

Meeting Minutes
February 27, 2009
US Consulate General, Jerusalem

Attendance:

US Lt. Gen. Paul Selva (PS)
 CG Jacob Walles (JW)
 Gemal Hilal (GH)
 Peter Evans
 Tuggle

Palestinian: Dr. Saeb Erekat (SE)
 Rami Dajani

PS: We are talking to Bimkom to get information on building permit process for the West Bank – all of it – and planning in area C. We are preparing for the upcoming tour ...

SE: I can share with you a letter I sent to Turgeman last week on the road blocks that we are interested in removing. It is also a request to allow weapons and ammunition for Hazem Atallah (HA). When I sat with Gilad (AG) and Dangot recently I told them you are now praising the performance of the PA security forces – so how do we make strategic benefit from it and improve the situation? Then I drafted the letter – I hope we can do something serious.

PS: Did he [AG] share the Israeli proposal with you. It has been in the press. Apparently it has ten items. Part of it is about more flexibility from the brigade commanders. They are also approving tear gas and rubber bullets.

SE: HA wrote what is needed. I put the signature for the PM.

PS: We talked about removing 130 obstacles ...

SE: I am asking for nine. They can keep the other 661!

PS: I asked a question if a mayor asks for a dirt pile to be removed, and the brigade commander says it has no use, how do we do that? No one seems to want to respond because the IDF ...

SE: My advice, in spring of 2007 – in fact April 15th – Dayton submitted his benchmarks, the matrix. We need to revive that approach. There are several key obstacles to movement

that are crippling us – and they only separate Palestinians from Palestinians. For example, Wadi Nar – from Bethlehem to Ramallah, Toubas, Jericho, Huwwara. Why are they there? We need benchmarks and we need to specify dates. Take Jericho, it has always been quiet. It was not part of either Intifada. People just want to live peacefully. You have the checkpoint there that has no use except to keep people waiting for hours – to humiliate them. I am not asking for Za’aim or Tulkarem into Israel – only roadblocks separating Palestinians from Palestinians. These have no security relevance -- other than collective punishment and humiliation. Before 91 I used to drive in my own car to Gaza in an hour and a half. Now it takes me longer to go from Jericho to Al-Ouja, a few kilometers away.

PS: Is HA confident in the ability of Palestinian security forces to handle increased movement?

SE: These barriers to movement are illogical [gives more examples]. Israel realizes there are improvements in PA security. AG used to tell me “zero” at the beginning of every meeting. Now he says it was “beyond his wildest dreams” that the West Bank would hold during the recent events. So I said, how do you, AG, translate this into a strategic currency? Instead we get E1, Silwan etc. This is the Hamas program. We will be doomed. The whole mentality needs to be revisited – treating Palestinians with inferiority and humiliation. We need to regain public opinion. Our credibility is virtually destroyed. If we can go back to a matrix / benchmarks ... I know we also have obligations – they can be in the benchmarks. Tell HA he needs to do 1, 2, 3, in conjunction.

GH: Did Israel give you an answer?

SE: AG has been saying they are developing a plan – for a year!

JW: The AMA says they should develop a plan in conjunction with the US.

SE: AG says it’s a conspiracy [unclear].

JW: At the time of the AMA, they said two years. We said that was too long. Now three years have passed.

SE: And double the road blocks – except the two that Condi got removed. On settlements [hands to PS NSU chart comparing tenders pre- and post- Annapolis] you see an increase of 77% in tenders in East Jerusalem.

PS: Yes I have this chart.

GH: What is happening with the 80 houses in Silwan? There is also the Sheikh Jarrah settlement. Apparently the neighbourhood is becoming terrorized.

PS: We are hearing regarding the 88 house demolitions in Silwan that they are rumours – that no official measures have been taken. We are hearing that maybe given seriousness of

Sheikh Jarrah situation someone is trying to stir up the populace in Silwan – that there really aren't any demolition orders.

SE: [Asks NSU to check and confirm status of demolition orders in Silwan]

PS: Silwan is the flashpoint ...

