

To: Anwar Gargash, Mohamed Mahmoud Al Khaja Cc: Faris Mohammed Al Mazrouei, Mohamed Issa Abushahab, Omar Ghobash, otaiba7@otaimail.com

Dear Dr Anwar,

As instructed, I met today with the Russian Permanent representative to the UN regarding Yemen. I conveyed HH's and your regards to him and mentioned I had been in Abu Dhabi with you and with our ambassador to Moscow and we had agreed to continue keeping Russia updated of our views on the evolving situation in Yemen both in Moscow and in New York as part of our ongoing and productive exchange of views on the subject.

I stressed that we would appreciate their continued support in this matter as we move into this next phase in Yemen - since the Geneva talks have failed and the special envoy will be shuttling across various regional capitals in an effort to pull together a political process.

I outlined our approach to Yemen, our reason for participation in the coalition and the fact that the Houthi's aggression represented a fundamental threat to the UAE and GCC's security and we therefore took a long-term approach to the situation and would be there for the long haul. The military coalition was the only possible response at the time to stop the Houthis taking over the entire country and we still believe it was and remains the right course of action, as a means to an end which is political in nature and rests on the GCC initiative, outcomes of the National Dialogue, and UNSC resolution 2216. The last time a humanitarian pause was called for, the Houthis simply exploited the opportunity, however we also remain equally concerned about the humanitarian situation and are working with the UN and other agencies on the ground to help alleviate the crisis. We have repeatedly expressed our views to the UN special envoy that the ports of Aden in the south and Hodeidah in the north need to be reopened to allow this aid in. Ultimately the aim of the military coalition is to soften the Houthi position back into a negotiating stance and we think we have made gains in that respect.

The GCC, therefore has a long-term strategy in Yemen which does not only involve a military campaign, but also discussing with partners the parameters of a reconstruction and economic stabilization plan to move the country forward. Lastly, it is important for Russia to understand that the GCC cannot watch another proxy militia become active in the politics of yet another Arab country as has been the case across the region, and that the GCC and its coalition partners will do everything to prevent that happening. We appreciate Russian support for our perspective, although the last round of talks in Geneva do not demonstrate that the Houthis are reasonable or rational interlocutors in a political dialogue. We must also not over inflate their importance – they are a small voice in a much larger community and have been given undue weight. We do not have all the answers to the crisis in Yemen, it is a complicated landscape but we do think we are right in preventing their dominance and the growing influence of their supporters in the Yemeni political scene.

Russian Permanent Representative - Vitaly Churkin

The Russian PR confirmed that the UAE position very much in line to what the Saudi PR had mentioned to him just yesterday on a similar visit.

He referred to the recent Saudi bilateral visit to Russia where the Saudi Minister of Defense had also spoken with President Putin and had expressed a similar viewpoint. He mentioned that it was an excellent visit and strengthened the cooperation between the two countries.

While the Russian position overall is to support the GCC, he believed the Russian position is slightly more "nuanced", but at the same time understands that the Houthis have demonstrated an "over eagerness" to play a role in Yemen.

The Russian PR highlighted his 3 main areas of concern in Yemen:

- 1) The Coalition's Objectives:** The objectives set out by the coalition have not been delivered. The Houthis and Ali Abdullah Saleh are still in a strong position in Yemen and continue to grow stronger. Furthermore, the Russians have intelligence on the ground that indicates that the Houthis are increasing in popularity because they are perceived by the Yemeni population as fighting foreign powers. Public opinion is therefore turning in their favour. Simply calling for their withdrawal is also problematic – the question of who will fill their place aside from AQ is a problematic one and AQ is a far worse challenge.
- 2) The Humanitarian Situation:** The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate which will cause territorial spillover of people to neighboring countries. UN OCHA has raised the level of Emergency in Yemen to level 4 (considered as the highest level of emergency). The P5 are discussing an approach to Saudi Arabia with a proposal for another humanitarian pause. The Russian PR also took note of the narrative that the Houthis took advantage and breached the last humanitarian pause, they still believe that the pause was useful. This was the subject of a P5 discussion today with OCHA.
- 3) The UN Political process:** The Russian PR stated that the new UN Envoy to Yemen seems to be trying to build a new process from scratch. While he does not blame the new envoy for the failure of the Geneva negotiations, Ismail Weld Cheikh Ahmed must continue to build on what Benomar had already established. Speaking metaphorically he explained that the house was already built by Benomar, and Ismail weld Cheikh must place the roof on top rather than try to build everything from the beginning.

