL BECAUSE SYRIA WISHED TO AVOID A MAJOR WAR WITH ITS FORCES IN THE BLOA'. BUT THE CEASEFIRE THAT SYRIA AGREED TO, WHICH WAS BASED ON THE CONDITION THAT ISRAEL WITHDRAW TO THE LEBANESE BORDER, AND WAS BACKED BY A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT REAGAN THAT THE U.S. WAS READY FOR A CEASEFIRE AND ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL WAS REJECTED BY ISRAEL.

8. SUMMING UP, SHAR' SAID THERE WERE FIVE ASPECTS TO THE LEBANESE PROBLEM. ONE, ISRAEL WENT BEYOND ITS OWN ORIGINAL GOALS IN ENTERING LEBANON; TWO, ISRAEL REJECTED A CEASEFIRE PROPOSED THROUGH THE U.S.; THREE, THE U.S. RENEGED ON ITS COMMITMENT FOR THIS CEASEFIRE (SHAR' IS HERE REFERRING TO THE JUNE 10, 1982 HABIB-ASSAD DISCUSSIONS). FOUR, THE LEBANESE NEVER FOUGHT AGAINST THE ISRAELIS OR VIOLATED THE 1949 TRUCE AGREEMENT; AND FIVE, THE MAY 17, 1983 AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED BY LEBANON AFTER THE U.S. AND ISRAEL COLLABORATED TO IMPOSE IT ON THE LEBANESE. ON THE LAST POINT SHAR' SAID THAT PRESIDENT GEMAYEL HIMSELF HAD TOLD SYRIA HE WOULD NOT HAVE SIGNED THE AGREEMENT IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR THE PRESENCE OF ISRAELI TANKS IN LEBANON BECAUSE IT VIOLATED LEBANON'S SOVEREIGNTY, AND CLEARLY THERE WAS GREAT OPPOSITION TO THE AGREEMENT BY THE LEBANESE.

9. GOVERNOR ATIYEH RETURNED TO THE LEBANESE INTERNAL QUESTION BY ASKING HOW A MINORITY GROUP LIKE THE PHALANGISTS COULD HOLD UP THE ENTIRE RECONCILIATION PROCESS AS THEY SEEMED TO HAVE DONE, NOTING THAT IN THE UNITED STATES WE DID NOT ALLOW A MINORITY TO THWART THE WILL OF THE MAJORITY. SHAR' RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT EVEN WHEN ALMOST EVERYONE AGREES ON A CEASEFIRE, TEN PEOPLE ARE ENOUGH TO BREAK IT. HE ADDED THAT IF AN EXTREMIST DECLARATION IS MADE, IT IS DIFFICULT FOR MORE MODERATE MEMBERS OF THAT SAME COMMUNITY TO REJECT IT BECAUSE THEY WILL BE CAST IN THE ROLE OF OPPONENTS TO THE INTERESTS OF THEIR COMMUNITY, A PROCESS WHICH HAS BEEN REPEATED OFTEN IN LEBANON.

10. RETURNING TO THE LAUSANNE CONFERENCE, SHAR' SAID THAT MORE THAN EVER BEFORE, THERE WAS A COMMON CONCERN AMONG THE PARTICIPANTS TO PUT AN END TO THE CIVIL WAR, AND THE PARTICIPANTS MADE A CLEAR EFFORT TO DRAW A LINE BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THE EXTREMISTS IN LEBANON. SHAR' SAID THAT IN ALL FAIRNESS IT MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT PRESIDENT GEMAYEL HAS NOW TAKEN A POSITION AS A

GENUINE PRESIDENT OF LEBANON AND WAS AT LAUSANNE BEHAVING IN A FAIR MANNER AS CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN. SHAR' SAID THIS WAS A NEW DEVELOPMENT "AND VERY MUCH APPRECIATED." HE SAID THIS POSTURE BY GEMAYEL HAD ANNOYED THE EXTREMISTS IN HIS OWN CAMP, BUT HE WAS CAREFUL NOT TO LISTEN TO THE OPPOSITION WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY. SHAR' SAID THAT SYRIA DID NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE INFLUENCE OF EXTREMISTS IN THE LEBANESE SITUATION, BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN LAUSANNE THEY WERE ISOLATED AND THIS WAS A VERY IMPORTANT FACT.

11. CONTINUING, SHAR' SAID IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THE ISRAELIS WERE NOT INTERESTED IN SEEING LEBANON AS A SOVEREIGN, UNITED AND INDEPENDENT COUNTRY, AND EVEN SOME OF THOSE WHO HAVE BUILT THEIR HOPES ON COLLABORATION WITH ISRAEL HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED TO SEE THAT. SHAR' SAID THE MAJORITY OF CHRISTIANS ARE AWARE THAT THE INTERESTS OF LEBANON ARE IN CONTRADICTION WITH THE INTERESTS OF ISRAEL IN LEBANON, AND THEY HAVE ALSO "DISCOVERED" THAT LEBANESE AND SYRIAN INTERESTS ARE NOT IN CONTRADICTION BECAUSE SYRIA WANTS THE LEBANESE TO LIVE IN PEACE WITHOUT PRESSURE OR MILITARY PRESENCE OF FOREIGNERS, BY WHICH HE SAID HE MEANS NON-ARABS.

12. SHAR' DECLARED THAT PRESIDENT ASSAD IS TODAY MORE THAN EVER DETERMINED TO HELP THE LEBANESE ACHIEVE THEIR SOVEREIGNTY AND UNITY. HE SAID THAT WHEN THE LEBANESE AGREE ON PRINCIPLES FOR REFORM WHICH ARE NECESSARY TO END THIS ROUND OF THE CIVIL WAR, A BROAD NATIONAL GOVERNMENT WILL BE ESTABLISHED BY THE LEBANESE TO IMPLEMENT THESE PRINCIPLES. THE MAIN GOAL OF THE GNU WILL BE (A) TO ACHIEVE COMPLETE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON, AND (B) TO WORK FOR INTERNAL REFORMS. SHAR' SAID SYRIA EXPECTS THAT WHEN ISRAEL IS OUT OF LEBANON, THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WILL DISCUSS THE SITUATION WITH

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SYRIA, AND IF THE LEBANESE ASK SYRIA TO LEAVE, SYRIA WILL NOT HESITATE TO LEAVE BECAUSE THE SITUATION WILL BE SECURE AND ISRAEL WILL NOT BE ABLE TO USE LEBANON AS A BASE TO ATTACK SYRIA.

13. GOVERNOR ATIYEH ASKED ABOUT THE SEQUENCE OF THE VARIOUS EVENTS WHICH SHAR' HAD JUST DESCRIBED AND WHETHER IT WAS POSSIBLE TO DO ANYTHING BEFORE ISRAEL WITHDREW. SHAR' SAID THAT THERE COULD BE SOME SIMULTANEITY, EXPLAINING THAT WHEN THE LEBANESE AGREE ON A SET OF INTERNAL REFORMS, THEY CAN THEN "WORK WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY" TO ACHIEVE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON, AND THE REFORMS AND WITHDRAWAL (OF ISRAEL) CAN BE SIMULTANEOUS.

14. GOVERNOR ATIYEH THEN ASKED THE MINISTER WHAT HE WOULD DO NOW IF HE WERE IN THE POSITION OF THE UNITED STATES, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT EVERYTHING THAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR. SHAR' REFORMULATED THE QUESTION BY ASKING WHY US-SYRIAN RELATIONS DETERIORATED, WHY U.S. DIPLOMACY IN LEBANON FAILED, AND WHY U.S. CREDIBILITY HAD BEEN UNDERMINED. HE ANSWERED BY SAYING THAT LEBANON WAS AN IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS BUT THE DEEPER CAUSE WAS IN FACT THE U.S. ATTITUDE TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT. SHAR' SAID, FOR EXAMPLE, THE ARABS BELIEVE THAT THE ISRAELI INVASION OF LEBANON TOOK PLACE WITH THE CONSENT OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT "OR AT LEAST THE KNOWLEDGE OF SOME OFFICIALS IN THE ADMINISTRATION". SHAR' CITED A SPEECH BY FORMER SECRETARY HAIG IN MAY 1982 WHICH COULD BE READ AS DESCRIBING A PLAN FOR THE INVASION OF LEBANON. SHAR' SAID THAT AFTER THE INVASION, THE U.S. COMMITTED A SECOND MISTAKE ON THIS ISSUE BY "NOT IMPLEMENTING" UN SECURITY RESOLUTIONS 508 AND 509 WHICH THE U.S. HAD VOTED FOR, WHICH CALLED FOR UNCONDITIONAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. SHAR' SAID THE U.S. PUBLICLY FAVORED THE RESOLUTIONS BUT "TACITLY WAS AGAINST IT" AND THEREFORE HAD A DOUBLE POSITION.

15. CONTINUING, SHAR' SAID THAT A FEW DAYS LATER SYRIA RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT REAGAN THROUGH AMBASSADOR HABIB OFFERING A CEASEFIRE AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE RESPECTED THAT CEASEFIRE. THEN, WHEN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM HAD MET WITH SECRETARY SHULTZ IN OCTOBER 1982 AT THE UNITED NATIONS, THE SECRETARY HAD TOLD KHADDAM THAT THE U.S. DID NOT FAVOR AN ISRAELI-LEBANESE AGREEMENT MADE AT GUNPOINT, BUT SUBSEQUENTLY THE MAY 17, 1983 AGREEMENT WAS IN FACT MADE AT GUNPOINT. SHAR' SAID THAT THE MINISTER HAD ASKED THE SECRETARY ABOUT THAT MATTER AND THE SECRETARY HAD EXPLAINED, DURING HIS MAY 1983 VISIT TO DAMASCUS, THAT

WHAT HE MEANT WAS THAT A "TREATY" SHOULD NOT BE MADE AT GUNPOINT. DURING THAT SAME VISIT TO DAMASCUS, SHAR' SAID THAT THE SECRETARY WAS TOLD BY PRESIDENT ASSAD THAT THE AGREEMENT VIOLATED LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY AND WAS REJECTED BY THE MAJORITY OF THE LEBANESE, TO WHICH THE SECRETARY HAD RESPONDED THAT MOST OF THE LEBANESE SUPPORT IT. AS IT TURNED OUT, SAID SHAR', PRESIDENT ASSAD WAS CORRECT BECAUSE THE AGREEMENT WAS ULTIMATELY ABROGATED; THE U.S. GOVERNMENT DID NOT TAKE SERIOUSLY WHAT PRESIDENT ASSAD HAD SAID IN MAY.

