

U.S. Denies Vernon Walters Met With PLO Leader In Tunisia

NEW YORK (JTA) — A report that the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations met in Tunisia with a senior leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization was denied by the envoy, Vernon Walters, as well as the State Department and the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

CBS News reported that Walters met a PLO leader in a private home in a coastal town near Tunis, the Tunisian capital. CBS attributed the information to top PLO officials.

Walters, arriving in Geneva to address the U.N. Human Rights Commission, categorically denied the alleged meeting. "I deny it, it is a lie. I have not met a PLO representative in

Tunis. I am not authorized to speak with the PLO," Walters said in response to questions by reporters.

He added: "It's absolute nonsense. I never saw anybody in Tunisia but Tunisians and Americans ... No Palestinians."

A woman who answered the telephone at the PLO observer mission at the United Nations said no one was available to comment on the report.

In Washington, Charles Redman, a spokesman for the State Department, said the CBS report "is a complete fabrication. Somebody's been had."

A spokeswoman at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations here, Helene Mahoney, said

that the report is "absolutely not true," and that the alleged meeting "did not happen."

The U.S. assured Israel in September 1975 that U.S. government officials would not meet or negotiate with members of the PLO. However, Andrew Young, then U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, held a 15-minute meeting with a PLO official in New York in 1979. He subsequently resigned under pressure.

Walters conceded to reporters that CBS was accurate in reporting that he met in the 1970s with PLO representatives.

Israel Will Host Cities Conference

TEL AVIV (JTA) — More than 1,000 mayors and senior municipal officials from around the world are expected to gather in Jerusalem on Sunday for the week-

"The report was correct in saying that I spoke to them (the PLO) in 1975. They were killing Americans and I was sent to tell them to stop and they did. But that was 13 years ago, the 71-year-old Walters, who speaks fluent Arabic, said.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said in an interview that "We accept Walter's assurances that he did not meet with the PLO and we wait for further clarifications."

long International Conference of Twin Cities and Municipal Institutions.

Participants will come from Bangkok and Japan. The last such conference was held in Los Angeles in 1986. Former French Premier Pierre Mauroy, now mayor of Lille, plans to attend.

The largest delegation will come from West Germany, with 559 people; followed by Italy, 117; the United States, 110; and France, 98.

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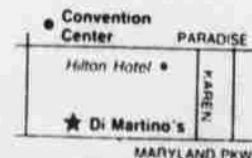
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