

D2. U.S. SECURITY COORDINATOR KEITH DAYTON, ADDRESS DETAILING THE MISSION AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE OFFICE OF THE U.S. SECURITY COORDINATOR, ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY, WASHINGTON, 7 MAY 2009 (EXCERPTS).

The following are excerpts from a speech by Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, the U.S. security coordinator (USSC) to the Palestinian Authority (PA), whose rare on-the-record address to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) was closely followed by observers of the Palestine-Israel conflict. Dayton has served as USSC since 2005 and recently accepted another two-year term.

Dayton's speech angered PA officials, who felt he had disclosed sensitive details about PA-U.S. operations, and was treated by PA opponents as an affirmation of PA collaboration with Israeli occupation forces. The full text of the speech can be found at WINEP's Web site: www.washingtoninstitute.org.

It is truly an honor for me to have the opportunity to address such a distinguished audience. My name is Keith Dayton, and I head a small team of Americans, Canadians, British, and a Turkish officer who were sent to the Middle East to assist in bringing some order to the Palestinian Authority's security forces. The name of our group is the U.S. Security Coordinators Team—USSC for short—but we are really an international effort. . . .

Let me state at the outset a few bedrock principles that guide me in my work. First, as I just said, I profoundly believe that it is in the national security interest of the United States to help resolve the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Second, I am one of those who firmly believes in a two-state solution: a Palestinian state living in peace and security alongside the State of Israel is the only solution that will meet the long-term needs of Israel and the aspirations of the Palestinian people. . . . Third, let me state very clearly my deep conviction . . . that . . . the bond between the United States and Israel is unbreakable today, it is unbreakable tomorrow, and it is unbreakable forever.

Before I begin, I want everyone in this room to know that I consider—and this is really sincere—the Washington Institute to be the foremost think tank on Middle East issues, not only in Washington, but in the world. I'm not done yet. I read the Institute's reports, I talk with the Institute fellows and

staff about key matters. The people here at the Washington Institute give analytical and unbiased advice. I depend on it, and sometimes I feel I would be lost without it. . . .

The office of the U.S. security coordinator came into existence in March of 2005 as an effort to assist the Palestinians in reforming their security services. The Palestinian security forces under Yasir Arafat were never able to achieve internal cohesion, they were not properly trained, they were not properly equipped, and they had no clear or effective security mission.

The idea in forming the USSC was to create an entity to coordinate various international donors under one plan of action that would eliminate duplication of effort. It was to mobilize additional resources and to allay Israeli fears about the nature and capabilities of the Palestinian security forces. The USSC was to help the Palestinian Authority to right-size its force and advise them on the restructuring and training necessary to improve their ability to enforce the rule of law, and make them accountable to the leadership of the Palestinian people whom they serve.

Why was a U.S. general officer chosen to command this thing? Well, three reasons. The first was that senior policymakers felt that a general officer would be trusted and respected by the Israelis. . . . The second was that a general's prestige would help leverage Palestinian and other Arab cooperation. . . . And the third idea was that a general officer would have greater influence over the U.S. government interagency process. . . .

As I said earlier, we are a multinational team. This is important. U.S. personnel have travel restrictions when operating in the West Bank. But our British and Canadian members do not. In fact, most of my British contingent—eight people—live in Ramallah. And those of you who know about the overseas missions [know] that the United States does understand that living among the people you work with is invaluable. The Canadians, who are going up to about eighteen people, are organized in teams we call road warriors, and they move around the West Bank daily, visiting Palestinian security leaders, gauging local conditions, and working with real Palestinians in sensing the mood on the ground.

Canada provides the team with highly proficient Arab-Canadian translators who relate directly with the people. The Canadians and the British are my eyes and ears.

And when I meet with Palestinian security leaders and Israeli military leaders, for that matter, I bring the Canadians and the British with me. Being multinational is a very strong point.

Another strong point is that we were given permission from the outset to work with all sides of this conflict except the terrorists. That means we work on a daily basis with both Palestinians and Israelis—something that is unique in the region, believe it or not. . . . My team and I frequently visit Jordan and Egypt and we've even been granted permission to coordinate with the Gulf states. Our watchword is to move forward carefully, in full coordination with all sides. . . . We are also networked with all the other missions in the region working the Arab-Israeli conflict. My team and I are in daily contact with a group called EUPOL COPPS. It's a team of European policemen who actually live there who are charged with reform of the Palestinian civil police—the cop on the beat.