16. GOVERNOR ATIYEH SAID HE WONDERED IF SYRIA SAW ANY ROLE FOR THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IN THE AREA. SHAR' RESPONDED BY SAYING SYRIA BELIEVES THERE IS INDEED AN IMPORTANT ROLE FOR THE U.S. IN THE AREA. IN FACT, "WITHOUT THE U.S. THERE CAN NEVER BE PEACE IN THE REGION." ASKED WHAT THE U.S. SHOULD DO, SHAR' PREFACED HIS REPLY BY SAYING THAT THE JEWISH LOBBY IN AMERICA HAD SUCH A STRONG INFLUENCE OVER AMERICAN POLICY, AND THE CURRENT U.S. ELECTION PROCESS HAD ITS EFFECT, SO SYRIA HAD NO ILLUSIONS (ABOUT THE U.S. PLAYING A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE), BUT IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE THAT THE U.S. MIGHT CHANGE. SPECIFICALLY, HE SAID THE U.S. "SHOULD DRAW A LINE BETWEEN U.S. AND ISRAELI POLICY" SO THE ARABS WOULD BE ABLE TO FEEL THAT THERE IS A U.S. POLICY INDEPENDENT OF ISRAELI POLICY. SECONDLY, HE SAID THE U.S. SHOULD PLAY THE ROLE OF AN HONEST BROKER IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT BUT TO PLAY THAT ROLE THE U.S. CANNOT BE PARTISAN OR BIASED. SHAR' SAID THE FRAMEWORK FOR A SOLUTION IS THERE IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS. HE ADDED THAT UNITED STATES SHOULD NOT BLAME SYRIA FOR HAVING GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE USCR AND NOT ACCUSE SYRIA OF BEING A COMMUNIST BASE OR A SOVIET

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SATELITE, BECAUSE SYRIA IS NEITHER.

17. GOVERNOR ATIYEH SAID HE WANTED TO PICK UP ON THE MINISTER'S REFERENCE TO AMERICAN CREDIBILITY, AND HE ADDED THAT HE WAS "DISGUSTED" BY DEMOCRATS HART AND MONDALE TRYING TO OUTBID EACH OTHER (ON THE MIDDLE EAST QUESTION) BECAUSE IT WAS NOT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES OR OF ISRAEL TO DO SO. GOVERNOR ATIYEH SUGGESTED THAT CREDIBILITY COULD BE RESTORED BY THE U.S. DECLARING THAT IT SEEKS GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALL OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST, NOT JUST OF SOME. SHAR' RESPONDED THAT THAT WAS A GOOD IDEA BUT ADDED THAT "WORDS ARE NOT ENOUGH." HE SAID THAT IF THE U.S. MAKES SUCH A DECLARATION BUT THEN CONTINUES TO INCREASE AID TO ISRAEL AS IT HAS BEEN, THERE WOULD BE NO CREDIBILITY; "THERE HAS TO BE SOMETHING TANGIBLE."

18. GOVERNOR ATIYEH ASKED THE MINISTER WHAT HE SAW AS THE LONG RANGE OBJECTIVES OF ISRAEL IN THE AREA. SHAR' RESPONDED "TO OCCUPY MORE LAND, TO BUILD NEW SETTLEMENTS, TO CREATE MORE FACTS ON THE GROUND, AND THEN DECLARE THE SETTLEMENTS HAVE TO BE DEFENDED, ETC." WHEN THE GOVERNOR ASKED IF SHAR' DID NOT SEE ISRAELI POLICY AS BEING SOMEWHAT RESTRAINED NOW BECAUSE OF ITS ECONOMIC COST, THE MINISTER SAID NO, BECAUSE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE U.S. IS SUFFICIENT TO ALLOW ISRAEL TO CONTINUE ITS EXPANSIONIST AND BELLICOSE POLICIES.

19. CHARGE SAID HE HAD TO COMMENT ON AT LEAST ONE PART OF THE MINISTER'S DESCRIPTION OF THE LEBANESE SITUATION, IN ORDER TO CORRECT THE RECORD. CHARGE SAID THAT THE MINISTER HAD REFERRED TO THE ISRAEL INVASION OF JUNE 1982 AND AMERICAN POLICY WITH RESPECT TO EVENTS BEFORE AND AFTER THAT INVASION. IN FACT, IT WAS U.S. POLICY NOT TO SUPPORT BUT TO OPPOSE THE ISRAELI INVASION, AND IT WAS U.S. POLICY TO SUPPORT UN RESOLUTIONS 508 AND 509. BUT THE UNITED STATES CANNOT IMPOSE ITS WILL ON ANY OF THE PARTIES, ISRAEL OR LEBANON OR SYRIA, AND THE UN RESOLUTIONS WERE NOT SELF-FULFILLING. CHARGE SAID, IN FACT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAD ITSELF NOT BEEN ABLE TO IMPLEMENT RESOLUTIONS 508 AND 509 BUT HAD TAKEN A SOVEREIGN DECISION TO SIGN THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL. AS FOR THE CEASEFIRE PROPOSAL DISCUSSED BETWEEN AMBASSADOR HABIB AND PRESIDENT ASSAD ON JUNE 10, 1982, THAT WAS NOT PRESENTED AS AN AMERICAN PROMISE OR COMMITMENT TO INSURE FULFILLMENT OF A CEASEFIRE, BUT RATHER A PROPOSAL WHICH UNFORTUNATELY DID NOT SUCCEED. THE MINISTER RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT IT WAS DISTURBING TO BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT CAN NOT BE COUNTED UPON TO HONOR ITS COMMITMENTS. CHARGE AGAIN SAID THAT

THE HABIB-ASSAD DISCUSSION ON THE CEASEFIRE SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED A U.S. COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVE THE PROPOSAL AND THEREFORE THE U.S. HAD NOT IN ANY SENSE RENEGED ON A PROPOSAL. THEREFORE, THERE SEEMED TO BE A DIFFERENCE IN UNDERSTANDING AS TO WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN JUNE 1982 BECAUSE THERE WAS NO U.S. PROMISE. GOVERNOR ATIYEH ADDED THAT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT A U.S. OFFICIAL IS CONCERNED ABOUT AMERICAN CREDIBILITY AND WISHES TO CLEAR UP A MISUNDERSTANDING OF WHAT HAD TRANSPIRED IN A PAST EVENT.

20. GOVERNOR ATIYEH THEN CONCLUDED THE MEETING SAYING HE HAD TO LEAVE FOR ANOTHER APPOINTMENT AND MENTIONED THAT HE HOPED TO SEE PRESIDENT REAGAN ON HIS RETURN TO WASHINGTON. HE ADDED THAT HE PERSONALLY WAS PLEASED TO HEAR THAT SYRIA WAS MAKING A RESPONSIBLE EFFORT IN LEBANON TO BRING ABOUT A SOLUTION TO ITS PROBLEMS, AND HE SAID HE WANTED TO ENCOURAGE THE SYRIANS TO ADOPT A POSITIVE RATHER THAN A NEGATIVE FRAME OF MIND.

21. GOVERNOR ATIYEH ALSO NOTED THAT HE HOPED VERY MUCH THAT HIS PROPOSED MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD WOULD TAKE PLACE, TO WHICH THE MINISTER RESPONDED THAT HE HAD JUST SPOKEN WITH THE PRESIDENT WHO HAD ISSUED ORDERS THAT GOVERNOR ATIYEH'S VISIT TO SYRIA SHOULD BE A SUCCESS. THE MINISTER SAID HE EXPECTED THERE WOULD BE A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT BUT THAT THE TIME WAS NOT YET SET.

22. COMMENT WILL BE SUBMITTED BY SEPTEL

23. BEIRUT MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. RUGH

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DAMASCUS 02203

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: PREL, OVIP (ATIYEH, VICTOR), SY
 SUBJECT: OREGON GOVERNOR ATIYEH'S MARCH 20 CONVERSATION
 WITH SYRIAN BATH PARTY OFFICIAL

- (C-FUTURE TEXT).
- SUMMARY: ON MARCH 20, OREGON GOVERNOR VICTOR ATIYEH MET WITH SYRIAN PARTY OFFICIAL MUHAMMAD HAYDAR. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS, HAYDAR SAID HE THOUGHT THE THREE NEW VICE PRESIDENTS IN SYRIA WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR, RESPECTIVELY, "POLITICAL AFFAIRS" (KHADDAM), "SECURITY" AND TO A CERTAIN EXTENT MILITARY AFFAIRS (KIFAT) AND PARTY/CULTURAL/INTELLECTUAL AFFAIRS (MISHARJAH), ALTHOUGH THESE DUTIES HAD NOT YET BEEN SPELLED OUT. IN DESCRIBING THE BATH PARTY, HAYDAR WAS CAREFUL TO DISTINGUISH IT FROM MARXIST PARTIES, AND IN DISCUSSING SYRIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS HE SAID THESE WERE NOT BASED ON IDEOLOGY BUT ON POLITICAL SELF-INTEREST. HAYDAR ASSERTED THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE NO BASES IN SYRIA, AND THAT SYRIA IS NOT PART OF MOSCOW'S INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY. END SUMMARY.
- ON MARCH 20, OREGON GOVERNOR VICTOR ATIYEH CALLED ON MUHAMMAD HAYDAR, DIRECTOR OF FOREIGN RELATIONS FOR THE BATH PARTY REGIONAL COMMAND. GOVERNOR WAS ACCOMPANIED BY CHARGE, AN ASSISTANT FROM HIS OFFICE, AN OREGON BUSINESSMAN OF DAMASCENE ORIGIN WHO ACTED AS INTERPRETER, AND TWO MEMBERS OF THE OREGON PRESS.
- HAYDAR OPENED THE CONVERSATION BY SAYING SYRIA WAS PROUD THAT A MAN OF SYRIAN ORIGIN HAD REACHED THE HIGH POSITION OF GOVERNOR OF AN AMERICAN STATE, AND HE ADDED THAT SYRIANS WERE CONFIDENT THAT GOVERNOR ATIYEH WOULD ACT AS A 100 PERCENT AMERICAN AND NOT HAVE DOUBLE LOYALTIES WITH ALLIGENCE TO A FOREIGN STATE AS MANY AMERICAN JEWS DO. THE GOVERNOR RESPONDED THAT HE HAD LEARNED FROM HIS FATHER, A FIRST-GENERATION AMERICAN, TO BE LOYAL TO THE UNITED STATES, ADDING THAT A MAJOR REASON HE (THE GOVERNOR) IS ABLE TO SPEAK ARABIC IS BECAUSE HIS FATHER INSISTED THAT HE AND HIS BROTHERS LEARN THE LANGUAGE OF THE UNITED STATES. THE GOVERNOR ADDED THAT NEVERTHELESS MOST AMERICANS WHO HAVE ROOTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES DO HAVE AFFECTION FOR THE COUNTRY OF THEIR ANCESTORS AND THAT THE MIX OF PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS IN THE UNITED STATES IS PART OF THE STRENGTH OF AMERICA. HAYDAR COMMENTED THAT SYRIA IS AWARE OF THE STRENGTH OF THE UNITED STATES AND ESPECIALLY APPRECIATES ATIYEH'S EFFORTS IN TRYING TO REACH THE AMERICAN PUBLIC ON ISSUES OF CONCERN IN THE MIDDLE EAST BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF OPINION IN THE FORMULATION

OF U.S. PUBLIC POLICY.

