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

Washington, July 21, 1974, 9:33–11:23 a.m.

**SUBJECT**

* Cyprus

**PARTICIPANTS**

* Chairman—Henry A. Kissinger
* State
* Robert Ingersoll
* Robert McCloskey
* John Day
* Arthur Hartman
* Helmut Sonnenfeldt
* Defense
* Amos Jordan
* Harry Bergold
* Denis McAuliffe
* James Schlesinger
* JCS
* Gen. George Brown
* LTG John Pauly
* CIA
* William Colby
* George Lauder
* NSC
* Richard Kennedy
* Harold Saunders
* Rosemary Niehuss
* David Ransom
* James Barnum

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

It was agreed that:

* —the WSAG Working Group would prepare a paper outlining U.S. options in negotiations, the balance of forces picture on the island in the event of a ceasefire, and the political balance on Cyprus following a ceasefire;
* —that the FBIS station on the northern coast of Cyprus be evacuated, with Greek and Turkish permission.

Mr. Colby briefed from the attached text.

Secretary Kissinger: Who is doing the fighting, the National Guard? (referring to heavy fighting near Karavas).

Mr. Colby: Yes, the National Guard. (continued to brief)

Secretary Kissinger: The whole town of Nicosia? [***1 line not declassified***]

Mr. Colby: It’s hard to tell at this point. [***11/2 lines not declassified***]

Secretary Kissinger: What is he saying? (referring to a late report that General Secretary Brezhnev was giving a report on the Cyprus situation over the radio).

Mr. Ingersoll: It’s still coming in, but as far as we can tell now, he is not saying anything new.

Mr. Colby continued to brief.

Secretary Kissinger: What message? (referring to Mr. Sisco’s message).

Mr. Colby: The one Joe (Mr. Sisco) is sending back regarding the Turks ignoring the resolution to cease fire.

Secretary Schlesinger: They should have withdrawn by now. What was the latest time they were to withdraw?

Mr. Colby: They have ignored them all. The first was 9:00 a.m. our time. I think that was pushed up to 11:00 a.m.

Secretary Kissinger: Did we send that message to the President? (Ecevit).

Mr. Ingersoll: Yes.

Secretary Kissinger: Well, there won’t be a ceasefire until we hear from Ecevit.

Secretary Schlesinger: The ceasefire has been extended until noon?

Secretary Kissinger: I don’t know what time—there is no fixed time.

George (Gen. Brown), would you like to add…

Gen. Brown: Just the NATO withdrawal…

Secretary Kissinger: What’s the story in the ***Washington*** Post article this morning that we have cut off all military aid to Greece? Who leaked that?

Secretary Schlesinger: I can assure you that it did not come out of the Defense Department. Getler (the author) told Friedheim that he got the story straight out of the State Department.

Secretary Kissinger: Nothing would surprise me more than it was not leaked out of State!

Secretary Schlesinger: Getler claimed he was handed the story on a silver platter by the Department of State. The real story is that we have not held up on all military aid to Greece. The A–7 contracts are continuing, the F–4s are being held up at Rota (Spain), however. What is of more concern to me is the possibilities of more seizures (referring to the Greek seizure of three ammunition barges on Friday).

Secretary Kissinger: They did? I didn’t know that.

Secretary Schlesinger: Yes, they seized three of our ammunition barges.

Secretary Kissinger: Well, the real situation is that we are not sending in any heavy equipment. We’ll blame it on administrative delays or something like that. The problem when you cut off that stuff, however, is that it is so hard to get it started again. If pressed, we’ll say that there are some delays because we are assessing the situation. If we say that the supply of military goods to Greece has broken down, we’ll have one hell of a time getting them resumed (Congress). Moreover, we’ll have to pay one hell of a price.

On the diplomatic side, I have talked at least five times with Ecevit since last night. All I could really get out of it was that they are totally confused. If their generals are as bad as their leaders, what can their captains and majors be like! Anyway, our efforts are aimed at getting a ceasefire. The Turks, by the way, were talking about a Greek armada off the coast of Cyprus somewhere. Do we know what they are talking about?

Gen. Brown: I think it was the one sighted off the southern coast. The problem is that it is within 25 miles of the coastline, and there are so many different types of ships in that area that we are having trouble identifying them.

Mr. Colby: They’re off Paphos.