And we are also working closely together with them on reform of the Palestinian judicial system. We are well tied in with the efforts of the Quartet special representative, Tony Blair, and his team. We're tied in with a colleague of mine from the Joint Staff—Lt. Gen. Paul Selva, U.S. Air Force, who is the road map monitor and reports directly to Secretary of State Clinton. And we meet with a variety of other international actors in the region in the course of our coordination, ranging from individual countries, nongovernmental organizations, to officials of the United Nations. But perhaps the most important thing about who we are is that we live in the region. We do not parachute in for a few days and then go home. We stay there. In a region where understanding the reality on the ground while building relationships is the cornerstone of getting something done, you have to invest the time, and we've done that. . . .

So let me tell you a little bit of the history and figure out where we've been since March of 2005. Gen. Kip Ward was the first commander of the USSC, and his mission was to begin the process of training and equipping the Palestinian security forces. But his mission was, frankly, captured by the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and he never got work done on that particular task.

When he passed command to me in December 2005, he said, "Good luck." . . . [A] month later, Hamas won the Palestinian Leg-

islative Council elections and my mission changed overnight. For the first eighteen months I was there, we faced a situation of either a Hamas government in the Palestinian territories or a unity government led by a Hamas prime minister.

So as a result, we focused on coordinating international activity to help to get the Gaza economy going, largely through coordinating the activities of Israel, Egypt, and the Palestinians at the large border crossings in Gaza at . . . Rafah and Karni. We also coordinated British and Canadian training assistance to the Palestinian Presidential Guard who were manning those border passages.

And because the Presidential Guard reported directly to President Abbas and was not influenced by Hamas, they were considered to be in the game. But all other security forces suffered greatly from Hamas neglect, nonpayment of wages, and persecution, while Hamas went on to create its own security forces with lavish support from Iran and from Syria. In June 2007, as I think most of you know . . . those Iranian- and Syrian-sponsored, well-equipped, well-funded, and well-armed Hamas militiamen overthrew the legitimate Palestinian Authority's security forces, keeping in mind those guys hadn't been paid for sixteen months and they were poorly equipped and poorly trained. . . . [D]espite all that, the Palestinian forces fought back for five days and lost several hundred killed and wounded. But at the end of all that, Hamas still won, and my mission changed again, very dramatically.

With the appointment of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and his technocrat government by Pres. Mahmud Abbas in June of 2007, our focus changed again from Gaza to the West Bank. In July, President Bush announced a request to Congress that \$86 million be provided to fund a security assistance program for the Palestinian security forces, and Congress readily agreed. We were back in the game again. . . . [T]his time, we actually had money in our pocket and a mission to go out and achieve. And since then, we have followed a consistent azimuth of support to the moderate government of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad in the West Bank.

The U.S. administration and Congress provided an additional \$75 million last year, bringing to \$161 million that the USSC has been able to invest in the future of peace between Israel and Palestinians through improved security. So what have we done? At the risk of boring you, we did it in four

major areas. First: train and equip. Although we work closely with the Presidential Guard even now, we have focused on transforming the Palestinian national security forces into a Palestinian gendarmerie—an organized police force or police units, as it were—to reinforce the work being done by the civilian police advised by the European Union.

The training is a four-month program at the Jordan International Police Training Center—we abbreviate it as JIPTC for short—outside of Amman. It features a U.S.-Jordanian police training cadre and a U.S.-developed curriculum that is heavy on human rights, proper use of force, riot control, and how to handle civil disturbances. The training is also focused on unit cohesion and leadership.

Now, you might ask, why Jordan? The answer is pretty simple. The Palestinians wanted to train in the region, but they wanted to be away from clan, family, and political influences. The Israelis trust the Jordanians, and the Jordanians were anxious to help. Our equipping is all nonlethal, and it is fully coordinated with both the Palestinians and the Israelis. Make sure you understand that. We don't provide anything to the Palestinians unless it has been thoroughly coordinated with the State of Israel and they agree to it. Sometimes this process drives me crazy—I had a lot more hair when I started—but nevertheless, we make it work.

We don't give out any guns or bullets. The equipment ranges from vehicles to socks. We have also graduated now, three battalions—an average of five hundred men each—from JIPTC and another battalion is currently in training. The graduates have also been extensively schooled by the Jordanians, who have really stepped up to this task, on loyalty to the Palestinian flag and the Palestinian people.