The Russian PR added that the reason the Geneva talks broke down was because there was no comprehensive framework to channel the negotiations. Resolution 2216 should not be the only starting point of the negotiations since Hadi is "over-exploiting" the resolution, also there are other unresolved matters that are outside the framework of resolution 2216 that need to be part of the early negotiations. The PR of Russia did note however the Houthi's lack of engagement describing them as "difficult people".

- 3) **The UN Political process:** The Russian PR stated that the new UN Envoy to Yemen seems to be trying to build a new process from scratch. While he does not blame the new envoy for the failure of the Geneva negotiations, Ismail Weld Cheikh Ahmed must continue to build on what Benomar had already established. Speaking metaphorically he explained that the house was already built by Benomar, and Ismail weld Cheikh must place the roof on top rather than try to build everything from the beginning.

The Russian PR added that the reason the Geneva talks broke down was because there was no comprehensive framework to channel the negotiations. Resolution 2216 should not be the only starting point of the negotiations since Hadi is "over-exploiting" the resolution, also there are other unresolved matters that are outside the framework of resolution 2216 that need to be part of the early negotiations. The PR of Russia did note however the Houthi's lack of engagement describing them as "difficult people".

UAE Response:

In response to the Russian position, I indicated that Resolution 2216 is an adopted security council resolution which is endorsed by the international community, therefore for the envoy to use it as a solid peg to build the negotiations around it, is justified. Furthermore resolution 2216 is not the only framework that the envoy is utilizing, the GCC initiative, and its implementation mechanisms as well as the outcomes of the comprehensive national dialogue are all solid pegs that the UN envoy could build around to discuss all pending matters with the Yemeni parties in tandem. He needs to start with these in order to build up a tangible and comprehensive process otherwise what is the point of a security council resolution. On his other views, I welcomed his perspectives and promised to relay them to my capital noting that we welcomed the constructive input of partner countries like Russia and took their concerns seriously into account.

On Palestine, Iran:

I asked the PR what are the chances of the French sponsored Palestine resolution coming about this summer and he replied that it was very unlikely. "The Israelis don't want it, the Palestinians don't want it, and everyone is focused on an Iran deal."

The Russian PR mentioned that the Iran talks have been extended to the 7th of July, and that postponing the date any further would be counterproductive and mean that the whole process will lose momentum. These talks are the big focus of attention in capitals right now.

In terms of lifting of the sanctions the Russian PR noted that any resolution will come from Washington and other capitals and not New York, but he believes that the lifting of the sanctions will be done systemically, in the following order:

- 1) An initial resolution to partially lift the sanctions.
- 2) A second resolution to be adopted after the IAEA reporting and inspection is conducted on Iran's compliance.

He noted that this process wasn't very complicated and much of the work had been done but that the US were still not clear on how they would sequence the resolution with congressional approval and were still debating that internally.

Candidates on the upcoming SG:

I asked his view on how the SG race was shaping up and he observed that a number of good candidates had emerged from the eastern European group as well as a number of candidates who do not meet the criteria, for example the Foreign Minister of Croatia.

He spoke well of the following candidates:

- Irina Bokova (Bulgaria, endorsed by Government) – Current UNESCO Director General, former Foreign Minister (1996-1997) with a long career in UN and multilateral affairs, and a close interest in European integration. The Bulgarian Foreign Minister has been tasked with coordinating her campaign. However we understand views on her candidacy are tainted by the 2011 vote to recognize Palestine at UNESCO – leading to the withdrawal of US funding – which occurred under her watch.
- Danilo Türk (Slovenia, endorsed by Government) – Former President of Slovenia (2006-2012), former Assistant Secretary-General DPA (2000-2005), Former PR of Slovenia to the UN (1992-2000).
- Srgjan Kerim (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) - President of the 62nd General Assembly who also led successful rounds of discussions on Security Council reform. He has not yet officially declared but has been making the rounds in New York and Washington.

With regards to Kristalina Georgieva (Bulgaria) – EU Commission Vice-President for Budget and Human Resources (from 2014), European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response (2010-2014), Vice-President and Corporate Secretary of the World Bank (2008-2010), World Bank Director for Strategy and Sustainable Development (2007-2008), World Bank Director for the Russian Federation (2004-2007). He mentioned she did not have as impressive credentials as the other candidates for example Irina Bokova in his view was far more impressive.