Secretary Kissinger: Can the Greeks land on that end of the island?

Mr. Colby: Yes, it’s a safe area. They could at least introduce troops there.

Secretary Kissinger: I’ll call Ecevit after this meeting. I think they are just stalling for time. I have real trouble assessing his motives and thinking. It’s my guess that they (the Turks) will accept a ceasefire by the end of the day. According to Callaghan, the Greeks have agreed to negotiations, in Vienna. I think Vienna is a mistake, I’d rather see them held in London where Callaghan can keep prodding them. Callaghan is now going to ask the Turks to send someone to Vienna. Sisco says they are in no position at the moment to do so. Our major effort now is to achieve a ceasefire; the talks can get started any time. If the Turks hold—what is the state of play on the island now?

Mr. Colby: Well, it’s unclear, but they do have a foothold.

Secretary Kissinger: It seems to me they haven’t done as well militarily as they have politically.

Mr. Colby: You’re right, they haven’t done very well militarily.

Secretary Kissinger: They didn’t go after Famagusta as we thought they would.

Mr. Colby: No, they put out some stories that they were going to take it, but apparently only for psychological purposes.

Secretary Kissinger: Then the Greeks are fighting better than we thought they would.

Mr. Colby: Yes, they are doing well.

Amb. McCloskey: What is their strength on the island?

Mr. Colby: About 9,000 National Guard troops, and plus 30,000 Reserves. The Turks have about 6,000.

Secretary Kissinger: Are the Greeks reinforcing?

Mr. Colby: Yes, today.

Secretary Kissinger: As I look at it, we have two problems. One is getting a ceasefire. Without one, we are impotent. The Greeks are also in no position to do much. And two, what our stance should be in the negotiations. What is your judgement as to the internal situation in Cyprus following a ceasefire? Anybody heard from Sampson?

Mr. Colby: We’ve heard nothing from him. The National Guard is running most of the operations. What we’ve heard is that the various Turkish communities are doing most of the fighting.

Secretary Kissinger: What will this mean for the negotiations?

Mr. Colby: Well, it will leave them less to negotiate with.

Secretary Kissinger: I’m trying to understand what the balance of forces would be when negotiations start so that we can chart a course.

Mr. Colby: If there is a ceasefire, it would seem to me that the Turkish effort failed. They wanted to seize a substantial area—more than they have now—and they have failed.

(Secretary Kissinger was handed a note)

Secretary Kissinger: Oh, this is what Ecevit has already told me—that there is to be a meeting of their NSC at 4:00 p.m. and a cabinet meeting at 6:00 p.m. The Greeks are complaining of heavy bombing in Nicosia. Anything could happen now. I could call Ecevit and tell him that if there is no ceasefire and there is war, this would severely jeopardize our relations.

Secretary Schlesinger: Well, you have to have a ceasefire before you can talk about a breakdown in a ceasefire.

Mr. Colby: It’s our understanding that the bombing in Nicosia has died down.

Secretary Kissinger: Well, let me talk to Sisco and see if he can set them straight.

Secretary Schlesinger: We have two related questions regarding NATO [***less than 1 line not declassified***] we would like to discuss.

(Secretary Kissinger left to take a call from Mr. Sisco at 9:56 a.m.,[9](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d91#fn:1.5.4.4.12.132.136.6) returned at 10:00 a.m.)

Secretary Kissinger: What is the probability of having to evacuate U.S. citizens?

Mr. Ingersoll: The only possibility of getting them out is through the British Sovereign Base Area, isn’t it?

Gen. Brown: No, we can lift them out by helicopters.

Mr. Ingersoll: (Amb.) Davies is already starting to evacuate…

Secretary Kissinger: Damnit! Davies is taking orders from here. I will not have an Ambassador, I don’t care who it is, making these decisions without clearing it through here. This is an interdepartmental matter and the decisions are to be made here.

Mr. Ingersoll: No, the cable, I believe, is asking for approval to evacuate.

Secretary Kissinger: Nevertheless, I will not have an Ambassador making these decisions unilaterally.

Sisco says that if we get no action from the Turks we will have to leave NATO. I’ll put in a call to Ecevit—it will give us some time in Athens. Seems to me that Ecevit is not doing well militarily. They are doing lousy militarily. We’ve got two governments in and outside the country. Under these conditions we may have to turn to Makarios. I’m not sure we have any alternative now. What is going to be the balance of forces if we get a ceasefire?