SE: Silwan, Sheikh Jarrah, E1 ...

PS: Our position on E1 is consistent.

SE: Bibi Netanyahu (BN) is negotiating to form a government. There are three parties that are conditioning joining a coalition on E1. They are telling BN "you delivered on Har Homa, you can deliver on E1". The US will make a fuss, but then it's business as usual.

GH: A question on the Israeli government: you know the PM, what's your position as the PA regarding engagement in peace talks?

SE: I have officially relayed the position to the current Israeli government ...

GH: That may become irrelevant ...

SE: No. I gave an assurance that on security cooperation we will not stop. We are committed to "one gun, one authority", fighting terrorism regardless of government. Now on the political negotiations, our position is clear. We will deal with a government that accepts the two state solution, accepts previous agreements, and stops settlement. These are established in the Road Map.

GH: Are these ideas or policy?

SE: Policy. AM gave it to Mitchell. We gave a written copy to Lavrov, the EU, the UN. We will give you one. Livni told me last night that she went to him [BN] and said "I could have formed a government in September. When Shas demanded no negotiation on Jerusalem, I refused, because then there will be no Palestinian partner". So if Livni cannot be his [BN] partner, how can AM be?!

GH: Will AM stand next to the Secretary of State and say that?

SE: Yes.

GH: With all respect I don't think the interest of the PA now is peacemaking, but building the credibility of AM – this is at least for the next 6 to 8 months.

SE: Internal reform is the priority. Livni said I can use her line, the line she used with BN. "I want your program in writing, including two states and political negotiations".

GH: You look weaker if you use Israeli lines.

SE: Let me be candid. BN goes to Barack Obama (BO) and says 'Iran'. Then he says 'I am committed to improve the economy, to negotiations ...' Then BO will not make him stop settlements. I am using what Livni said to embarrass *you*. This is what I will tell Mitchell. You want to continue to take me on a ride.

GH: Advice: put this in an op-ed piece. A hypothetical meeting between BN and BO – put it all in writing for the Washington Post or the New York Times.

SE: Let's do it. We told this to Abdallah, Sarkozy ... if AM goes to negotiate he is finished. I am finished. We will negotiate but on the basis of the Road Map.

GH: If we negotiate we are handing it over to Iran.

PS: There's a different approach. You have a new administration in both the US and Israel. AM in a sense has seniority. He should say he will negotiate if there is acknowledgment of statehood and freeze. This way he acts as a senior – asks for the parties commitment to the existing process. As Salam Fayyad (SF) says, the Road Map requires and affirmative statement on the two state solution. So the formula is there but the subtlety is in reaffirmation.

Tuggle: That it is based on the Road Map.

SE: I understand – it's the same message. We will be having elections as well...

GH: To corner the US – not working against the US but to help credibility – we need a clear-cut policy on settlements, so a violation is a violation. Settlements and the two states is an oxymoron. Where territory is the most important ingredient in the conflict and you are eroding it by settlements. So we should be clear-cut, to cover it.

SE: AM has no option. His credibility is zero. Now how can we raise his credibility? All the corrupt people need to go – we need to reform Fatah.

GH: That is the second part of the argument. If you don't get Fatah's act together – you are finished. So when you talk you need to know what you are saying. How many promises have you not delivered on? With Abu Ala it's always in 2 months' time. AM is losing credibility not only with Palestinians but with everyone who wants to help.

SE: You need to tell him. If I raise it, since I'm a candidate for Fatah committee, it's seen as having an interest. So he also needs to hear it from you.

GH: That's the job of the CG, who has been doing a great job, if I may add. He will put it in the TPs for Hillary Clinton and George Mitchell.

SE: I know we are in deep trouble if there is no Fatah reform. We will lose the election with the current setup. I won in Jericho because people know I didn't buy cars without taxes, or take bags of money, unlike some of Gemal's friends. Bags of money – it's stupid, your idea of strongmen. I had this argument with the bastards in Shin Bet. This is not Ghana, or Libya. You know my principles.

