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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20540

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September 26, 1983

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

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Reviewed Chief, RDD, WHS
IAW EO 13526, Section 3.5
Date: AUG 21 2013

Dear Mr. Secretary,

A copy of the transcript of your May meeting with the Saudi defense minister as reported by the Lebanese news magazine, Al Sapir, recently came to my attention.

I am concerned about the statements attributed to you regarding Saudi arms requests and your alleged intention to provide a copy of a National Security Council report to the Saudis. Mayor Edward Koch has also contacted me about similar concerns which he has already communicated to you. Please find enclosed a copy of Mayor Koch's letter for your reference.

I would very much appreciate your sending me a copy of your response to Mayor Koch about the transcript's validity at your earliest convenience.

With best regards,

Cordially,

Alan Cranston
Alan Cranston

Enclosure

Office of the Secretary of Defense 5456552
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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007

August 17, 1983

The Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

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IAW EO 13526, Section 3.5
Date:

AUG 21 2013

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I just read a translation of the minutes of the meeting which took place between yourself and the Saudi Defense Minister, Sultan Ben Abd el Aziz, on May 12, 1983, in Paris. The transcript was published in the Lebanese news magazine, Al Sapid, on July 17, 1983, a copy of which is enclosed.

The transcript, if accurate, is shocking. However, because there is always the possibility of a forgery as we saw with the Adolf Hitler diaries, I would like you to confirm or deny the accuracy of the transcript.

I was appalled at the comment which conveyed your alleged view that President Reagan should not be told by you of Saudi arms requests because, as the transcript puts it, "If we were to inform President Reagan of your request it would be leaked to Congress and the press, and a problem would be created hampering the delivery of new weapons to Saudi Arabia." If that statement is accurate, and I hope it is not, it would imply that he is denied access to information relating to our nuclear secrets and other vital information because of a lack of trust in his integrity in keeping government secrets. I hope that is not so. Is there a secret super-government, in which the President is not a participant?

I cannot believe that you would agree to provide a National Security Council report to Emir Bendar, which is the import of your alleged comment when you say to General Wendelmeyer in referring to that report, "Can we give a copy of the report to Emir Bendar, when it will be ready?"

Another glaring comment, supposedly made by you which leaps off the page is your statement in referring to the United States' newest tank in

August 17, 1983

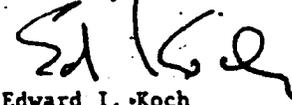
which you say you are attempting to persuade the Saudi "to view a demonstration or an experiment of this new tank." You state that "we will bring the tank to Saudi Arabia during the course of this year for a try-out." And then you point out, "This model is not in the hands of the American army even." You go on to talk about delivery of that tank to the Saudis. Am I not correct that it is the policy of the United States to maintain Israel's superiority in the quality of its arms so as to offset the Arab quantity of arms? Have you abrogated that policy? This for me is most alarming as it bears out, if true, the critical comments made as they relate to your hostility to the State of Israel.

I do hope that if the transcript is a forgery, you will immediately make that clear not only by your letter to me but by so informing Al Sapir in Lebanon.

All the best

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Sincerely,


Edward I. Koch
Mayor

enclosure

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Protocol of the meeting of the U.S. Secretary
of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, and the Saudi
Defense Minister, Sultan Ben Abd el Aziz

Paris, May 12, 1983

The Source: Al Sapiro, Lebanon, 7.17.83

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The meeting commenced with a report by Weinberger on the main points of the Israeli-Lebanese agreement. Weinberger apologized for not having a copy of the agreement. He explained that, as the U.S. is not a party to the agreement, it cannot distribute copies of it. Only the Lebanese and Israelis may distribute copies of the agreement (at this point, Weinberger's attention was drawn to the fact that Schultz had given a copy to Emir Saud Al Faisal during their meeting in Saudi Arabia on 5/7/83).