Mr. Colby: The National Guard is doing quite well, they have some 40,000 troops.

Secretary Schlesinger: I don’t think we can get an accurate picture of the balance of forces because the only thing we have is a ceasefire. They can bring in more troops under a ceasefire, reinforce here and there. That would change the whole picture.

Secretary Kissinger: It is against our interests to have the Greeks in there. A strong Turkish presence would be highly desirable. What went wrong, anyway?

Mr. Colby: They have turned out to be tough.

Mr. Ingersoll: How much ammo is on the island?

Mr. Colby: Lots of it. Every male over the age of 12 has a gun and lots of ammunition.

Amb. McCloskey: That’s right. Also, Sampson opened up all the caches.

Mr. Lauder: They have also received weapons from the Palestinians.

Secretary Kissinger: From Fatah?

Mr. Lauder: Yes.

Mr. Colby: All the Greeks on the island are cleaving together on this thing. They all act as one against the Turks.

Secretary Kissinger: Then once we have a ceasefire, we have a united populace.

Mr. Colby: At least for the moment. Some cracks will begin to show, primarily between the Makarios and Sampson forces.

Secretary Kissinger: Is the Clerides option still open?

Mr. Colby: That’s tough to say at this time.

Secretary Kissinger: Well, I think we ought to get a Working Group together today. Arthur (Mr. Hartman) would you take charge. You should look at what options we want in negotiations, look at the various political forces in the event of a ceasefire and what the political balance will be on the island.

Secretary Schlesinger: I’d like to bring up the issue that we only touched upon earlier. I think the larger question here is the future status of NATO. The actions we decide to take might militate against NATO, destroy it. Is that what we are prepared to do?

Secretary Kissinger: I think we have two separate questions here. If we have a peaceful solution today…

Secretary Schlesinger: The larger question is, is NATO going to survive in its present form? The other European countries have said that we have gone beyond the point of no return regarding Greece.

Secretary Kissinger: You want to kick the Greeks out of NATO?

Secretary Schlesinger: No, I am thinking more along the lines of some moves we might make to bring about a more sympathetic regime in Greece.

Secretary Kissinger: Well, there is a chance that will happen anyway.

Mr. Colby: If the Greeks leave NATO, it would be very hard to bring them back in later on.

Secretary Kissinger: No, what Jim is saying is, should we move to replace the current Greek government.

Secretary Schlesinger: That’s the question. I don’t have an answer. I’m not sure that the Greek Government could be shored up at this point.

Secretary Kissinger: Is it being shored up now?

Secretary Schlesinger: I don’t know.

Mr. Jordan: The fact that we have not turned off the military aid conveys the thought that we have not abandoned the regime.

Secretary Schlesinger: In fact, we are viewed throughout the world as supporting the Greek regime. The only point I want to make is that while we are looking at the political balance on Cyprus, we should also be looking at the larger question of how this would impact on NATO. [2 lines not declassified]

Secretary Kissinger: What kind of an arrangement do we have with them?

Secretary Schlesinger: We have a bilateral arrangement with the Greeks, allied with NATO. They are under a NATO umbrella. If we want to show our distaste of the Greek regime—I don’t know if we do or not—we could initiate actions [***less than 1 line not declassified***]. If a ceasefire does not occur, I think they may attack in Thrace. This is a regime, if I could say it in not too subtle terms, that is unsophisticated, irresponsible, that is growing increasingly desperate. [***11/2 lines not declassified***]

Secretary Kissinger: [***11/2 lines not declassified***]

Secretary Schlesinger: [***less than 1 line not declassified***] This home- porting business, by the way, is going down the drain. We have put Phase 2 in cold storage, and there is a question whether we will proceed with Phase 1. This is just one element we could use against the Greeks.

Secretary Kissinger: But what would we accomplish? What would happen a year from now?

Secretary Schlesinger: Well, I think we have to take each issue separately. Home-porting as far as we are concerned is OBE. Irrespective of the Cyprus situation, we don’t want to proceed with home-porting.