5. GOVERNOR ATIYEH SAID HE WANTED TO ASK ABOUT THE RECENT APPOINTMENT OF THREE NEW VICE PRESIDENTS IN SYRIA. WHAT DID THAT MEAN? HAYDAR RESPONDED BY REFERRING TO THE SYRIAN CONSTITUTION OF 1973 WHICH ALLOWED FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF ONE OR MORE VICE PRESIDENTS TO HELP THE PRESIDENT IN HANDLING AFFAIRS OF STATE. NOW THAT THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRESIDENCY HAVE GROWN SO MUCH, HE HAS TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THIS CONSTITUTIONAL POSSIBILITY.

6. GOVERNOR ATIYEH ASKED WHAT THE SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INDIVIDUAL VICE PRESIDENTS WOULD BE. HAYDAR RESPONDED THAT THIS HAD NOT BEEN SPELLED OUT IN DETAIL AS YET, BUT HE EXPECTED THAT THE THREE NEW VICE PRESIDENTS WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR AREAS RELATED TO THEIR PARTICULAR BACKGROUNDS AND INTERESTS. SINCE KHADDAM HAD BEEN FOREIGN MINISTER HE WOULD NOW PROBABLY BE RESPONSIBLE FOR "POLITICAL AFFAIRS". (COMMENT: THIS TERM "SHU'UN SIYASIA" IS THE SAME ONE USED BY OTHER WELL-INFORMED INSIDERS, SEE DAMASCUS 1946.) HAYDAR SAID THAT VICE PRESIDENT KIFAT, WHO HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN MILITARY AFFAIRS AND LED AN ARMY UNIT, WOULD PROBABLY NOW BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SECURITY AND "TO A CERTAIN EXTENT" OTHER MILITARY MATTERS. THE THIRD VICE PRESIDENT, MISHARJAH, WHO HAYDAR DESCRIBED AS AN OLD HAND IN PARTY AFFAIRS WOULD BE GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR PARTY AFFAIRS AS WELL AS FOR CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL MATTERS. HAYDAR SAID THAT FROM WHAT HE UNDERSTOOD OF DISCUSSIONS THIS IS PROBABLY THE WAY IT WOULD COME OUT ALTHOUGH SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES HAD NOT YET BEEN ANNOUNCED. IN ANY CASE, THE PRECISE DUTIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE VICE

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PRESIDENTS REMAINS IN THE HANDS OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE WHOLE IDEA OF THIS NEW DEVELOPMENT IS TO LIGHTEN THE PRESIDENT'S WORKLOAD.

7. GOVERNOR ATIYEH THEN ASKED HAYDAR ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE PARTY IN FORMULATION OF FOREIGN POLICY. HAYDAR EXPLAINED THE STRUCTURE OF THE BATH PARTY NATIONAL AND REGIONAL COMMANDS AND SAID THE NATIONAL COMMAND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SETTING PARTY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES AND THAT EACH NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBER HAD A SPECIFIC FUNCTIONAL AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY. HIS HAPPENED TO BE FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THESE INVOLVED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTY AND OTHER PARTIES IN THE ARAB WORLD AND ELSEWHERE ABROAD. GOVERNOR ATIYEH INTERJECTED "INCLUDING THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IN THE UNITED STATES?" HAYDAR LAUGHED AND SAID NORMALLY THE RELATIONS OF THE BATH PARTY ARE WITH THE OPPOSITION PARTIES ELSEWHERE BUT SAID THE BATH DID HAVE SOME RELATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES WITH INDIVIDUALS, WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY, WITH BLACK AMERICAN POLITICAL MOVEMENTS, AS WELL AS WITH ORGANIZATIONS OF IMMIGRANTS. HAYDAR NOTED THAT HE WAS ALSO HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ARAB IMMIGRANTS ABROAD WHOSE PURPOSE WAS TO KEEP SYRIAN IMMIGRANTS INFORMED ON DEVELOPMENTS IN SYRIA, CREATE TIES WITH THEM AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO BUILD TIES WITH SYRIA AND VISIT IT. HAYDAR SAID THAT HE HAD PERSONALLY BEEN INVOLVED IN EXTENDING THE INVITATION TO GOVERNOR ATIYEH, FOR EXAMPLE, TO VISIT SYRIA.

8. GOVERNOR ATIYEH PICKED UP HAYDAR'S REFERENCE TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT SYRIA IS INDEPENDENT OF BOTH THE U.S. AND THE USSR. HAYDAR SAID THAT AS A POLITICAL PARTY, THE BATH IS NATIONALISTIC AND DIFFERS FROM MARXISTS AND THEREFORE FROM COMMUNIST PARTIES AROUND THE WORLD. HE SAID THE BATH PARTY BELIEVES THAT EVERY COUNTRY HAS ITS OWN EXPERIENCE AND SYRIA SHOULD TAKE IDEAS FROM OTHER SOURCES BUT MAKE ITS OWN CHOICES AND FOLLOW AN INDEPENDENT SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL LINE, NEVER COPYING A FOREIGN IDEOLOGY WHOLESALE, TAKING ONLY WHAT IS GOOD FOR SYRIA. THEREFORE, THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BATH PARTY ON THE ONE HAND AND COMMUNIST PARTIES AND THE USSR ON THE OTHER ARE THE RESULT OF POLITICAL POSITIONS BASED ON IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS FACING SYRIA, NOT ON IDEOLOGY. HAYDAR SAID THAT FOR 30 YEARS THE BATH PARTY HAS FOUND THAT THE POSITION OF THE USSR AND COMMUNIST PARTIES HAVE ALWAYS COINCIDED WITH ITS OWN AND SYRIA RECOGNIZED THAT ITS ARMED FORCES ARE ARMED WITH SOVIET EQUIPMENT. NEVERTHELESS, SYRIA IS NON-ALIGNED DESPITE THE SOVIET ARMS AND SUPPORT. THE PARTY WANTS SYRIA TO LIVE PEACEFULLY

IN THE MIST OF THE CONFLICTS OF THE SUPER POWERS AND SEEKS FOR THE AREA TO BE FREE OF SUPER POWER RIVALRY. CONTINUING, HAYDAR SAID THAT WHEN THERE IS A MAJOR CONFLICT IN THE AREA, THE U.S. SIGNS A STRATEGIC AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL AND SYRIA IS LEFT WITH NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM THE USSR. THEREFORE, HAYDAR SAID, IT APPEARS THAT THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES IS THE BEST PROMOTOR OF SOVIET INTERESTS IN THE AREA BECAUSE OF U.S. BIAS IN FAVOR OF ISRAEL WHICH HAS LED TO THE SYRIAN-SOVIET ALLIANCE. HE STRESSED THAT SYRIA AND THE USSR ARE NOT IDEOLOGICALLY LINKED BUT THAT THE TWO WERE PUSHED TOGETHER BY U.S. FOREIGN POLICY (#)

UNITS, FACTORIES, AND ELSEWHERE. HE DESCRIBED THE OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES IN SYRIA AND CONTRASTED THE COMMUNIST PARTY, WHICH HE CALLED MARXIST, WITH THE OTHER THREE WHICH HE CALLED NATIONALIST WHO CALLED FOR ARAB UNITY AND A SOCIALIST SOCIETY AS CONTRASTED WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY WHICH IS LESS SOCIALIST AND MORE INTERNATIONALIST.

11. BEIRUT MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. RUGH

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THE REPUBLIC AND ALSO SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PARTY, AND HE OUTLINED THE HIERARCHY OF THE PARTY THROUGH THE COUNTRY, IN SCHOOLS, MILITARY UNITS, FACTORIES, AND ELSEWHERE. HE DESCRIBED THE OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES IN SYRIA AND CONTRASTED THE COMMUNIST PARTY, WHICH HE CALLED MARXIST, WITH THE OTHER THREE WHICH HE CALLED NATIONALIST WHO CALLED FOR ARAB UNITY AND A SOCIALIST SOCIETY AS CONTRASTED WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY WHICH IS LESS SOCIALIST AND MORE INTERNATIONALIST.

11. BEIRUT MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. RUGH

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TAGS: PREL, OVIP (ATIYEH, VICTOR), SY

SUBJECT: OREGON GOVERNOR ATIYEH MARCH 28 CONVERSATION
 WITH SYRIAN VICE PRESIDENT KHADDAM

1. (C-INTIRE TEXT).

2. SUMMARY: OREGON GOVERNOR VICTOR ATIYEH MET WITH SYRIAN VICE PRESIDENT KHADDAM FOR 90 MINUTES ON MARCH 29. KHADDAM EXPRESSED FAMILIAR VIEWS OF U.S. POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND LEBANON, LAYING PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON ALLEGED LACK OF UNDERSTANDING BY THE USG OF MIDDLE EASTERN REALITIES, AND ON U.S. AID TO ISRAEL. THE GOVERNOR RESPONDED THAT THE U.S. HAD ENTERED LEBANON WITH GOOD INTENTIONS (AND WITH THREE MHF PARTNERS), AND REMINDED KHADDAM THAT PRESIDENT REAGAN OPPOSES MOVING THE U.S. EMBASSY FROM TEL AVIV TO JERUSALEM. THE GOVERNOR URGED KHADDAM TO TAKE A POSITIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH RATHER THAN DWELLING ON HISTORY, BUT KHADDAM SAID HE WANTED TO SEE UNBIASED ACTIONS FROM THE U.S. RATHER THAN JUST WORDS. WHEN THE GOVERNOR SUGGESTED THAT SYRIA OUGHT TO UNDERSTAND ISRAEL'S FEAR OF BEING ATTACKED, KHADDAM BRUSHED THAT ASIDE AND INSISTED THAT SYRIA WAS THE ONE THAT NEEDED DEFENDING AGAINST (ISRAELI) AGGRESSION. KHADDAM DID ASSURE THE GOVERNOR THAT SYRIA WANTS PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE AREA, AND IS READY TO WORK WITH ANYONE ELSE WHO HAS THOSE AIMS. THE GOVERNOR RECOMMENDED MORE BILATERAL EXCHANGES OF PERSONS LIKE HIS OWN GROUP, AND KHADDAM READILY AGREED. COMMENT: KHADDAM WAS VERY CORDIAL AND RELAXED, BUT BROKE NO NEW GROUND ON THE ISSUES. END SUMMARY

3. ON MARCH 29, OREGON GOVERNOR VICTOR ATIYEH MET FOR 90 MINUTES WITH SYRIAN V.P. ABDUL HALIM KHADDAM. THE GOVERNOR WAS ACCOMPANIED BY CHARGE AND FOUR MEMBERS OF HIS ACCOMPANYING DELEGATION, WHILE V.P. WAS ACCOMPANIED BY DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS AT SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY, INTERPRETER AND NOTE TAKER.