And what we have created—and I say this in humility—what we have created are new men. The average age of the graduates is twenty to twenty-two years, and these young men, when they graduate, and their officers believe that their mission is to build a Palestinian state. . . . Let me quote you, for example, from an excerpt of the graduation remarks of a senior Palestinian official as he spoke to the assembled troops in Jordan last month. He said, "You men of Palestine have learned here how to provide for the safety and security of the Palestinian people. You have a responsibility to them and to

yourselves. You were not sent here to learn how to fight Israel, but you were rather sent here to learn how to keep law and order, respect the rights of all of our citizens, and implement the rule of law so that we can live in peace and security with Israel."

Now, upon the return of these new men of Palestine, they have shown motivation, discipline, and professionalism, and they have made such a difference—and I am not making this up—that senior Israel Defense Forces [IDF] commanders ask me frequently, "How many more of these new Palestinians can you generate, and how quickly, because they are our way to leave the West Bank."

The second area we focused on has been capacity building in the Ministry of Interior. That may seem like a mundane task, but it is absolutely vital, because we are trying to form a normal government. In the Palestinian Authority, the minister of interior is responsible for all the security forces to the prime minister and president. And when Gaza fell, the Ministry of Interior fell with it, which really wasn't a bad thing because the ministry had been dominated by Hamas, and the ministry had been focused on building up what's called the Executive Force—which was the Hamas alternative to the legitimate security forces. And when the ministry fell, it was one of the good things that happened in June of 2007.

Well, the new Fayyad-appointed minister had literally no one else to work with when he walked into his office, and as he complained to me, he didn't even have a typewriter. . . . In the last eighteen months, we have invested considerable funds and personnel into making the ministry a leading arm of the Palestinian government with a capacity to budget, to think strategically, and to plan operationally. As I said, it's the key to normalcy for Palestine. Security decisions in Palestine are no longer made by one man in the middle of the night. In this, we have come a very long way.

Infrastructure is the third area. It's hard to describe how decrepit the Palestinian security facilities we first encountered were—not really fit for human habitation. In the past eighteen months, we have worked with Palestinian contractors to build a state-of-the-art training college for the Presidential Guard in Jericho as well as a brand new operational base that will house—as a matter of fact, is housing now—one thousand of the returning [national security forces]

gendarmes from Jordan on a hilltop outside of Jericho city.

We are planning on building another one of these operational bases in Jenin, and it's with the full agreement and endorsement of the Israeli army. We are also in the midst of rebuilding a major Palestinian police gendarmerie training center, also in Jericho. And I've got to tell you, the pride and confidence that the beneficiaries of this work exhibit has been a persistent observation of U.S. and allied visitors to these sites, including frequent congressional delegations that have gone there. For the first time, I think it's fair to say that the Palestinian security forces feel they are on a winning team.

And the fourth area we've focused on is senior leader training. . . . [A]ctually it's a small program—but in my view, it's probably the one of the greatest lasting value. We've already graduated two classes of people at the ranks of major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel from an eight-week seminar-like course where we get thirty-six men from all the security services together and they learn how to think about current-day problems and how to operate jointly and with respect for international standards. It's the most popular thing we do. . . .

The new battalion commander of the unit training in Jordan, whom I visited last week, is a recent graduate of the senior leader course, and he is just proud as punch that he is taking what he learned there and applying it to leading his new unit of five hundred men and anticipating their return back to the West Bank.

Okay, so what have we and the Palestinians—I've got to emphasize this—what have the Palestinians achieved? Because I'm a force provider—I help them. But they do a lot of this themselves. Let's talk about facts on the ground. The USSC security partnership with the Palestinians and Jordanians and the Israelis is now in its eighteenth month. The results are beyond our most optimistic expectations, and they relate directly to the title of this talk, "Peace through Security." The facts on the ground have changed and will continue to change.

I don't know how many of you are aware, but over the last year-and-a-half, the Palestinians have engaged upon a series of what they call security offensives throughout the West Bank, surprisingly well coordinated with the Israeli army, in a serious

and sustained effort to return the rule of law to the West Bank and reestablish the authority of the Palestinian Authority. Beginning in Nablus, then Jenin, Hebron, and Bethlehem, they have caught the attention of the Israeli defense establishment for their dedication, discipline, motivation, and results.

And I've got to tell you, the Jordanian-trained guys are the key. Let me dwell on Hebron for a minute, because if any of you know about Hebron, this is a very difficult place, okay? It's the largest city in the West Bank, it has a very large and aggressive settler population, and it is a very holy site for the Jewish people and for the Arab people. A year ago, the IDF rejected any suggestion that the Palestinian Authority should be allowed to reinforce its garrison in Hebron, which was a small force of only about four hundred police and gendarmes for this, the largest governorate in the West Bank.

