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The Secretary's Possible Phone Call with Egyptian President Mubarak
TBD

Background: S/E Mitchell met with Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit and EGIS Chief Omar Solimon on January 24 in Cairo. While Solimon responded positively to S/E Mitchell's request that Egypt encourage Palestinian President Abbas to agree to proximity talks, Aboul Gheit asserted that the Palestinians should not agree to any form of negotiations until Israel has taken action on the "five steps" requested by the Palestinians. Aboul Gheit then hosted a meeting on February 3 with Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat and Jordanian FM Nasser Judeh, which Solimon attended in part. Egypt and Jordan agreed to support the Palestinians entry into proximity talks, but the three sides also agreed that Abbas would seek U.S. views on two questions: 1) The terms of reference for the proximity talks and 2) Whether the U.S. would present its own bridging proposals on final status issues or simply serve as a conduit for the parties' positions. Deputy Envoy David Hale met with Abbas on February 5, during which Abbas indicated flexibility on both the terms of reference (he would accept a general formula based on language from the Roadmap) and on the U.S. role. **You should emphasize that it is critical that Abbas agree to begin proximity talks immediately to lay the foundation for negotiations that will realize Palestinian aspirations for an independent and viable state.**

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