4. FOLLOWING OPENING PLEASANTRIES, GOVERNOR CONGRATULATED THE V.P. ON HIS RECENT APPOINTMENT AND NOTED THAT HE HAD NOW MANY OPPORTUNITIES BEFORE HIM. KHADDAM RESPONDED THAT HE INDEED HAD MANY PROBLEMS ADDING THAT THE UNITED STATES "DOESN'T LET US REST IN THIS AREA." GOVERNOR RESPONDED THAT HE DISAGREED, IN THAT THE U.S. DOES WANT SYRIA TO SUCCEED IN ITS PEACE EFFORTS IN LEBANON, ESPECIALLY NOW THAT SARG IS IN EFFECT AFTER THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE U.S., THE ONLY (OUTSIDE) PARTY ATTEMPTING TO MAKE PEACE IN LEBANON. KHADDAM RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT THE U.S. WAS FAMILIAR WITH THE SURFACE OF THE MOON BUT DID NOT

KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING HERE IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

5. CONTINUING, KHADDAM SAID THE U.S. HAD ENBROILED ITSELF IN LEBANON "AND WE DON'T KNOW WHY." HE SAID SYRIA'S FREQUENT DISCUSSIONS WITH AMERICAN OFFICIALS AND REPRESENTATIVES HAD NOT GIVEN SYRIA A CONVINCING ANSWER TO THE QUESTION AS TO WHY ISRAEL RECEIVES MORE AID PER CAPITA FROM THE UNITED STATES THAN DO AMERICANS THEMSELVES.

6. GOVERNOR ATIYEH REMINDING KHADDAM THAT HE DOES NOT REPRESENT THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION, SAID THAT THE U.S. DID NOT ENTER LEBANON ALL BY ITSELF BUT CAME TO LEBANON WITH GOOD INTENTIONS AND ALONG WITH THE FRENCH, THE BRITISH AND THE ITALIANS. THE PURPOSE OF THE U.S. PRESENCE THERE WAS PEACEKEEPING AND UNFORTUNATELY THESE EFFORTS BROKE DOWN AND THE MARINES STAYED LONGER THAN THEY SHOULD HAVE. GOVERNOR STRESSED THAT THE MARINES WERE WITHDRAWN BECAUSE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN THE UNITED STATES. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THIS WAS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE FACT THAT PUBLIC OPINION IN THE UNITED STATES OFTEN HAS AN INFLUENCE ON POLICY, REGARDLESS OF WHAT THE ISRAELI LOBBY MAY DO.

7. GOVERNOR THEN EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD BROUGHT WITH HIM TO SYRIA REPRESENTATIVES OF TWO TELEVISION STATIONS AND THE MAJOR NEWSPAPER IN OREGON, WHO WERE REPORTING EVERY DAY BACK TO CITIZENS OF OREGON ON CONDITIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. FOR EXAMPLE, THE TELEVISION PEOPLE HAD DONE A REPORT ON THE ISRAELI DESTRUCTION AT KUHAITRA ALREADY AND THIS WAS A STORY THAT THEY WERE QUITE EXCITED ABOUT. GOVERNOR ATIYEH SAID HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE GOOD IF OTHER DELEGATIONS VISITING THE MIDDLE EAST ALSO BROUGHT MEDIA PEOPLE WITH THEM AND SUGGESTED THAT SARG

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UGHT TO INVITE OTHER GOVERNORS FOR ORIENTATION TOURS, MENTIONING THAT ISRAEL DOES SUCH TOURS. GOVERNOR MENTIONED THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ARAB AMERICANS WHICH IS BEGINNING TO ORGANIZE AND OFFSET THE ISRAELI LOBBY.

8. WHEN KHADDAM SAID HE AGREED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH VISITS AND MENTIONED THAT SYRIA MAKES AN EFFORT TO WELCOME SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN, GOVERNOR ATIYEH RESPONDED THAT IT WOULD BE EVEN MORE IMPORTANT TO HAVE THE AMERICAN GOVERNORS VISIT THE MIDDLE EAST BECAUSE AS A POLITICIAN HE KNEW YOU COULD BUILD A FIRE AT HOME IN HOME DISTRICTS ON POLITICAL ISSUES. KHADDAM SAID HE AGREED WITH THAT POINT. KHADDAM ADDED THAT GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SYRIA AND THE UNITED STATES DO NOT DEPEND ON SYRIA'S EFFORTS ALONE BUT ARE SUBSTANTIALLY INFLUENCED BY THE U.S. POSITION ON THE JERUSALEM QUESTION, NEVERTHELESS SYRIA HAS A DESIRE FOR GOOD RELATIONS AND AN EXCHANGE OF VISITS IS A GOOD IDEA.

9. GOVERNOR ATIYEH THEN MADE THE POINT THAT ONE SHOULD CLEARLY DISTINGUISH THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION FROM THE U.S. CONGRESS. HE COMMENTED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION IS MORE FAVORABLE (TO THE ARAB VIEW) THAN IS CONGRESS, AND SAID THAT THE ADMINISTRATION TRULY WANTS TO BE OF SOME ASSISTANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. HE SAID THAT ADMITTING THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAS MADE SOME MISTAKES, DOES NOT MEAN THAT THEY ARE UNCONCERNED. GOVERNOR ATIYEH SAID THAT FOR EXAMPLE PRESIDENT REAGAN IS STRONGLY OPPOSED TO THE PROPOSAL TO MOVE THE AMERICAN EMBASSY FROM TEL AVIV TO JERUSALEM, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES FAVOR THAT PROPOSAL. THE GOVERNOR SAID PRESIDENT REAGAN WANTS TO BE A PART OF THE PROCESS OF HELPING PEACE. HE SAID THAT HE WANTED TO COMMUNICATE THAT MESSAGE TO THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT AND HOPED TO BE ABLE TO GIVE IT DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT AQDAD. THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT HE HOPED THAT WITH DELEGATIONS LIKE HIS OWN PLUS THE EFFORTS OF THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION WHICH DEFINITELY WANTS TO BE FRIENDS WITH THE COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND PART OF THE SOLUTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST, ALL OF THE INTERESTED PARTIES COULD COME TOGETHER SO THAT THE U.S. WOULD ESTABLISH FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH ALL OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST INCLUDING ISRAEL, SWITER THAN JUST ONE OR SOME OF THEM.

10. KHADDAM RESPONDED THAT FROM A PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW, HOWEVER, THE SITUATION WAS MOVING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. KHADDAM SAID THAT IF AMERICAN AID TO ISRAEL HAD BEEN LIMITED TO ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, SYRIA WOULD NOT HAVE OBJECTED, THAT IS AMERICA'S BUSINESS, BUT AMERICAN

MILITARY AID HELPS ISRAEL OCCUPY ARAB LANDS AND COMMIT AGGRESSION AGAINST THE ARABS.

11. GOVERNOR ATIYEH THEN SAID HE WANTED TO STRESS THAT IN HIS OWN EXPERIENCE IN THE STATE OF OREGON HE HAS GONE THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES ECONOMICALLY AND SOMETIMES THINGS HAVE GONE WRONG, BUT HE DOES NOT SPEND TIME LAMENTING WHY OR HOW BUT RATHER DEVOTING HIS ENERGIES TO SOLUTIONS. HE SAID ONE CAN LEARN FROM THE PAST BUT HE ALWAYS TRIES TO MOVE FORWARD AND NOT SPEND TIME ON DAYS THAT ARE GONE. KHADDAM AGREED. CONTINUING, GOVERNOR ATIYEH SAID HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE SOLUTIONS ON THE MIDDLE EAST WERE NOT EASY AND THAT SYRIA WAS WORKING HARD TO SETTLE THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR AND THAT THERE WERE MANY OTHER PROBLEMS IN THE AREA. THE GOVERNOR SAID HE RECOGNIZED THAT KHADDAM'S IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS WAS GREATER THAN THAT OF A GOVERNOR BUT HE AS GOVERNOR WANTED TO ASK HOW HE COULD CONTRIBUTE TO MOVING FORWARD AND ASKED IF THERE WAS A ROLE FOR SOMEONE LIKE HIMSELF WHO IS NOT A PART OF THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION.

12. KHADDAM RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT PEOPLE WHO DO NOT KNOW THE PROBLEMS OF THE AREA CANNOT BRING ABOUT A SOLUTION, JUST AS A PERSON WITH A HEADACHE WHO DOES NOT KNOW THE CAUSE OF THE HEADACHE IS UNSURE WHICH MEDICINE TO TAKE. HE SAID IF TWO PEOPLE DISAGREE THEY CAN GO TO COURT AND WHERE THERE IS A LAW JUDGMENTS ARE MADE, BUT IN THE MIDDLE EAST THAT FACILITY IS NOT AVAILABLE. KHADDAM THEN DESCRIBED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL, THE EXPULSION OF PALESTINIANS WHO "LIVE IN TERRIBLE

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CONDITIONS" AND WANT TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES AND SAID IT IS HARD TO SEE A SOLUTION IF ISRAEL DOES NOT GIVE PALESTINIANS THEIR RIGHTS AND RETURN OCCUPIED TERRITORY TO ITS OWNERS. THUS, SAID KHADDAM, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT MUST RECOGNIZE THESE FACTS AND IF IT DOES IT WILL KNOW HOW TO REACH A JUST SOLUTION.

13. KHADDAM ASSURED GOVERNOR ATIYEH THAT SYRIA WANTS PEACE AND A SETTLEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS IN THE AREA, BUT THIS MUST BE A JUST AND STABLE PEACE, NOT ONE THAT CAN BE UNDERMINED AND COLLAPSE WITH THE FIRST SHAKE. KHADDAM SAID THAT AMERICAN OFFICIALS CAN HELP RESTORE STABILITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST IF THEY ARE MORE OBJECTIVE, ALTHOUGH HE RECOGNIZED THAT THIS MIGHT BE DIFFICULT IN AN ELECTION YEAR.

14. GOVERNOR ATIYEH THEN FOCUSED ON ISRAEL'S SECURITY PROBLEM AND MENTIONED THAT ISRAEL REPEATEDLY SAYS THAT IT FEARS MILITARY ACTIONS WHICH IT MUST DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST. THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT SOME "SIGNALS" ARE NEEDED TO SAY TO ISRAEL THAT THEY DO NOT NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THEIR SECURITY, I.E., TO TAKE AWAY ISRAEL'S CONCERN. FOR EXAMPLE, THE GOVERNOR SAID SYRIA MIGHT DECLARE THAT IT WOULD BE WILLING TO PROTECT ISRAEL'S BORDERS AND THEREFORE ISRAEL DOES NOT NEED ALL THOSE ARMAMENTS, THAT WOULD BE ANOTHER WAY TO DEAL WITH THE QUESTION OF ARMS TO ISRAEL.

15. KHADDAM REPLIED BY SAYING THAT ONE HAD TO DEAL WITH THE QUESTION OF ISRAELI TERRITORIAL CLAIMS AND THE MASS EXODUS OF THE PALESTINIANS FROM PALESTINE. KHADDAM ASKED HOW SYRIA COULD TELL ISRAEL THAT IT WOULD PROTECT ITS BORDERS WHEN THOSE BORDERS WERE NOT THREATENED. KHADDAM SAID THAT IN FACT SYRIA'S WERE THE ONES THAT NEEDED TO BE DEFENDED. IT WAS THEREFORE NOT REALISTIC AT ALL TO SPEAK OF A SYRIAN GUARANTEE OF ISRAEL. IN FACT, IF THERE IS TO BE PEACE IN THE AREA, ANY GUARANTEES WOULD HAVE TO LAID DOWN BY THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL.