Weinberger: In any case, I can assure His Highness that the agreement is a very good one and it is to the benefit of the Arabs, or at least to the benefit of one Arab country. It is not a perfect agreement, but it does stipulate that Israel will withdraw from an Arab country, and this in itself should be welcomed by Arab countries, at least the friendly ones. The U.S. is relying on her friends' acquiescence to the agreement, so that these friends can persuade other countries to accept it.

The Sultan: I know what my friend Weinberger is alluding to. Every day I hear and read in the newspapers and on television that the key for a solution is in the Saudi's hands, and that the Saudis can compel the Syrians and the PLO to withdraw. There is some exaggeration in this. It is true that Saudi Arabia acts discreetly, in its own special way, without threats or shouts, but its influence on the Syrians is not as the world perceives it. In any case, we shall leave these matters to the King, President Reagan and Secretary Schultz. I and my friend Weinberger are defense ministers and we should not intervene in the internal affairs of other ministries. We should discuss only defense matters.

Weinberger: I agree. There are two matters which are related to defense and which I should like to present to you. I can assure you that discussing them will not constitute intervention in the affairs of Secretary Schultz or the Emir Saud. These two matters are of great

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concern to us, and I am sure that they are of even greater concern to you. I am referring to the enhanced Soviet presence in Syria--the increase in the number of Soviet advisors and the number of S.A. 5 and S.A. 10 missiles, which, according to our information, can be equipped with nuclear warheads. Syria has become the new Afghanistan, but without a formal Soviet invasion. The Syrians believe that the Soviets are giving them the aid and the advisors and the missiles for love of Syria, but of course that is not so. As you said in our last meeting, the Soviets are seeking troubled waters to fish in and warm waters to sit in.

After the dismal failure of their weaponry last year, they wish to prove through the Syrians that they have good weapons. Their arms sales have been dealt a severe blow in the Third World. Some states have started to turn to other countries to buy weapons--mainly to France. There is also the Iran-Iraq war, which can already be termed a war of attrition.

Secretary of State Schultz told me of his meeting with Mr. Tarq Aziz two days ago. Mr. Aziz expressed Iraq's sincere wish to bring the war to an end, in light of the deaths of youths on both sides. According to our information the Iraqis are prepared and willing to cease the hostilities almost unconditionally but it seems that the Iranian leaders are bent on personal vengeance towards the Iraqi leadership, and the victims are 10-12 year old children who are being killed by the hundreds every day.

We are of the opinion that our friends' influence is crucial in this matter because Syria has close relations with Teheran. All this has had a grave influence on Lebanon and I am referring to the increased Shiite extremism in Baal-Beq and Baqaa--an influence which is nurtured by Iran and protected by Syria.

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The policy of the U.S. is to remain completely neutral in this war. We shall not sell arms to any side. We do not have any contacts with either party, but we do support efforts which may convince them to agree to a cease-fire and to negotiations. As you know, we have quietly worked to prevent the expansion of the war to a larger area, and in this context we have endeavored to improve our relations with Iraq. Mr. Schultz's meeting with Mr. Aziz was a link in a series of contacts between us, as you know, but regretfully one of the things which are delaying a continued effort is the lack of a clear Iraqi policy on terrorism, especially on groups such as Abu-Nidal.

The Sultan: I agree with my friend on all the points which he raised. We are doing all we can to help Iraq to retain their position, but the U.S. must do more in this matter.

Weinberger: Regretfully, the U.S. does not have relations with both sides and does not have leverage over them. Of course, we are operating quietly, and through intermediary countries, and lately we have succeeded in bringing both sides to one table to discuss the oil spill in the Gulf, and we hope that these contacts will lead to further contacts.

Sultan: I would like to discuss with the honorable Secretary the question of the defense and military cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the U.S.. It is true that we are in constant contact through the joint committee. However, the Emir Bendar has informed me that the Reagan Administration has not been given notice yet of Saudi Arabia's request for 20 F-15 jets. We wish to receive them as early as possible, because the Iranian danger is increasing daily.