And we wanted to reinforce them with some of the graduates of the Jordan program. They said no. Yet the performance of these Jordan-trained graduates in Jenin, which was their first deployment, was so impressive that six months later, the IDF not only allowed the reinforcement in Hebron, but led it, facilitated it, and extended it. It's still going on. And the results of this reinforcement have been electric. There were villages in the Hebron governorate that had not seen a uniformed Palestinian policeman since 1967. Think about that. Not anymore.

It had become the place where tribal law, sharia law, had replaced the secular law of the Palestinian Authority. Let me give you an example of something I thought was fascinating. The governor of Hebron told me—about three months ago—that the security forces had rounded up four guys who were guilty of some kind of a criminal ring, and they had incarcerated them, they were in jail.

And true to form, the next morning, the governor goes into work, and he finds four shaykhs sitting outside his office, and he knew what was coming. These were guys from the most powerful clan in the Hebron area, and his experience with these guys in the past had always been, "Give us our guys back, you can't have them, we've got them, we know how to deal with this." Well, this day was different. He said as he was sitting in his office, they came in and the head shaykh

said, "We know you picked up four of our men last night. And we've been watching what you've been doing here for the last two months. We just have to tell you that we believe in you and you can have them. We don't know how to deal with these guys, they are yours, the authority is back, let's go." [Applause.]

Well, I was in Hebron last week, where a company—about one hundred and twenty-five men—of the Jordan-trained second special battalion of the national security forces is operating under the authority of the Palestinian area commander, reinforcing the police and providing a gendarme presence in what Oslo called area A and also in area B, which is, according to Oslo, Israeli control. Why are they in area B? Because the Israeli army commander in the area says, "I need their help and I can trust these guys—they don't lie to me anymore."

That's, again, a pretty significant transformation. And I will tell you that what I saw, and what I get reports on from my Canadians and British who travel more than I do, is that the transformation in what was arguably the politically most difficult city in the Palestinian territories has been profound. And in the midst of all this, there have been no clashes—no clashes—between Palestinian security forces and the IDF or the Palestinian forces and the Israeli settlers who happened to live in the areas. Now, that's pretty amazing, and I think we're pretty pleased with that.

Across the West Bank, these security campaigns have featured clamping down on armed gangs amid a visible police presence, dismantling illegal militias, working against illegal Hamas activities, and focusing on the safety and security of Palestinian citizens. Crime is down. Teenage girls in Jenin can visit their friends after dark without fear of being attacked. Palestinian shops are now open after dark—they never were. A year ago they weren't.

And life is approaching normal in many of these areas. In a report published at the end of February, the International Monetary Fund, which is always critical of everybody, wrote that "During 2008, the Palestinian Authority made substantial progress in establishing security in several Palestinian cities in the West Bank by deploying police and security forces. This has brought about a large measure of stability and business confidence, and 2008 was the most profitable year for the Palestinian Authority in the past decade."

Now, in my meeting with Palestinian commanders last week, from Tulkarm and Nablus in the north to Hebron and Bethlehem in the south, there was profound confidence in their capability and positive comments about their cooperation with the Israeli army in the area. In Bethlehem, surprisingly, the area commander noted proudly that he and the local Israeli brigade commander have worked out a deal where the curfew that Israel has always applied since 2002 in the West Bank no longer applies in Bethlehem and that the Palestinians are now authorized to run checkpoints of their own to control smuggling activity 24/7.

The situation may be fragile; there are many challenges ahead. But this is real progress in changing facts on the ground. But the big challenge—and this is the one I want you all to take away if you take away nothing else tonight—was in January 2009. . . . [O]ver the past year, no security challenge in the West Bank has even come close to the challenge the Palestinians had in maintaining law and order during Operation Cast Lead—the Israeli ground invasion of Gaza in January.

Before the ground invasion, my IDF colleagues warned in confidence that massive civil unrest in the West Bank was coming. Some even predicted a third intifada—something they dreaded but were willing to risk to stop the rocket fire against southern Israel. Yet, as it turned out, none of these predictions were true. Demonstrations occurred, there were some loud rallies, but the promised days of rage demanded repeatedly by Hamas failed to materialize.

Why was that? Well, there were two reasons. The first was, I think, the new professionalism and competency of the new Palestinian security forces guaranteed a measured and disciplined approach to the popular unrest. Their guidance from the prime minister and president was clear: allow demonstrations, but do not allow them to become violent, and keep the demonstrators away from the Israelis. This time, unlike any time in the past, the Palestinian president and prime minister had tools adequate to the task. The IDF also felt—after the first week or so—that the Palestinians were there and they could trust them. As a matter of fact, a good portion of the Israeli army went off to Gaza from the West Bank—think about that for a minute—and the commander was absent for eight straight days. That shows the kind of trust they were putting in these people now.