Extremism

We ended speaking about the shocking events today in Tunisia, Kuwait and France and the rise of extremism worldwide. He mentioned that one of the tourists killed in Tunisia was a Russian, and that over 30 had been staying in the hotel where the attack took place.

End of report.

Yousef Al Otaiba
Re: Totally off record
To: Solomon, Jay

Sent - Yousef Al Otaiba May 8, 2017 at 12:46 PM

YO

It's a makeover. Like the one they did with al nusra where they changed their name.

From: Solomon, Jay
Sent: Monday, May 8, 2017 3:00 PM
To: Yousef Al Otaiba
Subject: Re: Totally off record

How do you read the Hamas move? Bullshit? They're under pressure from the Sunni states to moderate? Hamas is worried about Trump?

On Mon, May 8, 2017 at 2:58 PM, Yousef Al Otaiba <otaiba7@hotmail.com> wrote:
Yes, please bring two Arabic copies.

It was unlikely I was going to the embassy dinner.

Agreed. That's why we don't want to get caught opening up with Israel without any progress on Palestine.

From: Solomon, Jay
Sent: Monday, May 8, 2017 2:52 PM
To: Yousef Al Otaiba
Subject: Re: Totally off record

Yes. Coming to ABZ dinner. Should I bring the Arabic version of my book? Or did he read it in English. Isn't your embassy dinner on the same night?

I don't see Bibi's people doing much on Palestine. Man, those guys are hawkish.

On Mon, May 8, 2017 at 2:49 PM, Yousef Al Otaiba <otaiba7@hotmail.com> wrote:
Absolutely. We are completely aligned. We have no issue with Israel. What I'm trying to say is that they are prioritizing working with us over the palestinian issue.

what the double booking? You're coming to dinner with ABZ, right?

Wall and Beal are nice together.

From: Solomon, Jay
Sent: Monday, May 8, 2017 2:42 PM
To: Yousef Al Otaiba
Subject: Re: Totally off record

Although you guys do share a genuine desire to push back Iran, no? That's genuine.
You double booked on Thursday! I have to jilt my date:-)
Man, John Wall is getting so good.

On Mon, May 8, 2017 at 2:40 PM, Yousef Al Otaiba <otaiba7@hotmail.com> wrote:
Only thing bibi really wants is a relationship with us.

From: Solomon, Jay
Sent: Monday, May 8, 2017 2:39 PM
To: Yousef Al Otaiba
Subject: Re: Totally off record

True.

On Mon, May 8, 2017 at 2:38 PM, Yousef Al Otaiba <otaiba7@hotmail.com> wrote:
For us, not really. He came for a multilateral IRENA meeting. Pretty sure he didn't have any bilats.

The Israeli narrative is to talk up anything about their relationship with us and Saudi. They want to prove that we love them and we don't care about the Palestinians.

From: Solomon, Jay
Sent: Monday, May 8, 2017 2:33 PM
To: Yousef Al-Otaiba
Subject: Totally off record

Was that trip to Abu Dhabi by the Israeli Minister Yuval Steinitz a big year? He was talking about it up in New York.

Best, Jay

--
Jay Solomon
Foreign Affairs Correspondent
The Wall Street Journal
www.wsj.com

Solomon, Jay
To: Yousef Al Otaiba

September 23, 2015 at 9:02 AM

[Details](#)

JS

They've played him all over the world -- Crimea, Syria, weapons embargo on Iran, Palestine. It's embarrassing.

Jay Solomon
Foreign Affairs Correspondent
The Wall Street Journal.

From: Yousef Al Otaiba [otaiba7@hotmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2015 12:01 PM
To: Solomon, Jay
Subject: Re: Syria

Nothing ever comes out of these meetings other bland joint communique. I expect nothing.

Kerry now thinks Russia is his new best friend. If you can't beat them, join them.

From: Solomon, Jay
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2015 11:28 AM
To: Yousef Al Otaiba
Subject: Syria

You expecting anything major next week on Syria? Putin's speech will be huge. Kerry is trying to meet Lavrov and Adel again. Not sure if anything else is going down.

Jay Solomon
Foreign Affairs Correspondent
The Wall Street Journal.