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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON
August 15, 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: EDWARD SANDERS *Ed*
SUBJECT: Middle East Peace Negotiations

The events of the past two weeks have served to confirm my opinion, previously expressed to the State Department, that our present course of conduct at the United Nations with respect to the Kuwaiti Resolution will lead to almost certain catastrophe. It has been my view that we should have stayed away from any involvement with the Kuwaiti Resolution so that we would have absolute freedom of action to veto an unacceptable resolution. I also believe strongly that we should not be contemplating presentation of our own resolution.

I strongly believe that our actions have put us into a no-win position. We will not be able to produce or support a resolution that will satisfy the Arabs or the PLO; similarly, failure to veto any resolution will anger the Israelis and cause them to take actions which may destroy the peace process.

Today we face a choice. We can either continue to work for a resolution at the UN on Palestinian rights or we can put our efforts into the autonomy negotiations within the Camp David framework. In my view, if we choose the former, we will not obtain Palestinian participation in the peace process in the foreseeable future, while we will destroy the autonomy talks and public support for your peace initiative. At the same time, we will have sent a signal to all that we will succumb to explicit and implicit threats from OPEC.

If we choose to put our efforts into the autonomy talks, no one can guarantee success. But I firmly believe that a constructive negotiation leading to a meaningful definition of autonomy can attract Palestinian support. At the very least, we should give Ambassador Strauss a chance to try.

It is with the utmost seriousness that I recommend that we:

(1) Cease any activity at the UN around the Kuwaiti or our own resolution and indicate that we will veto any resolution in that forum;

(2) Put all of our efforts into the autonomy talks to produce a definition of autonomy acceptable to both Egypt and Israel; and

(3) Provide Ambassador Strauss with sufficient authority over our Middle East policy so that new initiatives which might affect the peace process cannot be undertaken without his consultation.

I will be accompanying Ambassador Strauss on his trip starting on Thursday, August 16. If you wish to see me, I will be leaving the White House at 12:30 p.m. on Thursday.

cc: Secretary Vance
Hamilton Jordan
Zbigniew Brzezinski
Robert Strauss