**Minutes of Meeting of the Washington Special Actions Group**

Washington, July 15, 1974, 10:18–10:43 a.m.

**SUBJECT**

* Cyprus

**PARTICIPANTS**

* Chairman—Henry A. Kissinger
* State
* Robert Ingersoll
* Joseph Sisco
* Wells Stabler
* Thomas D. Boyatt
* Robert McCloskey
* ***Defense***
* William Clements
* Robert Ellsworth
* Harry Bergold
* ***JCS***
* Gen. George S. Brown
* Lt. Gen. John W. Pauly
* ***CIA***
* William Colby
* George Lauder
* ***NSC***
* Col. Richard Kennedy
* Rosemary Niehuss
* Henry Appelbaum
* James Barnum

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

***It was agreed that:***

* —The aircraft carrier America, due to return to the U.S. on regular rotation today, will remain at Rota, Spain for at least the next twenty-four hours;
* —State and Defense will prepare a joint message for transmittal to appropriate embassies today outlining U.S. policy in the current situation.[2](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d80#fn:1.5.4.4.12.32.18.5.4.2)

Secretary Kissinger: I thought we would have a quick review of the situation and discuss briefly what we can or should do about it. Bill (Mr. Colby), would you like to brief?

Mr. Colby briefed from the attached text.[3](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d80#fn:1.5.4.4.12.32.22.4)

Secretary Kissinger: Bill (Mr. Clements), do you have any views?

Mr. Clements: Not really. I don’t have anything to add. I’ve just been listening. Frankly, I’m not clear on what is going on.

Secretary Kissinger: Joe (Mr. Sisco), do you have any views?

Mr. Sisco: I’ve got a couple.…

Secretary Kissinger: Maybe we should hear from the Chairman (General Brown) first.

General Brown: From our viewpoint we have only one item. The carrier “America” was scheduled to begin its return to the States today. We have sent out instructions to hold for 24 hours at Rota, Spain because movement of our ship west (or east) might “say something” and we might want to avoid any such impression at this particular time. Besides there would be a gap as her relief is not expected for 12 to 14 days. So, we thought it would be better to hold her for a time. Is that all right?

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, let’s hold her there, I agree completely. I don’t think it would be wise for her to move anywhere, east or west, for that matter as it might indicate something.

General Brown: No, under no circumstances.

Secretary Kissinger: It shouldn’t move either way.

General Brown: Then we will hold her for a while.

Secretary Kissinger: Which carrier is supposed to replace her?

General Brown: I think it’s the “Forrestal.” No, it’s the “Independence.”

Mr. Sisco: The way I see it, over the next 24 to 48 hours there isn’t a great deal we can do. The situation is too confused and we’ll just have to wait until it clarifies. I think, however, our two objectives are very clear: (1) do what we can to avert war between Greece and Turkey; and (2) do what we can to avert Soviet exploitation of the situation.

The situation offers great opportunities for Soviet intervention. I think we must operate on the assumption that what is important is that the integrity and political independence of Cyprus be maintained. What this means will depend on how the situation evolves on the ground. So far it has not become an intercommunal matter.

Whether this is a limited objective coup inspired by Greece or will lead to a prolonged civil war will depend partly on whether Makarios is alive and whether his Communist supporters and others will fight. Our best interests are protected within the framework of the territorial integrity of Cyprus.

I suggest that we continue to operate quietly, that not to internationalize the situation would be in our best interests. Over the next 24 hours we should get a reading on the situation from both the Greeks and the Turks. By the way, the Cypriot Ambassador called to see you this morning. I recommend that you (Secretary Kissinger) see him sometime today.

Secretary Kissinger: What is his name?

Mr. Sisco: Nicos G. Dimitriou.

Mr. Clements: Henry, I think we ought to get a reading on the situation. We are tasking the attaché in Turkey—and perhaps State should do the same—to go see the military people and come back to us with some thinking. There have been some rumblings out of the Turkish military and we ought to find out what they are up to.

Mr. Sisco: From what I’ve seen so far there is no collusion between the Greeks and the Turks.