16. GOVERNOR ATIYEH SAID HE DID NOT NECESSARILY DISAGREE, HE WAS ONLY THROWING OUT IDEAS AND POKING AT THE QUESTION. KHADDAM CONTINUED THAT PALESTINIAN PEOPLE WHICH HAVE BEEN DENIED THEIR RIGHTS AND DISPLACED ARE STRUGGLING TO RETURN AND NO ONE HAS THE RIGHT TO PREVENT THEM FROM LAUNCHING A STRUGGLE FOR THIS PURPOSE. KHADDAM SAID THAT ONCE THE PROBLEMS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND PALESTINIAN RIGHTS ARE SOLVED, THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL COULD LAY DOWN APPROPRIATE SECURITY MEASURES.

17. GOVERNOR STATED THAT SYRIA NOW SEEMED TO BE THE ONLY COUNTRY WHICH WAS ACTIVELY WORKING TOWARD PEACE AND A LEBANESE SETTLEMENT. HE ASKED AGAIN WHAT AN AMERICAN GOVERNOR COULD DO TO HELP. KHADDAM REPLIED THAT SYRIA WELCOMES ALL EFFORTS IN THE PROPER ATMOSPHERE TO ASSIST. HE SAID SYRIA WANTS PEACE BECAUSE SYRIA IS SPENDING A MAJOR PORTION OF ITS REVENUES FOR DEFENSE, REVENUE WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN SPENT ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IF THERE HAD BEEN PEACE. HE SAID SYRIA HAS THEREFORE AN INTEREST IN PEACE BUT IT IS THE ISRAELI WILL WHICH IS BEING IMPOSED ON THE ARABS, AND ANY EFFORT TO CREATE A PROPER ATMOSPHERE FOR PEACE WOULD BE WELCOMED BY SYRIA.

18. GOVERNOR ATIYEH CONCLUDED THE DISCUSSION BY REMINDING THE VICE PRESIDENT THAT HE DOES NOT REPRESENT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, BUT HE DID EXPECT TO SEE PRESIDENT REAGAN AND WOULD REPORT TO HIM ON HIS VISIT TO SYRIA. HE SAID HE WOULD BE A MESSENGER WHO HAS DEEP CONCERN FOR PEACE AND HOPES FOR THE PEOPLE AND THAT HE WANTED TO ASSURE VICE PRESIDENT THAT AMERICAN EMOTIONS ARE THE SAME AS THOSE EXPRESSED BY THE VICE PRESIDENT. THE VICE PRESIDENT SAID HE BELIEVED GOVERNOR ATIYEH WOULD DO SOMETHING IMPORTANT IF HE FOLLOWED THAT COURSE.

19. BEIRUT MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. RUGH

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6966

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 02271

E. O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: OVIP, SY (ATIYEH, VICTOR)
SUBJECT: SYRIAN NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW WITH OREGON GOVERNOR
ATIYEH

SYRIAN NEWSPAPER MARCH 29 REPORTED AN INTERVIEW WITH
VISITING OREGON GOVERNOR VICTOR ATIYEH GIVEN ON MARCH 28.
FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE ARTICLE:

BEGIN TEXT: THE GOVERNOR OF OREGON SAYS AMERICAN POLICY
IN THE REGION LACKS CREDIBILITY. MR. VICTOR ATIYEH,
GOVERNOR OF OREGON, CRITICIZED AMERICAN POLICY IN THE
MIDDLE EAST AND ITS POSITIONS ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT.

MR. ATIYEH SAID IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THAWRA NEWSPAPER
THAT HE BELIEVES IT IS A GREAT MISTAKE THAT THE AMERICAN
CONGRESS IS APPROVING THE TRANSFER OF THE AMERICAN EM-
BASSY IN ISRAEL FROM TEL AVIV TO JERUSALEM. THE AMERICAN
OFFICIAL CONTINUED, WARNING OF THE DANGERS THAT WILL RESULT
FROM THIS MATTER. HE BELIEVES THAT JUST TALKING ABOUT
THIS ISSUE IS CONSIDERED DANGEROUS.

MR. ATIYEH CONFIRMED THAT IT IS NOT IN AMERICA'S INTERESTS
THAT SUCH A THING TAKE PLACE.

REGARDING AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT AND
THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS, MR. ATIYEH CONFIRMED THAT
AMERICA'S ROLE LACKS CREDIBILITY. HE SAID THAT IN ORDER
FOR AMERICA TO BECOME A MEDIATOR, IT MUST POSSESS CREDI-
BILITY AND THAT AMERICA HAS LOST THIS CREDIBILITY.

MR. ATIYEH EXPRESSED HIS HOPE THAT PEACE WOULD BE ACHIEVED
IN THE REGION. HE SAID THE AMERICAN PEOPLE CARE ABOUT
PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THAT THEY ARE ANXIOUS ABOUT
THE EVENTS AND SUFFERING THAT WERE WITNESSED BY THE
REGION. HE ADDED THAT THERE WILL BE A DAY WHEN THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE WILL HAVE THEIR SAY.
ON THE ROLE OF ARAB EMIGRANTS AND ARAB COMMUNITIES
IN AMERICA REGARDING THE ARAB CAUSE AND THE REQUIRED ROLE
IN THE FACE OF THE ZIONIST LOBBY'S ROLE IN THE US, MR.
ATIYEH SAID THAT THE ARAB COMMUNITIES ARE ACTING TO FORM
GROUPS THAT ARE EFFECTIVE AND THAT CAN PRACTICE IN THE
FUTURE AN ACTIVITY THAT WOULD SERVE THE ARAB CAUSE.

MR. ATIYEH EXPLAINED THAT FOUR YEARS AGO, AN ARAB ASSOCI-
ATION WAS ESTABLISHED IN WASHINGTON AND IT IS TRYING TO
GET IN TOUCH WITH AMERICAN POPULAR AND OFFICIAL CIRCLES
TO EXPLAIN TO THEM THE DIMENSIONS OF THE ARAB CAUSE AND
THE FACTS OF THE CONFLICT IN THE REGION.

MR. ATIYEH LAUDED THE PROJECTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS THAT WERE
ACCOMPLISHED ON THE LEVEL OF INTERNAL CONSTRUCTION. HE
ALSO EXPRESSED HIS SATISFACTION WITH HIS TALKS WITH SOME
SYRIAN OFFICIALS. END TEXT. RUGH

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6958
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 07 DAMASCUS 02267

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL, OVIP (ATIYEH, VICTOR), SY
SUBJECT: OREGON GOVERNOR ATIYEH'S MARCH 31 MEETING WITH
SYRIA'S PRESIDENT HAFIZ AL-ASSAD

1. (CONTINUE TEXT).

2. SUMMARY: ON MARCH 31, OREGON GOVERNOR ATIYEH,
ACCOMPANIED BY CHARGE AND BY ONE MEMBER OF OREGON DELEGA-
TION, MET WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD. MOST OF THE DISCUSSION
DEALT WITH US-SYRIAN RELATIONS, WHICH THE GOVERNOR
INITIATED BY EXPRESSING CONCERN THAT RELATIONS ARE NOT
GOOD DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE U.S. WANTS PEACE IN
THE AREA AND IT APPEARS SYRIA DOES ALSO. THE GOVERNOR
SAID HE HAD BEEN ASKED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO SAY
THAT THE USG WANTS TO OPEN UP LINES OF COMMUNICATION
WITH ASSAD. IN RESPONSE, THE SYRIAN PRESIDENT REAFFIRMED
THAT HE IS INTERESTED IN DIALOGUE WITH THE U.S., BUT
HE RECITED AT SOME LENGTH THE USUAL SYRIAN GRIEVANCES
ON U.S. POLICY: THE U.S. IS SERVING ISRAELI RATHER
THAN AMERICAN INTERESTS, IT IS PROVIDING HUGE AMOUNTS
OF ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL, AND IT
IS ASKING SYRIA TO ABANDON ITS PRINCIPLES. ASSAD
RECALLED HE HAD RECEIVED A U.S. MESSAGE ON FEBRUARY 8,
1984 WHICH HE SAID WAS "UNWISE" BECAUSE IT AMOUNTED TO
AN AMERICAN WARNING, OR THREAT, AND THE AMERICANS SHOULD
KNOW THAT THIS IS NOT THE WAY TO DEAL WITH SYRIA. ASSAD
ALSO RECALLED (ONCE AGAIN) HIS JUNE 10, 1982 MEETING
WITH AMBASSADOR HABIB, AND HE EXPRESSED HIS STRONGEST
CRITICISM YET OF HABIB PERSONALLY; AT THE SAME TIME
ASSAD HAD KIND WORDS FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY MURPHY. TO
THE GOVERNOR'S PERSISTENT INQUIRIES ABOUT THE ROLE
SYRIA ENVISIONED FOR THE U.S. IN THE AREA, ASSAD SAID
THAT THE SUPERPOWERS COULD NOT BE IGNORED IN SETTLEMENT
OF THE REGION'S PROBLEMS, BUT HE STRESSED THAT WASHINGTON
SHOULD DO MORE TO "UNDERSTAND" THE MIDDLE EAST AND TO
RESTORE ITS CREDIBILITY WITH THE ARABS IN ORDER TO PLAY
A ROLE THERE. GOVERNOR ATIYEH EXPRESSED HIS OWN INTEREST
IN FACILITATING UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION BETWEEN
OUR TWO COUNTRIES, AND SAID TO THAT END HE WOULD
RECOMMEND TO THE OTHER REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS THAT THEY
ALSO BRING TRADE DELEGATIONS TO THE AREA; ASSAD
WELCOMED THIS PROPOSAL. THE GOVERNOR DID NOT RAISE
THE QUESTION OF LEBANON IN ANY DETAIL, BUT HE DID TALK
ABOUT TERRORISM AND THE BUCKLEY CASE (SEPTEL). END
SUMMARY.

not

3. GOVERNOR OF OREGON VICTOR ATIYEH MET FOR NEARLY
TWO HOURS ON MARCH 31 WITH PRESIDENT HAFIZ AL-ASSAD. THE
MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT WAS THE LAST EVENT
IN A SIX DAY PROGRAM ARRANGED BY THE SYRIAN GOVERN-

MENT FOR THE VICTOR GOVERNOR WHOSE FATHER WAS
BORN IN A SMALL SYRIAN VILLAGE. THE GOVERNOR WAS
ACCOMPANIED IN THE MEETING BY THE CHARGE AND BY ONE
MEMBER OF HIS DELEGATION, MR. GUY KYLE, ANOTHER
OREGONIAN OF SYRIAN ORIGIN. THE GOVERNOR WAS
ACCOMPANIED ONLY BY HIS INTERPRETER AND A NOTE TAKER.