GH: Bottom line is you need Fatah reform. Otherwise you are irrelevant and the PA is a dead corpse. Reform should be more important than building a state on shaky ground.

SE: Hamas won elections for two reasons: Fatah corruption and Sharon's unilateralism.

GH: What are the scenarios for Gaza – to bring the PA back to Gaza ...

SE: First, national reconciliation according to the Egypt discussion. If so then it will be new rules.

GH: Will the PA take its own 'muscle' into Gaza [from the West Bank] or will it revive the old?

SE: HA will be head of the police in both West Bank and Gaza. You know 40% of the forces in the West Bank are Gazans. We can bring them back. That's not the problem, because Hamas also wants to integrate.

GH: If this scenario doesn't work ...

SE: We need an 'end game' agreement with Israel. Then we take it to the people.

GH: If AM announces tomorrow that he is going to Gaza?

SE: Nothing would happen. He goes, Haniyyeh welcomes him. It gives Haniyyeh more credibility.

JW: The line-up in Cairo. Abu Marzuq, Abu Ala', Mustafa Barghouti ... the biggest enemies of SF. Why isn't AM there?

SE: AM is not the person to go to Cairo. He is the president of all Palestinians. Fatah Central Committees chooses the delegates. Any agreed government has to be clear on the principles. If not that would be the biggest present to BN. The Europeans assured us in Prague that they will not have a double standard on this. And this was in Prague! We had a serious conversation.

PS: Again, it is the method of articulating these three requirements.

SE: He will just say them in the press conference with Hillary.

JW: What you will hear from us is: don't make the same mistake as Mecca.

GH: This is a mistake – to say the conditions in front of the Secretary of State.

SE: Listen. He has to affirm his commitment to the two states and say that the government has to do these three things.

GH: He should say this to Palestinians directly, address his people from his office. Not to look like towing the US line.

SE: He will simply reiterate the commitments ...

JW: Will your government be a government of factions?

SE: Maybe there won't be a government. I have more chance of becoming a NASA astronaut than Hamas agreeing to a government that recognizes Israel. Therefore, enter Saudi ambiguity. So we're dead either way.

JW: AM seems to have delegated his fate to Fatah representatives. No one is protecting his interests. Do they have his interest in mind?

SE: No.

GH: If he were to choose someone to represent his interest, who would it be?

SE: In the PLO, Yaser Abed Rabbo. In Fatah, Akram Haniyyeh.

GH: Why isn't Akram Haniyyeh in Cairo?

SE: He doesn't want anything to do with the government.

GH: I disagree about AM not going to Cairo on the basis he is president of all Palestinians. He is the chairman of the PLO.

SE: AM is willing to join negotiations, but at the level of the Saudis and Egyptians.

GH: Don't say this to me! He is the head of the PLO. He needs to be lobbying – not necessarily physically there, but his ideas. He should not shy away from this. Hamas stands tall, they defend their positions strongly, even if others disagree. AM should not be hesitant defend his position.

PS: Have you had a response from Israel on the letter [to Turgeman]?

SE: I expect a reply soon.

GH: Is AM going to Sharm?

SE: Yes.

GH: Then why is the Secretary coming? Israel doesn't even have a government yet. They could have met in Sharm.

PS: You're the policy guy Gemal.

GH: Do you think they listen?

SE: How are your Qatari friends?

GH: Not my friends. We should replace the US base there with Palestinian forces. Maybe they can take over.

SE: Who pays for the US base?

PS: Qatar paid for much of it. Moving it (to the Emirates) would be very expensive. They also subsidize its operations.

GH: So we can ship missiles from there to Israel ...

PS: I am meeting with the TIPH now. One of the issues is the damage done by settlers to a mosque and other property following the incidents of the Ibrahimi house. AG had talked to the MoD for time waivers for the damage. The IDF could not stop the settlers from causing the damage – there were not enough of them. They asked the Palestinian security forces not to intervene – to avoid confrontation with the settlers.

SE: We want you to revive the trilateral committee for Hebron, according to the agreement.

END