Secretary Kissinger: I think our first objective should be to prevent any kind of Soviet action. Whether they succeed depends on the degree this stops being an internal Cyprus problem. So we must keep this as an internal affair and keep it from becoming internationalized. Someone in the Department told me this morning of the pro-Makarios problem, that his supporters might start a scrap with the Turks to internationalize the situation.

The other thing we ought to do is get some sort of coordinated line on this thing, so that we can all speak with one voice. Could we get a few simple themes (to Mr. Sisco and Mr. Clements)? Can we draw up something that we can agree on?

Mr. Clements: Absolutely. There’s no problem.

Secretary Kissinger: To the Turks we want to point out the dangers of internationalizing the problem. We want to advise on preserving the present structure on the island; we don’t want the Turks to become provoked and want them to understand who is provoking and why. I think it would be a good idea to tell the Turks that we support them, that is, the maintenance of their existing rights on the island. We should tell the Greeks that there should be no—that we oppose any change of the existing political status of the island or of the Turk Cypriot rights.

Mr. Sisco: We need a public line for the noon briefing. I think we ought to put out a low-key statement, indicating we continue to operate on the assumption that the political integrity of Cyprus will be preserved. We don’t want to alarm the Turks and we don’t want to give them an excuse for exploiting the situation.

Secretary Kissinger: Bob (Ambassador McCloskey), do you have anything you would like to say?

Ambassador McCloskey: It has been my observation that Makarios has been deeply worried for several years now that he would be killed. He has been worried about it for some time.

Secretary Kissinger: Why wasn’t he killed earlier?

Ambassador McCloskey: There have been several attempts to kill him over the last few years but they all failed. His (Makarios’) overriding concern all this time is that Grivas is behind the whole thing. But I am a little disturbed by this report that Sampson has been put in as the new leader.

Secretary Kissinger: I’ve never heard of him. Who is he?

Mr. Boyatt: He is a killer. He has already got twelve notches on his gun. I’ve known him personally for several years.

Secretary Kissinger: It seems to me that our immediate objective is to keep this thing from becoming internationalized, the Greek-Turk problem, the Soviet angle. There is really nothing we can do at this time internally but we can keep it from becoming an international issue.

Mr. Colby: He (Sampson) is far to the right. This could stimulate Communist elements.

Secretary Kissinger: Can we get some cables off right away on what our line is? Can you (to Mr. Sisco and Mr. Clements) get together on what we send out so that both the Embassy and Defense are saying the same thing?

Mr. Sisco: Sure, we’ll make it a joint message. We can get it out very quickly.

Ambassador McCloskey: There is one thing, the UN question. Do we want the UN involved?

Secretary Kissinger: Not until it becomes an international issue. At this moment we don’t see it that way and I think that taking it to the UN would only internationalize the situation, which is what we want to avoid. Am I not right?

Ambassador McCloskey: Somebody could talk to (Secretary General) Waldheim. That might be a way to keep it out of the UN.

General Brown: How about NATO?

Mr. Stabler: They have a watching brief.

Secretary Kissinger: We can tell (Ambassador) Rumsfeld what we are doing—give him our position. If NATO calls for a meeting we’ll just have to see what happens. No problem if they want to offer to mediate. But I see no objection to telling Rumsfeld what our line is.

Mr. Sisco: And could we slip in, could you see the Cypriot Ambassador?

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, let’s make it 12:30 today.[4](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d80#fn:1.5.4.4.12.32.110.4) Does he know anything? We will let you (the WSAG members) know what he says.

Mr. Sisco: He (the Cypriot Ambassador) doesn’t know what is going on. He probably knows less than we do.

Secretary Kissinger: Then why see him?

Mr. Sisco: It would be consistent with our policy line on the integrity of Cyprus.

Secretary Kissinger: We don’t want to pick a fight with the Greeks. We want to keep this fairly low key. We want to let them know our thinking, but in a low-key way. Can (Ambassador) Tasca do this?

Mr. Sisco: He is out of the country—no, he’s back now.

Secretary Kissinger: O.K., before the end of the day let’s get these people informed of our views. We’ll take another look at the situation on Wednesday, or maybe tomorrow, depending on how the situation develops, and the next time we meet we should discuss the Greek-Turkish Aegean problem, too.