Secretary Kissinger: [***1 line not declassified***]

Secretary Schlesinger: [***31/2 lines not declassified***]

Secretary Kissinger: [***31/2 lines not declassified***]

Secretary Schlesinger: [***11/2 lines not declassified***]

Mr. Sonnenfeldt: [***11/2 lines not declassified***]

Secretary Schlesinger: [***1 line not declassified***]

Mr. Sonnenfeldt: [***1 line not declassified***]

Gen. Brown: [***less than 1 line not declassified***]

Mr. Jordan: [***11/2 lines not declassified***]

Secretary Schlesinger: [***21/2 lines not declassified***]

Amb. McCloskey: [***1 line not declassified***]

Secretary Kissinger: [***11/2 lines not declassified***]

Secretary Schlesinger: [***2 lines not declassified***]

Secretary Kissinger: [***2 lines not declassified***]

Secretary Schlesinger: That’s quite possible. The Russians are doing so well at the moment anyway.

Secretary Kissinger: How are they doing so well?

Secretary Schlesinger: Well, NATO is not in such great shape.

Amb. McCloskey: It seems to me the Russians are more perplexed about this situation than NATO.

Secretary Kissinger: Well, we can’t settle the NATO problem today. Cyprus is our problem today. I don’t like overthrowing governments. I’m not sure the Greek government will last out the week, anyway. It seems to me there is no way it will survive.

Mr. Colby: The succession could come from the lower echelons—the generals first, then the majors and colonels.

Amb. McCloskey: How about Karamanlis?

Mr. Colby: He’s not around. The King, as you know, has already made some moves. He would probably command more popular support than anybody else.

Secretary Kissinger: That’s dangerous business in the middle of a war. I’ll talk to the President about it. Anything operationally we need to do today? Any views on evacuees?

Gen. Brown: I don’t know about the British capability to take care of those 350 people they have.

Mr. Colby: I’d like to take that batch out of the north coast.

Secretary Kissinger: Who’s that?

Mr. Colby: The FBIS Station there. There are 12 Americans and their families plus some civilians.

Secretary Kissinger: We’ll have to have both country’s permission, won’t we to get the helicopters in?

Mr. Colby: Yes.

Secretary Kissinger: I think we should get them out, by all means. Ask for permission to get them out.

Mr. Ingersoll: How about the Greek Cypriots there. Do you need permission for them?

Gen. Brown: I’d like to have both sides know we are coming to take them out.

(Secretary Kissinger left the meeting at 10:29 a.m. to take a call from the President and Foreign Minister Callaghan. He returned at 11:33 a.m.)

Secretary Kissinger: Okay, I’ve just talked to San Clemente and with Callaghan. Our analysis is not correct—that we have the support of the EC–9. Callaghan filled me in on what is being done. Our total support at this point is one—Britain. Secondly, Callaghan has a report, who he describes as an excellent source, that there will be a Greek coup tomorrow and that the group that is to replace the present regime is infinitely worse and that it leans strongly to the Soviet Union. He has appealed to me to try to bring about a ceasefire today and he will try to get the talks started. If there is no objection, I will call Ecevit [***1 line not declassified***]. I want you all to consider very carefully what we are doing here. I would propose to call Ecevit and insist on a ceasefire. Callaghan and Sisco are going to insist on talks—in Vienna. We don’t have any other choice. Are there no objections?

Secretary Schlesinger: No. [***1 line not declassified***]

Secretary Kissinger: [***less than 1 line not declassified***]

Mr. Colby: You’ve got to give Ecevit something.

Secretary Kissinger: Why?

Mr. Colby: We put him in an untenable position. We have to give him something he can take back to his generals.

Secretary Kissinger: Our policy is to get rid of Sampson. What replaces him is no concern to us. The only issue is whether Makarios or Clerides or somebody else comes in.

Secretary Schlesinger: [***2 lines not declassified***]

Secretary Kissinger: [***1 line not declassified***]

Secretary Schlesinger: [***3 lines not declassified***]

Secretary Kissinger: I think this is as far as we can go today. We will keep you all informed on developments.

Gen. Brown: In our discussion on evacuation, should we prepare to move the task force closer into Cyprus?

Secretary Schlesinger: You’d have to move into the probable zone, no?

Gen. Brown: That would be preferable.

Secretary Schlesinger: I suggest we delay the question of evacuation until we see about the ceasefire. If we have a ceasefire, the whole problem disappears. We’ll have a clearer picture of that later today.

Secretary Kissinger: Evacuation is not one of my obsessions. [***1 line not declassified***] If need be, just discuss what is being done on the ceasefire.