

U.S. State Department Official Meets With West Bank, Gaza Palestinians

WASHINGTON (WNS) — The State Department announced that Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy met with nine Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip but strongly played down the significance of the meeting, held at the U.S. Consulate in East Jerusalem.

Department spokesman Bernard Kalb called it "routine" and cautioned "against reading any new development" into the meeting. He did not name the

Palestinian participants, saying only that they are among the "normal contacts" of the Consulate in Jerusalem. He stressed that the purpose of the meeting was not to "screen candidates."

Presumably, he was referring to Murphy's unsuccessful attempt last summer to find Palestinian representatives for a joint Jor-

danian-Palestinian delegation acceptable both to Israel and Jordan. The attempt floundered over King Hussein's insistence on including PLO figures on his proposed list. Kalb declined to comment on whether any of the Palestinians with whom Murphy met were on the Jordanian list. He said the purpose of the meeting was to discuss a variety of issues, including President Reagan's meeting with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in Geneva last month.

Murphy, who is Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, arrived in Israel from Syria to brief Premier Shimon Peres on his latest contacts with Arab leaders. He was accompanied by Wat Claverius, the U.S. special envoy to the Middle East.

The state of Middle East peace diplomacy is especially sensitive at the present juncture, according to Israeli officials, for several reasons: Jordan and Syria have recently started a process of rapprochement after years of estrangement; Jordan has given PLO chief Yasir Arafat to understand that he must accept United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, the framework of Mideast negotiations, by the end of this year if he wants the PLO to have any role in future peace talks.

Israelis are wary of Jordan's overtures to Damascus. Some observers see in them a determination by King Hussein to weaken the position of Arafat who has long been at odds with the Syrian regime. At the same time, it is feared in Jerusalem that by coming closer to

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Neon Exhibit Opens In UNLV Museum

"The Magic of Neon," an exhibit of 30 large-format photographs that explore the dazzling versatility of this unique light form, opens in UNLV's Museum of Natural History on December 13. The free exhibition is part of the Smithsonian Institution's Traveling Exhibition Service and will remain on display through December 31.

For information on museum tours and operating hours, call 739-3381.

The photographs in the exhibit include pictures of vintage neon signs as well as inventive new work by leading artists and designers, who have rediscovered the allure of neon light. An original sculpture by neon artist Jerry Noe is included in the UNLV exhibition. Guest curator for the exhibit is Michael Webb, former director of national film programming at the American Film Institute. Webb has written a book called "The Magic of Neon," published in 1983.

Because of the liquid-like quality of neon, it has been used to form everything from cocktail glasses and sombreros to fire-breathing dragons and dancing girls. Neon is currently enjoying a dramatic renaissance in this country. Designers are using it in movies, on stage and television, for sets and special effects, to animate discos, and to create a romantic atmosphere in restaurants and homes. Artists are using it as an art medium. And architects are employing neon to outline and accent buildings.

One art critic has hailed neon as "the magic wand that gave downtown its boogie-woogie spirit."

Syria's President Hafez Assad, a hardline leader of the rejectionist camp, toward possible negotiations with Israel may harden. Jordan's own position

Israeli officials do not expect Arafat to conform to Hussein's urgings to accept the two key UN resolutions. They believe that Hussein would then feel free to draw up his own list of Palestinian representatives on a joint delegation which would meet first with American officials and then with Israel.

A spokesman for Peres said Murphy informed the Premier that Hussein is determined to win approval of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to negotiate with Israel. Murphy also briefed Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

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