

**Meeting Summary**  
**Dr. Saeb Erekat – LTG Keith Dayton**  
**NAD Ramallah June 24, 2009**

Attendance:

US:           LTG Keith Dayton (KD)  
              Col. Stephen Moniz (SM)  
              Dov. Schwartz  
              Major Lawrence Martin

Palestinians: Dr Saeb Erekat (SE)  
              Rami Dajani (RD)

SE:    I want to share with you some materials we gave to Senator Mitchell (GM) during his last trip, one paper on security and another on judicial reform.

KD:    Thank you for this. I would really appreciate sharing your discussions with GM because we're not necessarily getting this information from him.

SE:    I have some questions for you today. First, about the Mitchell mission, and how you plan to work together.

KD:    When GM first came out to the region, he made the rounds. We explained to him what we're doing, and recommended he take the USSC as part of his effort. So he agreed that I would be his deputy for security. GM went around and came back and said "I accept your offer". He said he will use my staff, who are based here and are engaged on the ground. His condition was that I extend my mandate to December 2010 – I was planning to leave after this summer. Now, nothing is simple in Washington. The State Department is still looking for some Presidential authorization for this to be formal. I now have a memorandum of agreement stating that I work primarily for GM. However, I continue to coordinate and work through Jake in Jerusalem and Cunningham in Tel Aviv, and Feltman in DC.

GM rewrote my job description: essentially more of the same and more quickly. He has also helped with my budget. You recall our work together two years ago -- back then I had no funding whatsoever. Now we have Congress allocating over \$80 M in FY 2009. Some of that is still available for spending. We are looking at over \$100M in FY 2010. So there's a lot more money coming in from Congress and the Administration.

GM wants me to get into other areas of security assistance and coordination. So far we've been working mainly on the NSF and the PG. He wants me to take a bigger role on police, working with the Europeans. Hazem is excellent, but there are many needs – and structural issues.

He wants us to work on justice sector and corrections (prisons). So we started working with the Europeans on this. Also, border and crossings management. We have a budget line of \$10M so there is a lot of potential there – the Canadians have expressed a commitment to this work. They have made an assessment – it's too bad they didn't meet with you when they were here.

RD: You mean Denis Lefebvre's assessment?

KD: Yes.

RD: He did meet with the NSU and we discussed the various possibilities for work on crossings with him.

SE: That's good. If he meets with the NSU it's like meeting with me.

KD: There is a draft master-plan that they're working on. It is hard to figure out who in the PA is responsible. It seems like there are three addresses.

SE: You have to meet with the NSU. Rami is your contact.

RD: We are happy to review anything on borders or crossings for implications on permanent status positions and issues ...

SE: Work with the NSU and get back to me so we can see how to deal with it. My view is that this needs to be done through the Ministry of Interior.

KD: The next area I'll be working on is counter-terrorism. I've talked to the Israelis – they had no push back on the concept. Their military officers think it's now time. They also acknowledged the PA's needs for special equipment. The question is who should have this equipment: Hazem Atallah, Abu Fatah, the PG? Jordan is also willing to help.

SE: I seem to recall there was a decision by the president on this issue. I remember translating it for him to English. I believe it was an anti-terrorism unit in the PG. I will check and get back to you on that.

KD: Next is civil defence. This has been much neglected. We are planning new facilities and training in Jordan. I saw Gen. Atiani in Jordan and we are happy with his response.

[SE briefed on contacts with Jordan and recent openings with Syria, and the broader Arab and regional context]

KD: I am glad to hear all this from you because GM is not telling me anything. He says he doesn't need to tell me as long as I am doing what I need to be doing. What is clear is that the administration is really serious about creating a Palestinian state.

[SE briefed on AM meetings in DC, and the commitment shown by the US administration on this issue]

SE: A lot of this is a result of your help that we have made so much progress on security.

KD: It's hard to believe but even the Israelis are giving me credit.

SE: It is really rare that Palestinians and Israelis agree on anything. Whenever I see that happen I study it really carefully.

KD: Co-operation is also good now...

SE: I have your speech you know. [Brief discussion of KD's WINEP speech]

KD: Because of all this we now have broad congressional support.

SE: Yes – I met with several congressmen recently (Berman, Levin ...). This is true.

KD: You are talking to the right people....We are now the surest thing ....

SE: Now to some contentious points. You know I work off the radar, I examine and assess the situation – for example in Qalqilya recently. This time things are right as far as security is concerned. I want to know: is that your assessment? I am seeing Amos Gilad tonight – even he tells me things are different. He used to tell me “big zero” but not anymore.

KD: He's now a supporter of our mission.

SE: I want an assessment from you for the president. We hear from Hazem and the MoI, but we need to hear from you.

KD: They have come a long way, but I worry about some things. In the great tradition of the US Army, I will ask my colonel to go first, then I'll comment on it!

SE: I really need to know what you really think. I predicted what would happen in Gaza contrary to all the assessment and intelligence information. I wrote a paper for the president in 2005 and predicted the “Mogadishu Syndrome” in Gaza – the social structure and fabric etc... I don't want to repeat those mistakes in the West Bank. This is for me and my family – I don't want to run away across the bridge.

SM: First, with regard to capabilities, we assess the situation by governorate; the environment in each is different. In some, the PASF are ready to take over full security responsibilities (for example in Bethlehem). There you have good coordination, full force presence and no settler problem. Hebron, in contrast, is problematic because of the settlers. Still we are developing another battalion to improve force level. Some of the people originally trained in Jordan and now training the ones who weren't.

