

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Saturday, November 17, 2012 6:30 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Fayyad and Gaza contacts on an emboldened Hamas

Worth a read. Amridror says 24 more hours. Discussions ongoing in intel channels for comprehensive, simultaneous cease-fire.

From: Ratney, Michael A
Sent: Saturday, November 17, 2012 05:31 PM
To: Hale, David M; Hegadorn, Chris S; 'ssimon[redacted]<ssimon[redacted]>; Abell, Andy <Jason_A_Abell[redacted]> Ryu, Rexon Y; Schwartz, Jonathan B; Sullivan, Jacob J; Jones, Beth E; Shapiro, Daniel B (Tel Aviv); Blair, Oni K; Holtsnider, James W; Lasensky, Scott B; Sievers, Marc J; Dibble, Elizabeth L
Cc: Lempert, Yael; Gavito, Jennifer D
Subject: Fayyad and Gaza contacts on an emboldened Hamas

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(SBU) I spoke by phone with Salam Fayyad this afternoon. He thought an emboldened Hamas made this conflict different than previous ones, and he was concerned about the impact this would have on the attitudes of ordinary Palestinians, including in the West Bank. The current conflict, he thought, would result in greater legitimization of Hamas, a more formal Egypt-Hamas relationship, and possibly tangible benefits (like the permanent reopening of Rafah crossing) with credit going to Hamas and no PA involvement. With a few days of belligerence, he said, Hamas would have achieved more than the PA's years of peaceful cooperation with Israel, potentially pushing Palestinians ordinarily opposed to violence to question why PA leadership had taken that option off the table. All that said, Fayyad said the most important thing was to stop the immediate conflict as the only possible step to any longer term solution, and he urged the U.S. to lean on both Egypt and Israel to bring that about.

(SBU) On the UNGA bid, Fayyad said he thought that in the current climate, with Hamas showing strength, the UNGA bid might actually be met with ridicule, further weakening Abbas. I asked if he would say that to Abbas; he said he would when he sees him Sunday night, but that for Abbas, backing down would be seen as weakness even as Hamas is perceived as growing stronger, emboldened, and – after a period when their credibility was suffering with the Palestinian public – more credible among the Palestinian public.

(SBU) Fayyad's concerns are echoed out by our Gaza contacts, who say Hamas will emerge from this fight with significantly greater legitimacy. The de facto authorities today called on all government employees (except the education ministry) to show up to work tomorrow. Coupled with multiple Gaza City press conferences, high-level foreign visitors, and police on the street in uniform, Gazans see Hamas as using this conflict to bolster its domestic legitimacy. Gaza contacts have told us that residents are impressed with Hamas' response to the conflict, and there is a growing sense that Hamas has learned from Cast Lead, when their leadership largely went underground.

(SBU) Contacts in Gaza say morale is fairly high - with rockets strikes against Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Hamas feels like it is winning. Plus, they say, Gazans see "the entire Arab world" now coming to Gaza while Gaza fires rockets at Israel so "why would Hamas want to stop now?" In Hamas' view, according to this contact, with every passing day, international opinion is turning in its favor and Bibi is looking more impotent. Hamas has every incentive to continue up to - but not after - an Israeli ground invasion.