

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 20, 1990**

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THE WHITE HOUSE TODAY ANNOUNCED THAT WE HAVE SUSPENDED OUR DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO.

IN MY VIEW, THE PRESIDENT HAS MADE THE RIGHT DECISION -- AND MADE IT IN THE RIGHT WAY: AFTER EXPLORING ALL THE OPTIONS, AND GIVING THE PLO A REASONABLE PERIOD IN WHICH TO GIVE US AN ACCEPTABLE RESPONSE TO THE TERRORIST ATTACK UNDERTAKEN BY ONE OF THE PLO'S CONSTITUENT GROUPS.

I BELIEVE THE DIALOGUE -- WHILE NEVER WHAT WE HOPED FOR -- DID HAVE SOME POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE PEACE PROCESS. BUT WE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR AGAIN AND AGAIN: WE DO NOT NEGOTIATE WITH TERRORISTS, OR THOSE WHO SUPPORT OR CONDONE TERRORISM. WE AGREED TO THE DIALOGUE IN THE FIRST PLACE ONLY AFTER THE PLO CONDEMNED AND RENOUNCED TERRORISM.

SO THE PRESIDENT REALLY HAD NO CHOICE.

I DON'T THINK ANYONE TAKES ANY GREAT JOY IN THIS DECISION. THE FACT IS -- TERRORISM WILL REMAIN A TRAGIC PROBLEM IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND A REAL THREAT TO U.S. INTERESTS, UNTIL THE ROOT POLITICAL AND SECURITY ISSUES OF THE REGION ARE SATISFACTORILY ADDRESSED. THAT TAKES DIALOGUE -- NEGOTIATIONS -- INVOLVING ALL THE IMPORTANT PLAYERS.

IN THE LONG RUN, IT IS IN EVERYONE'S INTEREST -- OURS, ISRAEL'S, THE ARAB STATES' AND THE PALESTINIANS' -- TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH DIALOGUE.

BUT IN THE SHORT RUN, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE WHEN ANY OF THE PARTIES QUITE LITERALLY TRIES TO HOLD A GUN TO THE HEAD OF THE OTHER PARTIES, THROUGH THE USE OF TERRORISM.

THE BALL IS IN THE PLO'S COURT.

IT MUST UNEQUIVOCALLY CONDEMN THE RECENT TERRORIST ATTACK. IT MUST DISCIPLINE THOSE RESPONSIBLE, STARTING WITH ABU ABBAS.

THOSE ARE OUR CONDITIONS -- JUSTIFIABLE CONDITIONS -- NECESSARY CONDITIONS.

I HOPE THE PLO WILL MOVE QUICKLY TO MEET THEM. AND I HOPE THAT ALL OF THE OTHER PARTIES IN THE REGION WILL ALSO DO WHAT IS NECESSARY TO GET THEIR OWN HOUSES IN ORDER, SO THAT REAL DIALOGUE CAN BEGIN, LEADING TO REAL AND LASTING PEACE.

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