Regarding chain of command, the assessment is very good. The senior officers course has been useful and has established greater visibility for them. There are some outstanding problems mainly at the company and battalion level. For example, Abu Fatah is a good man – he commands a lot of respect, but there are some issues.

KD: On Hebron – the problem is the presence of settlers – guys who will provoke. There is also a strong Hamas presence and the clan issues. Jenin / Toubas is different: no settlers, Islamic Jihad rather than Hamas – the area commander is really good. Overall Bethlehem is the strongest area commander. Tulkarem is somewhere in between. In Nablus it's close as well: the relation between the occupying force and the PASF is very good. Qalqilya is not so good.

I can say that the security forces have done what AM has asked them: one authority, one gun. The problem now is political – that is, Hamas. I don't think they have that fully under control. We will continue working – with just three battalions this is just the beginning. We are looking at a goal of ten trained NSF battalions [*RD note: this is a force of approximately 5000*].

The experience in Qalqilya is instructive – in that it was not done well. The police didn't do what they were supposed to do in support of the NSF, like blocking off streets and keeping people out. Yet the result was positive.

SE: We lost three kids. It's unfortunate.

KD: That's true. Phase 2 was resolved when the Jordan-trained platoon came over from Tulkarem. They showed a disciplined chain of command. They completed the operation in one hour – which might have taken 15 otherwise.

What worries me is organization. You need to organize them. We can't do that for you. The rivalry is still there. The president or the MoI has not addressed this.

SE: I understand the security file is with the PM. What's SF's role in this?

KD: He gave it to the MoI. But the MoI does not do anything. The NSF still considers that it works for the president.

SE: But the president gave it to SF!

KD: The same problems with the intelligence units. The PSO reports to the MoI, but the GI reports to the president. The police: HA works on his own – like he has his own MoI. I've said "good for him" – at least he's doing things that need to be done.

SE: Hazem is great. I told the president to promote him. I nominated him to take on the security file in the permanent status negotiations. I think he should be MoI. I supported him on that. But I can see how he is working on his own.

KD: By the way, the intelligence guys are good. The Israelis like them. They say they are giving as much as they are taking from them – but they are causing some problems for international donors because they are torturing people. Hamas does it ...

SE: That is not an excuse.

KD: I've only started working on this very recently. I don't need to tell you who was working with them before ... As for Abu Fatah, he is respected and strong, but he does not even recognize the authority of the MoI. I go to the minister and he says go ask Abu Fatah. I want to empower the minister, but I need something to work with.

SE: You should meet the president. When was the last time you met him?

KD: I've been trying to meet him for the last year.

SE: I will set it up for you – next week.

KD: I will be in Washington, back July 7.

SE: We'll have it when you get back. You should prepare a few points to raise with him: what is good and what is deficient. He needs to hear this. We need to work on institutions. I know HA is great, but this way he is working on his own.

KD: I want to say that Civil Defence is well run. Military intelligence is also well run. Raji Faraj is great.

SE: I met him recently and was really impressed. He has a strategic outlook. I found the conversation with him going into real strategic issues.

KD: My president is really serious about a Palestinian state. I know SF has a two year plan. So we have no time to waste. We really need to work on the institutions – GM wants me to deliver on overall structure. For that we need to get at the “autonomy” of certain institutions. I need to be able to count on your president.

SE: You can count on him. I want to raise an important concern: You know I teach a course on hostage negotiations in Jericho. One thing I notice dealing with the kids there is the impact of Israeli military actions on them. We need to find a way to stop these incursions. This is the main factor of doubt about what we are doing. Israel tells me KD is not worried about this.

KD: I am not indifferent about the incursions. I want them to stop completely during daytime. At night, they should be limited to cases where the PA does not respond to an Israeli warning, and the occupying force needs to act. You know some governorates have no more curfews now – where area A is 24hrs under PA control.

SE: You need to have a mechanism that allows these guys to maintain the stature and dignity. This is the most important thing – more important than weapons or training. You have to give them a chance. For example, that they have 6 hours to act ...

KD: One way to work on this is to have a “right of first refusal” – PA forces have for example 2 hours to act (6 hours is too long for dealing with a threat).

SE: You should develop a mechanism.

KD: Qalqilya proved useful for that – in dealing with armed groups. I repeat: I am not indifferent to incursions.

SE: This has a demoralizing effect on them. Dignity, pride, and conviction are the most important things. I see it in the course in Jericho.

KD: I don't disagree and am not indifferent. But if there is a serious target and the Palestinians don't do something about it, the Israelis will act. One thing that would help is if you have a general commander – if not the MoI. Bottom line is you can't have autonomous security apparatuses if you're aiming to build a state.

SE: You work on a low profile. This is important. That is how you command respect. This time we should not mess around and we cannot afford mistakes.

KD: We need to work on these things because in two years you might find yourself with a state.

SE: I don't want it to be a failed state.

KD: Do you know what this 100 day plan is?

SE: Plans are good. Everybody needs plans. SF needs to improve his image. For example, everything I get from the Israelis I ask him to announce it. He is the one to “cut the ribbons”. He needs this for his image. Like you I work with a low profile. Sometimes that means people like us have unfair reputations.

KD: I'm really happy with my reputation. Apparently I run the PA!

SE: Even the Saudis think we're arms smugglers ...

KD: That was just an excuse. What do you want from me on Gaza?

SE: You will have an answer when you get back. By then we'll know more about the Cairo talks. The Syrians are interested in playing a constructive role. You know from your work in Iraq. They want a US ambassador in Damascus. For them Hamas is a card: one item one price. So we are hopeful there will be a rapprochement which will help us in Gaza. Let's wait and talk when you get back.