Our pilots are prepared and every day a new course for pilots is finished. Now we have, practically, a larger number of pilots than planes, and we must get planes from whatever source so that the pilots will be in a state of constant preparedness. This is a problem for us.

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Weinberger: Your highness, let us talk candidly.

Sultan: Yes, yes. Candor above all else. We must speak candidly. This has been the character of our relations for over 20 years.

Weinberger: All right. In all honesty--we know of your contacts with the French to buy weapons and jets. That is fine. It does not concern the U.S.. It is Saudi Arabia's affair. We do not wish to intervene in your internal policy concerning acquisition of arms, but the U.S. is willing to consider Saudi Arabia's request to receive a squadron of F-15 jets. However, I suggest that we do not present the matter to Congress before 1984, and perhaps preferably even later than that. I would like to confirm to you, as Emir Bendar knows, that President Reagan does not know of your request. There is good reason for this, for as you know the Administration is suffering from leakage of information, and if we were to inform President Reagan of your request it would be leaked to Congress and the press, and a problem would be created hampering the delivery of new weapons to Saudi Arabia.

The Emir Bendar: If the Emir Sultan and Mr. Weinberger will allow me-- we wish to purchase non-American weaponry for this very reason. We do not wish to become involved in another campaign like the one surrounding the Awacs, which was a scandalous and embarrassing affair for Saudi Arabia, even though we were ultimately victorious in the campaign. Additionally, the Saudi air force wishes to variegate its weapons and aircraft, it should not be dependent on one source or on only one type of weapon and aircraft. Additionally, the U.S. promised us during the Awacs campaign that it would sell us an F-15 squadron, and would even supply us with bomb racks and fuel tanks.

Weinberger: No, no, no! Wait one minute please. I do not believe that we promised.

Bendar: Yes, the Awacs overshadowed everything. Noone arouses the

question of the F-15's any more, and until now we have not received the additional bomb racks for the planes we already have, and the additional fuel tanks as well.

Weinberger: I believe that General Wendelmeyer dealt with this issue.

General Wendelmeyer: The National Security Council dealt with this issue this week, and I think that the Agency is now preparing a report on the matter and it should be ready next week.

Weinberger: Can we give a copy of the report to Emir Bandar, when it will be ready? But I can already state that the report will mirror U.S. dissatisfaction with the Saudi acquisition of non-American weapons and aircraft. Saudi Arabia is not the only country in the Gulf to have done this. Kuwait and other Gulf countries have started purchasing French weapons and Mirage-2000 jets. I am being criticized that I travel frequently to sell American arms, but I believe that Mr. Arneaux, the French Defense Minister, has preempted me.

In any case the only thing that concerns us is the future of the R.I.A.D. plan (Regional Integrated Air Defense) which necessitates a uniform system of weapons and aircraft in order to form a uniform air defense structure for the protection of the Gulf States. If the Gulf States will buy non-American weapons we shall be forced to make a radical change in R.I.A.D. which would be very costly. All the effort which we have put into building the system will go to waste.

Sultan: If my friend Mr. Weinberger will permit me--after the Avacs campaign, Saudi Arabia lost its will to work with the U.S.. The honorable Secretary mentioned that the idea will be presented to Congress even after 1984, and this is really our problem with the U.S. when we start contemplating any new idea--there is little time left before the end of the President's term, and he is preoccupied with his election campaign and you always ask us to postpone everything until a new President and Congress are elected.

In all honesty, if the Administration--any Administration, Democratic or Republican--will arouse an affair similar to the Awacs affair--Saudi Arabia shall be forced to alter its defense policy--for our enemies are numerous and they utilize any opportunity to attack Saudi Arabia, the Royal Family and its honor.

They produce movie and television films on the Royal Family. Every day an article is published on waste and corruption. This is not for us. You have a democratic regime and it's obvious that you cannot silence the press. Still...

Weinberger: There are other matters which we would like to discuss, but when we return to Washington I suggest that the Emir Bandar meet with General Secord(?) and General Wandelmeyer(?)--to find a way, which would be satisfactory to Saudi Arabia, to solve the F-15 problem. Now, if you will permit me, I would like to go on to the problem of the M-1 tanks.