4. GOVERNOR OPENED THE DISCUSSION BY DECIDING
HIS VISIT TO SYRIA AS THE HEAD OF A DELEGATION
WHICH INCLUDED BUSINESSMEN AND OREGON MEDIA
REPRESENTATIVES. HE SAID HE WANTED TO RECOMMEND
THAT SYRIA INVITE OTHER AMERICAN GOVERNORS TO BRING
DELEGATIONS TO SYRIA, EXPLAINING THAT IT WOULD BE
HELPFUL TO SYRIA BECAUSE IT WOULD HELP PROVIDE THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC WITH MORE INFORMATION ON THE MIDDLE
EAST. THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT AMERICAN PUBLIC
KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND
PARTICULARLY SYRIA IS NOT VERY STRONG. ASSAD
REPLIED THAT HE AGREED WITH THE IDEA IN PRINCIPLE,
BUT WONDERED WHETHER SYRIA WOULD BE PERMITTED
UNDER AMERICAN REGULATIONS TO ISSUE INVITATIONS
TO AMERICAN GOVERNORS DIRECTLY, ADDING THAT IF IT
WERE NOT POSSIBLE TO DO THAT IN A FORMAL SENSE,
SYRIA WOULD WELCOME GOVERNORS WITHOUT FORMAL
INVITATIONS.

5. GOVERNOR ATIYEH SAID THAT AS THE ELECTED CHAIRMAN
OF THE REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS' CONFERENCE HE WOULD
WRITE TO THE 14 OTHER REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS AND
TELL THEM THAT SYRIA IS INTERESTED IN BEING UNDER-
STOOD BETTER AND WOULD WELCOME VISITS BY THE
GOVERNORS, AND SUGGESTING THAT IF THEY RECEIVE

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6959
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 07 DAMASCUS 02267

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y T E X T

AN INVITATION THEY SHOULD ACCEPT IT. THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT THE BEST MEANS TO ARRANGE A VISIT WOULD BE ON THE BASIS OF A SYRIAN GOVERNMENT INVITATION TO COME AND TO BRING A TRADE DELEGATION. ASSAD RESPONDED THAT HE THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE POSSIBLE AND FOR EXAMPLE THE SYRIAN MINISTRY OF ECONOMY COULD ISSUE SUCH AN INVITATION. THE NOTE TAKER WAS DIRECTED TO FOLLOW UP ON THIS. ASSAD ALSO SUGGESTED THAT INVITATIONS COULD BE SENT THROUGH THE SYRIAN AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON.

6. GOVERNOR ATIYEH SAID THAT ARRANGING SUCH EXCHANGES WOULD NOT IN ITSELF SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF MISUNDERSTANDING, BUT IT COULD BE A BEGINNING. HE MENTIONED THAT DURING HIS VISIT TO SYRIA, THE TWO TELEVISION TEAMS FROM OREGON HAD SENT BACK BY SATELLITE FOOTAGE WHICH APPEARED EVERY NIGHT IN OREGON AND THAT WAS HELPFUL. THE GOVERNOR SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE AT HOME TO KNOW ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF THEIR GOVERNOR IN SYRIA. ASSAD SAID HE AGREED.

7. TWICE LATER IN THE CONVERSATION, GOVERNOR ATIYEH RETURNED TO THE SPECIFIC IDEA OF AMERICAN GOVERNORS VISITING SYRIA. AT ONE POINT HE SAID THAT IT WAS FINE TO HAVE U.S. CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS MAKING VISITS, BUT ASSAD SHOULD KNOW THAT CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS ARE ELECTED OUT OF THE INDIVIDUAL STATES AND IF ONE INVITED GOVERNORS FROM THOSE STATES ONE COULD IN EFFECT "BUILD FIRES AT HOME". THE GOVERNOR ASKED IF SYRIA HAD EVER RECEIVED AN OFFICIAL VISIT BY A U.S. GOVERNOR BEFORE, AND ASSAD SAID HE THOUGHT THIS WAS THE FIRST ONE. GOVERNOR ATIYEH THEN RECOUNTED AN EXPERIENCE HE HAD HAD IN 1968 WHEN HE WAS ON THE PLATFORM COMMITTEE OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY AND PROPOSED PROVIDING AMERICAN ARMS EQUALLY TO THE COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST, A PROPOSAL WHICH HAD EVOKED A VERY ANGRY RESPONSE FROM SENATOR JAVITS, WHICH WAS SO HEATED THAT THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN EVERETT DIRKSON HAD TO APOLOGIZE FOR JAVITS' BEHAVIOR. ASSAD SAID THAT STORY WAS AN EXAMPLE OF THE BLIND FANATICISM AND BIAS IN FAVOR OF ISRAEL WHICH ASSAD SAID HE KNEW ABOUT IN SENATOR JAVITS. GOVERNOR ATIYEH SAID THE POINT HE WANTED TO MAKE WAS THAT A PERSON WITH THOSE VIEWS GETS ELECTED IN NEW YORK STATE BUT IF THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK UNDERSTOOD THE SITUATION THEY WOULD NOT ELECT JAVITS. ASSAD SAID HE APPRECIATED THAT VERY MUCH.

8. LATER THE GOVERNOR RETURNED TO THE QUESTION AND SAID AGAIN THAT HE PLANNED TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE OTHER REPUBLICAN GOVERNORS AND WOULD SUGGEST THEY

COME ONE AT A TIME TO THE MIDDLE EAST AND BRING DELEGATIONS WITH THEM. THE GOVERNOR NOTED THAT THERE IS ALSO AN ORGANIZATION OF ARAB AMERICANS, THE NAHA, WHICH PERFORMS A DIFFERENT FUNCTION BUT WHAT HE IS PROPOSING IS BRINGING AMERICANS WHO ARE NOT OF ARAB ORIGIN TO THE MIDDLE EAST IN ORDER TO BROADEN THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. ASSAD SAID HE THOUGHT IT WAS A VERY GOOD IDEA.

9. MOST OF THE TWO HOUR DISCUSSION WAS SPENT ON THE MORE GENERAL QUESTION OF SYRIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN A SUBSTANTIVE SENSE. GOVERNOR ATIYEH OPENED THAT DISCUSSION BY SAYING AS A VERY DEVOUT AMERICAN HE KNEW THAT THE COURSE THE UNITED STATES HAD TAKEN WAS NOT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF HIS COUNTRY. ASSAD INTERJECTED THAT HE HAD SAID EXACTLY THAT TO ALL AMERICAN OFFICIALS THAT HE HAD MET. CONTINUING, THE GOVERNOR SAID HE KNEW THERE MUST BE A SOLUTION (TO BILATERAL DIFFERENCES) SOMEWHERE, HOWEVER HE DID NOT KNOW WHERE IT WAS BUT EVERYTHING HE HAD HEARD MADE IT CLEAR TO HIM THAT SYRIA DOES WANT PEACE AND DOES NOT WANT WAR. THE GOVERNOR SAID HE FIRMLY BELIEVED THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ALSO WANT PEACE. HE SAID HE KNEW THAT THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SYRIA WERE NOT VERY STRONG AND HE WAS AWARE OF AMERICA'S LACK OF CREDIBILITY WITH THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT, BUT HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IF THERE WAS ANY WAY THE UNITED STATES COULD WORK WITH THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT BECAUSE SYRIA SEEMED TO BE STANDING ALONE. THE GOVERNOR SAID HE DID NOT KNOW IF HE COULD BE A MESSENGER, AND HE NOTED PARLITHETICALLY THAT HE

new about the mayor of NYC

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O 021356Z APR 84 FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6960 INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN AMEMBASSY BEIRUT AMEMBASSY CAIRO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM AMEMBASSY JIDDA USELO RIYADH AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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WAS NOT PART OF THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION, BUT HE SAID THAT AS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN WITH A HIGH ELECTIVE OFFICE AND OF ARAB BACKGROUND HE WOULD LIKE TO BE HELPFUL IN ANY WAY HE COULD, EVEN IN A SMALL WAY.

10. AT THAT POINT THE GOVERNOR SAID HE DID HAVE ONE MESSAGE THAT HE WANTED TO CONVEY TO PRESIDENT ASSAD BECAUSE IT HAD BEEN GIVEN TO HIM AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY MURPHY TO BRING TO SYRIA. THE GOVERNOR SAID HE HAD NOT GIVEN THIS MESSAGE TO ANYONE ELSE. HE SAID THE MESSAGE WAS THAT THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT WANT TO OPEN UP LINES OF COMMUNICATION AND DISCUSSION WITH ASSAD. HE SAID THAT WAS THE ONLY MESSAGE HE WAS CARRYING FROM THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION, BUT HE ADDED IT WAS WORTHY OF DISCUSSION AND THOUGHT PRESIDENT ASSAD OUGHT TO KNOW THERE WAS STRONG AMERICAN DESIRE TO HAVE A DISCUSSION WITH THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT IN APPROPRIATE WAYS.

11. ASSAD RESPONDED BY SAYING FIRST THAT HE AGREED WITH THIS PROPOSITION. THEN ASSAD LAUNCHED INTO A LENGTHY DISCUSSION OF U.S. POLICY, WHICH HE OPENED BY SAYING THAT THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION LACKED CREDIBILITY. HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN MANY WIDE OPENINGS IN THE PAST BUT UNFORTUNATELY THE U.S. HAD NOT IMPLEMENTED COMMITMENTS IT HAD TAKEN UPON ITSELF. ASSAD SAID "WE HAVE FELT THAT U.S. ENVOYS OR OFFICIALS WHO COME OUT HERE ARE MERE CARRIERS OF ISRAELI POSITIONS. WE DO NOT FEEL THEY SPEAK TO US AS AMERICANS SERVING THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES OR CARRYING THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE UNITED STATES TOWARDS THE AREA." ASSAD SAID IT LOOKS AS IF ISRAEL IS THE SUPER POWER AND IT IS SENDING AMERICAN ENVOYS HERE.

12. CONTINUING, ASSAD SAID THAT HE WOULD CITE AS AN EXAMPLE AMBASSADOR HABIB. HE SAID "I DON'T LIKE HIM, AND I WOULD PREFER ANY OTHER AMERICAN OVER HIM, BECAUSE I BELIEVE HE WAS ABLE TO CHEAT US MORE. HE HAD A CHANCE TO CHEAT US BECAUSE HE WAS OF ARAB ORIGIN AND FRANKLY THIS FACT HAD AN EFFECT ON US BECAUSE WE EXPECTED THE OPPOSITE FROM HIM THAT HE WOULD HAVE SOME TIES TO US." EXPLAINING, ASSAD SAID THERE WAS AN ARAB PROVERB THAT THE BETRAYAL OF CLOSE RELATIVES IS FAR MORE HARMFUL THAN THAT OF A DISTANT PERSON, AND THAT THERE WAS ANOTHER ARAB PROVERB THAT SAID THE INJUSTICE OF THE CLOSEST RELATIVE IS SHARPER THAN THE WELL-SHARPENED SWORD. THEN PRESIDENT ASSAD

IN AN APPARENT REFERENCE TO THE DISCUSSION OF JUNE 10, 1982 WITH AMBASSADOR HABIB (WHICH HE AND OTHER SYRIAN OFFICIALS HAVE MENTIONED REPEATEDLY IN RECENT MONTHS) SAID THAT HE HAD ASKED HABIB WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO MAKE THE UNITED STATES CONTRADICT WHAT SYRIA AND AMERICA HAD AGREED UPON BASED UPON A WRITTEN MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT REAGAN. ASSAD SAID THAT SYRIA ONLY ASKED THE UNITED STATES TO IMPLEMENT AGREEMENTS AND ABIDE BY AGREEMENTS THE U.S. IS COMMITTED TO. ASSAD SAID WHEN HE HAD ASKED HABIB ABOUT THIS, HABIB'S ONLY ANSWER WAS THAT WHAT HAD HAPPENED HAD NOT BEEN WHAT THE UNITED STATES HAD WANTED TO HAPPEN, WHICH WAS LIKE THE ANSWER OF AN INCAPACITATED CHILD, ASSAD SAID.