Anyway, the Israelis deliberately kept a low profile, stayed away from the demonstrators, and coordinated their daily activity with the Palestinians to make sure they weren't in the wrong place at the wrong time for either an inadvertent clash or just to stay out of the way of the demonstrations that were coming. So typically the Palestinian commander would call the Israeli commander in the area and say, "We've got a demonstration going from point A to point B. That's very close to your checkpoint here at Beit El. We would appreciate it for two hours if you would leave the checkpoint so that we can get the demonstrators through, bring them back, you can come back."

And that's exactly what they did—amazing. Widespread demonstrations against the Gaza invasion occurred, of course. But they were largely peaceful and they never got out of control. The police and the gendarmerie applied the training they had learned in Jordan, and unlike past events, not a single Palestinian was killed in the West Bank during the three weeks of the Israeli presence on the ground in Gaza. That's pretty good.

The second reason, which is one that I think we need to study a little more—and maybe the Washington Institute can help us with this— . . . was one I didn't expect. I heard this in the north, I heard it in the south. The consistent theme was that although the people in the West Bank did not support the Gaza invasion—as a matter of fact, they were extremely angry at Israel for doing it—they didn't support Hamas even more.

What I'm saying here is, they showed their support for the people by blood drives, clothing drives, food drives, things like this. But they were not out there to demonstrate in favor of Hamas. They were out there to demonstrate in favor of the people of Gaza. But Hamas was clearly not on their dance card. Why? Because Hamas was perceived as having brought disorder and disaster to Gaza, and the people in the West Bank simply didn't want that anymore. Plus, they had a security force amid them that they were beginning to respect. The way I would put it is, the prospect of order trumped the prospect of chaos.

Okay, so where do we go from here? If Congress authorizes it, the USSC will continue our initiatives with the Palestinian Ministry of Interior to transform, professionalize, and restructure the Palestinian security

forces in the West Bank through more training and equipping, more capacity building, intensified work with the European Union, and more infrastructure. We have plans on the books right now to train and equip three more battalions in Jordan—that's approximately fifteen hundred more of the national security forces, and two more operational base camps to be built to house them. We have plans to expand our senior leader training to include middle-level officers.

We're aware that there's a need for a functional logistical and administrative structure that's unique to the Palestinian Authority, and we're working hard with the Ministry of Interior and the security chiefs to design such a thing that will work for Palestinians. And we're working closely with Israeli military commanders in the West Bank to explore options to further reduce the IDF footprint as the Palestinian capability and proven abilities grow. There has been progress already—I want to make sure you know that—as far as the IDF efforts to present a reduced Israeli security presence, especially in the north.

Through the efforts of our British team in Ramallah, we've also taken on the neglected Palestinian civil defense organization. Most of you have never heard of it, but these are the first responders. These are the EMTs and the ambulances and the firemen. We've taken them under our wing. They're in our budget. We're going to help them. And we also have something in our pocket called the West Bank Training Initiative where we have plans to continue a series of courses in the West Bank on logistics, leadership, first aid, maintenance, English language, battalion staff training, and driver education. These are led by our British and Turkish officers with an eye to eventually turning this over to the Palestinians themselves. . . .

I take to heart the much-repeated words of my friend, a very senior, tough, pragmatic leader in the IDF. He was formerly a severe critic. Not anymore. Now he says—and I'm quoting him here directly from a newspaper article—"The USSC is doing a great job, and as the Palestinians do more, we [the Israelis] will do less." Now, as far as I'm concerned, those are words to live by and to make a reality. . . .

As a professional military officer, I appreciate Israeli caution and Palestinian impatience. But sometimes it's useful to look backward as you look forward.

I recall vividly a meeting in February with a hardened IDF officer with great direct responsibility for the security of Israel. We were talking in his headquarters about what didn't happen in the West Bank in January and the prospects for the future.

He sat back in his chair and he smiled and he said, "The change among the new

Palestinian men in the past year is miraculous. Mine was the generation that grew up with intifadas, and now I have hope that my children won't have to do the same thing." And as a result he pledged to take prudent risk to move things forward, and he has been true to his word. He remains cautious but hopeful. Me too. . . .



A Palestinian employee of the Interior Ministry works inside a makeshift office in a tent next to the destroyed ministerial buildings in Gaza City, 25 March 2009. (Khalil Hamra/AP Photo)

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