Sultan: Excuse me. If my dear friend will allow me, before we discuss the M-1 tanks--we have heard that the U.S. is going to supply Israel with jet engines for the manufacture of a jet which...

Weinberger: Yes, yes, you mean the jet called 'Lavi'. This jet will apparently be produced by Israel in the 1990's. Our weapon links with Israel are crucial for ensuring and spurring Israel's willingness to surrender many of its unyielding stands in the Arab-Israeli negotiations. If we would not guarantee Israel, and if we would not give her this type of guarantees for her security, Israel will not cooperate with us in the future on matters of importance to us and to our Arab friends. In other words, we sometimes give Israel aid and weapons as an incentive for surrendering obstinate positions, as was the case during the past two weeks, during the negotiations Secretary Schultz had with Israel and Lebanon. Israel yielded much and abandoned many difficult demands, which Lebanon could not have accepted, and Israel would not have done

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so had President Reagan not decided to release the planes whose delivery was being held up. Did you say something about the M-1?

Sultan: Yes. this is a very important matter for us. However, a long time has gone by, and we still do not know whether Saudi Arabia will receive these tanks, when, and how many planes. The Emir Bandar has told me...

Weinberger: Allow me, honorable Emir, to state that the delay was not from our side. For over a year, or a year and a half, we have been attempting to persuade you to come to the U.S. and to view a demonstration or an experiment of this new tank. But we have not gotten your agreement. Now we have agreed to your request and we will bring the tank to Saudi Arabia during the course of this year for a try-out. Some of the tanks may participate in an exercise of the Rapid Deployment Force which will take place this year in the Gulf. But as you know, this model is not in the hands of the American army even.

We will be able to reach an agreement on the quantity, and it is clear that delivery will not take place before 1986 or 1987 or 1988. General Wendelmeyer knows the quantity, apparently.

Sultan: Let me tell you candidly that if a problem shall rise in the U.S. and in Congress about these tanks and their sale to Saudi Arabia, then we do not want them for we do not want another affair like the Awacs affair. As to the quantity, if we will request 2,000 you will only say: "No, 1,000 is enough". If we will request 1,000 you will say: "500". The truth is that we want as many as possible. The Emir Bandar reminds me that the exercises in the Gulf shall be in cooperation with Oman...

Weinberger: In any case we do not expect a campaign in Congress concerning the tanks, because we have learned through our contacts with the Israelis that they will not raise any objections--maybe they will raise a formal

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objection, as lip service. But the quantity will be fixed according to the Saudi Arabian army's capacity to absorb the tanks. I can assure Your Highness that we will not have any differences of opinion on this matter.

Sultan: Of course not. I hope that there won't be differences of opinion on any matter.

Weinberger: I see that Ambassador Cato is signalling that it's time to return to Washington. Unless there is another subject which you wish to raise before we end the meeting.

Sultan: Please.

Weinberger: A group from the Pentagon will arrive soon to discuss the "Centercon" system for the establishment of your front-line headquarters. I think that the correspondence we had last year and the situation in the Gulf make it imperative that we begin establishing this system as soon as possible. The Emir Bendar has informed me that Saudi Arabia is ready for this, but without the fanfare. We shall remain in touch. We are glad that the Emir Bendar is in Washington, for this makes it easier for us to establish direct contact with you. Before we depart--we shall remain in touch and in the next meetings, during the next few days, I hope that we shall find solutions satisfactory to the both of us on the subjects of the F-15, the M-1 and the CENTERCON.

Sultan: Very good. I wish to thank the honorable Secretary.

Weinberger: If the newspapermen assault us on the way out, I suggest that we say that our meeting was within the framework of our periodic meetings. Let us say that we dealt with mutual defense issues within the framework of the joint committee, etc. etc. I don't think the newspapermen will be content with that but...

Sultan: I think the press already reported a few days ago on today's meeting.

Weinberger: No doubt.