13. ASSAD RECALLED THAT HE HAD TOLD THIS STORY TO SECRETARY SHULTZ DURING THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO DAMASCUS AND HAD SAID THAT HABIB'S EXPLANATION MEANT ONE OF TWO THINGS, EITHER THE UNITED STATES IS COLLUDING WITH ISRAEL TO UNDERTAKE AGGRESSION AGAINST SYRIA, OR THE UNITED STATES IS UNABLE TO IMPLEMENT WHAT IT HAS COMMITTED ITSELF TO. HE SAID THAT EVEN SECRETARY SHULTZ HAD NO ANSWER FOR THIS, AND THE CONCLUSION WAS THEREFORE THAT ZIONISM IS MAKING "SOME PEOPLE" LIVE IN FEAR OF INTIMIDATION. ASSAD SAID THAT SYRIA HAS FELT THROUGHOUT THE YEARS THAT ANYTHING ZIONISM WANTS TO HAPPEN WILL HAPPEN.

14. ASSAD THEN MENTIONED AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE A CONVERSATION HE HAD HAD DURING THE VISIT OF

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6901
INFO AMEMBASSY ANMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
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AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
USELO RIYADH
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 04 OF 07 DAMASCUS 02267

CODEL HAMILTON TO DAMASCUS (NOVEMBER 17, 1982).
ASSAD SAID THAT ONE OF THE CONGRESSMEN IN HAMILTON'S
CODEL EXPRESSED HIMSELF IN A WAY THAT WAS UNLIKE
THAT OF A CONGRESSMAN AND ASSAD WONDERED IF HE
WAS REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL RATHER THAN OF THE U.S.
ASSAD SAID THAT THESE PEOPLE WERE ALSO TALKING ABOUT
PEACE. HE SAID "I HAVE DOUBTS THAT THE U.S.
ADMINISTRATION WANTS PEACE. IN A SENSE YOU ARE
BELITTLING OUR INTELLIGENCE BECAUSE PEACE DOES
NOT MEAN HERE WORDS." ASSAD SAID AMERICANS TALK OF
PEACE BUT AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS PUBLISH THE NEWS THAT
THE U.S. IS PLANNING TO GIVE THREE BILLION DOLLARS
IN AID TO ISRAEL. ASSAD ASKED "DON'T YOU SEE THAT
YOU ARE NOT BALANCED AND THAT THIS DOES NOT HELP
PEACE AND IT DOES NOT HELP ANYONE LOOK AT U.S.
FOREIGN POLICY WITH ANYTHING BUT APPREHENSION."
ASSAD THEN CITED SOME STATISTICS ON AMERICAN AID
TO ISRAEL AND SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THAT 90 PERCENT
OF THE THIRD WORLD POPULATION HAD AN INCOME BELOW
THAT WHICH THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER PROVIDED TO EACH
ISRAELI CITIZEN, AND IN ADDITION THE U.S. PROVIDED
THE MOST MODERN KLAPOURRY TO ISRAEL.

15. CONTINUING, ASSAD SAID THAT SYRIA IS NOT
AT ALL TRYING TO CUT OFF DIALOGUE WITH THE UNITED
STATES, BUT WHEN THE UNITED STATES DISGUISES
ISSUES WITH SYRIA "THEY WANT US TO SELL OUT OUR
PRINCIPLES AND WANT US TO SUBMIT TO ISRAEL'S WILL
AND BE SMALL AND WEAK, WHILE ISRAEL IS STRONGER.
THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN." ASSAD ADMITTED THAT CHANGE
TAKES TIME, AND HE SAID THAT SYRIA AND THE ARABS
ARE STILL IN A BACKWARD STATE, BUT THEY ARE MOVING
AHEAD BRISKLY. ASSAD SAID THAT WHOEVER LOOK AT
THE FUTURE OBJECTIVELY WILL SAY THAT THE FUTURE
DOES NOT FAVOR ISRAEL.

16. THEN ASSAD REFERRED TO HIS RECENT INTERVIEW
WITH HENRY GRUNWALD OF TIME MAGAZINE WHO HAD ASKED
HIM ABOUT THE U.S. POSITION IN THE AREA. ASSAD
SAID HE HAD REPLIED THAT THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT
DOES NOT FOLLOW POLICY BASED ON THE INTEREST OF
THE AMERICAN PUBLIC BUT ONLY ON THE VOTES OF
AMERICAN JEWS WHO DO NOT PROMOTE AMERICAN INTERESTS
FIRST, BUT RATHER ISRAELI INTERESTS. ASSAD SAID
"THIS IS OUR CHRONIC PROBLEM BUT WE ARE READY TO
DISCUSS THE ISSUES OPEN-MINDEDLY."

17. ASSAD THEN SAID HE HAD TOLD AN AMERICAN RECENTLY,
HE THOUGHT IT WAS AMBASSADOR PAGANELLI, THAT IN ORDER
TO HAVE AN ACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH SYRIA THE AMERICANS
SHOULD PUT DOWN THEIR GUNS. HE SAID IN A RESPONSE

TO A MESSAGE BROUGHT TO HIM BY AMBASSADOR PAGANELLI
HE HAD STATED THAT PATRIOTIC AND PAN-ARAB INTERESTS
MUST ALWAYS BE ON THE TABLE AND ARE NOT SUBJECT
TO BARGAINING. HE SAID UNFORTUNATELY THE AMBASSADOR
HAD BROUGHT A MESSAGE OF WARNING, NOTING THAT OF
COURSE THIS WAS NOT PAGANELLI'S MESSAGE BUT A
MESSAGE FROM THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. IN RESPONSE,
ASSAD SAID THAT HE ASKED THE AMBASSADOR TO TELL
THE PRESIDENT THAT THE AMERICAN MESSAGE WAS NOT
WISE BECAUSE IN DEALING WITH SYRIA THROUGHOUT THE
YEARS THE AMERICANS SHOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE
NATURE OF THE SYRIANS AND HOW SYRIA WOULD ANSWER
SUCH A LETTER. IF WISDOM HAD PREVAILED, THE
AMERICANS WOULD NOT HAVE SENT THAT MESSAGE IN THE
FIRST PLACE. (COMMENT: ASSAD WAS APPARENTLY
REFERRING TO HIS MEETING OF FEB 8 WITH AMBASSADOR
PAGANELLI -- SEE DAMASCUS 1022 -- CONCERNING RULES OF
ENGAGEMENT IN LEBANON.)

18. ASSAD ADDED THAT A U.S. OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN,
IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, HAD SAID THAT THE PRESI-
DENTS OF THE UNITED STATES AND OF SYRIA HAD NOT
EXCHANGED MESSAGES BUT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT SPOKES-
MAN SAID THAT MESSAGES HAD BEEN EXCHANGED. ASSAD
SAID THAT SYRIA HAD NOT MADE PUBLIC THAT THE U.S.
HAD "WARNED AND THREATENED SYRIA", BUT DESPITE THAT,
THE U.S. HAD MADE ITS STATEMENT SO ASSAD HAD
INSTRUCTED HIS PRESS SECRETARY THAT IF ASKED FURTHER
ABOUT THIS QUESTION AND PERSISTENT DENYING OF THE

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6962
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
USELO RIYADH
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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U.S. LETTER, SYRIA SHOULD PUBLISH BOTH OF THEM.

19. ASSAD CONCLUDED, "THIS IS OUR CHRONIC PROBLEM, BUT WE DO WELCOME A DIALOGUE." PRESIDENT ASSAD THEN MENTIONED THAT HE KNEW ASSISTANT SECRETARY MURPHY WELL AND THAT HE HAD BEEN THE FIRST AMERICAN AMBASSADOR AFTER THE RESUMPTION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., AND THAT HE WAS A GOOD MAN. ASSAD ALSO MENTIONED THAT AMBASSADOR SEELYE HAD BEEN A GOOD AND OBJECTIVE AMBASSADOR AS WELL, WHO HAD BEEN A SUPPORTER OF AMERICAN INTERESTS AND HAD EXPRESSED AMERICAN POLICY WELL. HE SAID AMBAHSADOR SEELYE, WHO HAD BEEN BORN IN BEIRUT AND WAS A NATIVE AMERICAN, HAD DONE HIS BEST TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH SYRIA AND AFTER HIS RETIREMENT HIS PERSONAL VIEWS CAME OUT INTO THE OPEN AND IT WAS SEEN THAT THESE VIEWS WERE NOT THE SAME AS U.S. POLICY.

20. GOVERNOR ATIYEH THEN ASKED IF ASSAD CONSIDERED IT NECESSARY OR IMPORTANT THAT THE UNITED STATES BE INVOLVED IN WORKING TOWARD A SOLUTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST'S PROBLEMS. THE GOVERNOR SAID HE BELIEVED THAT THE ANSWER WAS YES BUT WANTED ASSAD'S VIEW AND WHAT WAS REQUIRED OF THE UNITED STATES. ASSAD RESPONDED WITHOUT HESITATION: "TO BE NEUTRAL AND UNBIASED. THE U.S. CANNOT PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE RDLE AS LONG AS IT IS ALIGNED WITH ISRAEL." THE GOVERNOR SAID HE UNDERSTOOD ASSAD'S POINT ABOUT BIAS BUT WANTED TO ASK AGAIN IF IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR THE U.S. TO STAND DOWN A BIT OR REMIAN ENGAGED. ASSAD RESPONDED, "WHEN IT HAS NO CREDIBILITY, THE U.S. SHOULD STAY AWAY AS FAR AS POSSIBLE."

21. THE GOVERNOR TRIED AGAIN, SAYING HE UNDERSTOOD WHAT ASSAD WAS SAYING AND HE WOULD TRY TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT AMERICAN CREDIBILITY, BUT HE WANTED TO KNOW IF ASSAD THOUGHT THE SUPER POWERS SHOULD STAY INVOLVED OR GET OUT. IF THE U.S. SHOULD BE PART OF A SETTLEMENT, HOW DOES ONE ACHIEVE A SETTLEMENT WITH U.S. PARTICIPATION? ASSAD RESPONDED THAT THE TWO SUPER POWERS CANNOT BE IGNORED IN A BIG ISSUE LIKE THE MIDDLE EAST QUESTION. HE SAID THE ATMOSPHERE THAT EXISTS BETWEEN THE TWO SUPER POWERS AT THE MOMENT IS, HOWEVER, AGGRAVATED BY THE FACT THE U.S. IS ALIGNED WITH ISRAEL. HOWEVER, MORE IMPORTANT IS THE ZIONIST INFLUENCE IN THE UNITED STATES WHICH MAGNIFICS THIS INFLUENCE.

22. GOVERNOR ATIYEH SAID HE WANTED TO TAK ASSAD'S MESSAGE BACK TO THE UNITED STATES BUT WANTED TO BE

SURE HE UNDERSTOOD IT CORRECTLY. AS HE UNDERSTOOD IT, THE UNITED STATES HAS NO ABILITY TO INTERCEDE TO HELP IN THE MIDDLE EAST NOW BECAUSE OF THE IMBALANCE OF ITS TREATMENT OF THE AREA; PEOPLE HERE DO NOT HATE THE UNITED STATES OR THE AMERICANS BUT THEY ARE CONFUSED AND FRUSTRATED AS TO WHY THE ADMINISTRATION DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THE MIDDLE EAST. PEOPLE IN THE ARAB WORLD ARE NOT ASKING FOR SPECIAL TREATMENT FROM THE UNITED STATES, THEY ARE JUST ASKING FOR EQUAL TREATMENT. THE GOVERNOR ASKED IF THAT WAS THE MESSAGE AND WAS THERE ANYTHING IN ADDITION TO THAT. ASSAD RESPONDED THAT THE GOVERNOR'S FORMULATION WAS CORRECT, ADDING THAT IN LIGHT OF THAT PERCEPTION, SYRIA WELCOMES A DIALOGUE WITH THE UNITED STATES. ASKED AGAIN IF THERE WAS ANY OTHER MESSAGE FOR THE UNITED STATES, ASSAD SAID WHAT THE GOVERNOR HAD FORMULATED EXPRESSES IT WELL. HE SAID, "WHEN THEY ACCEPT THIS WE WILL MOVE ON TO DISCUSSION OF OTHER THINGS." THE GOVERNOR NOTED THAT THERE WERE MANY ISSUES ON THE TABLE, TO WHICH ASSAD RESPONDED THAT SYRIA WAS PREPARED TO DEAL WITH EVERYTHING.

23. THEN THE GOVERNOR SAID HE WANTED TO SPEAK FRANKLY AND HE WAS GLAD THERE WERE NOT OTHER PEOPLE IN THE ROOM TO HEAR WHAT HE WAS ABOUT TO SAY WHICH HE WANTED TO EXPRESS VERY MUCH FROM HIS HEART. HE SAID THAT IF THERE IS ANY PLACE IN THE WORLD WHERE THERE IS REAL AFFECTION FOR THE UNITED STATES IT IS IN

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THE MIDDLE EAST. HE SAID THAT ASSAD MIGHT REMEMBER AFTER WORLD WAR II, THE UNITED STATES WAS TRYING TO "BUY THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES" TO KEEP THEM OUT OF THE SOVIET SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, WHILE THE UNITED STATES TOOK OUR "REAL FRIENDS" FOR GRANTED. ASSAD INTERJECTED WITH THE COMMENT THAT ALSO THE REVERSE WAS TRUE: THE U.S. IS THE ONE THAT IS BENEFITTING FROM THE WEALTH OF THE MIDDLE EAST BECAUSE THE OIL REVENUES ARE GOING TO THE UNITED STATES. CONTINUING, GOVERNOR ATIYEH SAID THAT IN HIS EXPERIENCE, LOVE AND AFFECTION CANNOT BE DEMANDED OF THE PEOPLE, THEY EITHER GIVE IT OR THEY DO NOT, OF THEIR OWN ACCORD. HE WAS NOT ABLE TO TELL THE OREGONIANS TO RESPECT HIM JUST BECAUSE HE IS GOVERNOR; THEY WOULD GIVE HIM RESPECT OR NOT. THE GOVERNOR SAID IT WAS VERY CLEAR TO HIM THAT THE PEOPLE IN SYRIA GENERALLY LOVE AND RESPECT PRESIDENT ASSAD. ASSAD INTERJECTED THAT WAS "ONE OF THE GRACES OF GOD." THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT WAS ALSO A BLESSING OF THE MAN. THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT HE WANTED TO SAY SINCERELY THAT AS GOVERNOR PERHAPS HE CAN DO SOMETHING TO HELP. AT LEAST IN COMING HERE HE DID NOT WANT TO CAUSE ANY HARM. ASSAD RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT ON THE CONTRARY IF THERE IS A POSITIVE ROLE TO PLAY HERE TO BE OF ASSISTANCE, SURELY THE MOST LIKELY PERSON TO PLAY THAT AS FAR AS SYRIA IS CONCERNED IS A YOUNG SYRIAN CHILD WHO IS NOW IN A POSITION OF POWER IN THE UNITED STATES. ASSAD SAID "WE ARE HAPPY THAT A U.S. GOVERNOR IS OF SYRIAN ORIGIN."

24. AT THE END OF THE TWO-HOUR CONVERSATION, AS THE GOVERNOR TOOK HIS LEAVE, HE SAID THAT HE HOPED TO HELP SYRIA AND ITS EFFORTS FOR PEACE.

25. COMMENT: PRESIDENT ASSAD WAS RELAXED AND CORDIAL THROUGHOUT THIS MEETING WITH GOVERNOR ATIYEH. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED TO SEE A "NATIVE SON" WHO HAD ATTAINED A HIGH ELECTIVE OFFICE IN THE UNITED STATES, AND GRATIFIED TO HEAR THE GOVERNOR EXPRESS UNDERSTANDING OF SYRIAN VIEWS. ASSAD USED THE OPPORTUNITY TO REITERATE SOME OF HIS WELL-KNOWN COMPLAINTS ABOUT U.S. POLICY IN THE AREA, AND IN THIS THERE WAS NOT MUCH NEW. ASSAD WAS SHARPER IN HIS CRITICISM OF AMBASSADOR HABIB THAN WE HAVE HEARD HIM BEFORE; APPARENTLY THE ATIYEH VISIT FOCUSED HIS ATTENTION ON THE QUESTION OF ARAB-AMERICANS AND HE MADE HIS REMARKS ABOUT HABIB TO EMPHASIZE THE POINT THAT HE FELT THE U.S. HAD NOT KEPT TO ITS COMMITMENTS. ONCE AGAIN, ASSAD REFERRED TO HIS JUNE 10, 1982 MEETING WITH HABIB IN WHICH HE CLAIMS THE U.S. MADE A "COMMITMENT" TO ENSURE A CEASE-FIRE AND ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL: HIS DISTORTED VERSION OF THAT MEETING IS SOMETHING WE HAVE TRIED REPEATEDLY TO CORRECT,

BUT ASSAD SEEMS TO HAVE STUCK IN HIS MIND THE ERRONEOUS CONCLUSION THAT WE RENEGED. IT IS ALSO INTERESTING THAT HE REMEMBERS OUR MESSAGE OF FEBRUARY 8 AS A "THREAT". ASSAD'S REMARKS ON THE U.S. WERE TOUGH, BUT HE DELIVERED THEM IN A TONE MORE OF SADNESS THAN OF ANGER, AND HE MADE A POINT OF REITERATING HIS INTEREST IN CONTINUING THE DIALOGUE WITH THE U.S., AND IN SEEING THE NECESSITY OF A U.S. ROLE, IF UNBIASED.

26. COMMENT CONTINUED: PRIOR TO THE MEETING, CHARGE HAD CAREFULLY BRIEFED GOVERNOR ATIYEH ON ALL MAJOR CURRENT ISSUES. CHARGE HAD SPECIFICALLY ASKED THAT THE GOVERNOR RAISE THE QUESTION OF TERRORISM AND THE ABDUCTION OF BEIRUT POLITICAL OFFICER BUCKLEY, AND HAD SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNOR PROBE ASSAD ON SYRIA'S VIEW OF THE LAUSANNE CONFERENCE AND THE NEXT STEPS IN LEBANON, INCLUDING SYRIA'S IDEAS ON WITHDRAWAL OF FOREIGN FORCES. THE GOVERNOR DID RAISE THE TERRORISM ISSUE AND THE BUCKLEY CASE (SEPTEL), BUT HE HAD HIS OWN AGENDA FOR THE MEETING AND HE CHOSE NOT TO RAISE LEBANON AT ALL. IN THE END HE SEEMS TO HAVE COME ACROSS TO ASSAD AS A SINCERE AND CONCERNED AMERICAN WHO WANTS TO DO HIS PART TO IMPROVE BILATERAL RELATIONS. ASSAD APPEARED QUITE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING THE GOVERNOR'S IDEA TO PROMOTE MORE SUCH VISITS BY AMERICAN STATE DELEGATIONS TO SYRIA, TO HELP THE AMERICAN PUBLIC "UNDERSTAND" THE ISSUES BETTER. END COMMENT.

27. NOTE: FOLLOWING THE MEETING WITH ASSAD, GOVERNOR

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ATIYEH RETURNED TO HIS HOTEL AND GAVE AN INTERVIEW WITH SYRIAN TELEVISION (WHICH WAS BROADCAST IN PART THE SAME EVENING ON PRIME TIME TV) AND WITH THE REPORTER FROM OREGON'S CHANNEL TWO TELEVISION, AS WELL AS WITH THE REPORTER OF THE OREGONIAN NEWSPAPER. IN TALKING WITH THE AMERICAN JOURNALISTS, GOVERNOR ATIYEH SAID, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT HE HAD CARRIED ONE OFFICIAL MESSAGE FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT, WHICH WAS TO ASK ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF OPNING (MORE) LINES OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE U. S. AND SYRIA, TO WHICH ASSAD HAD SAID THIS WAS POSSIBLE BUT THE TIME WAS NOT RIPE FOR IT NOW. IN RESPONSE TO A FOLLOWUP QUESTION ON THAT PART OF THE EXCHANGE WITH ASSAD, THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT ASSAD HAD INDICATED HE WAS LOOKING FOR SIGNS FROM THE U. S. ADMINISTRATION THAT IT WAS EVENHANDED IN ITS POLICY. THE GOVERNOR ALSO TOLD THE PRESS HE HAD RAISED THE ISSUE OF TERRORISM, WHICH ASSAD HAD SAID HE DID NOT SUPPORT. ASKED ABOUT ASSAD'S HEALTH, THE GOVERNOR SAID THE PRESIDENT "LOOKS GOOD". FINALLY, ASKED WHAT IMPACT HIS VISIT WOULD HAVE ON BILATERAL RELATIONS, THE GOVERNOR SAID HE DID NOT KNOW, BUT HE EXPECTED THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT WOULD WANT TO FIND OUT WHAT HE HAD LEARNED HERE AND HE HOPED HE COULD BE HELPFUL.

28. BEIRUT MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. RUGH

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