

FOR YASSIR ARAFAT, THE U.S. MUST BE OFF LIMITS

Yassir Arafat has indicated an interest in coming to the New York headquarters of the United Nations at the beginning of June. The last time he addressed the General Assembly was in November 1974. Then the terrorist leader received a standing ovation from the anti-American and anti-Israeli audience. In recent years evidence has accumulated testifying to Arafat's involvement in international terrorism. As such, the Reagan Administration should exercise its legal prerogative to deny Arafat a visa to the U.S. Failing to do so would send the wrong message at a time when the Administration is seeking to use all responsible means to fight terrorism.

The U.S. has the full legal right to exclude Arafat from the U.S. Section 212(a) (27) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, known as the McCarran-Walter Act, permits expulsion of aliens who "seek to enter the U.S. solely, principally, or incidentally to engage in activities which would be prejudicial to the public interest or endanger the welfare, safety, or security of the U.S." On several occasions since 1947 the U.S. has denied entrance to aliens seeking to visit the U.N. Moreover, the arrangement by which the U.S. agreed to host the U.N., the Headquarters Agreement of 1947 as codified in P.L. 357 (80th Congress), explicitly states in Section 6 that "nothing in the Agreement shall be construed as in any way diminishing, abridging, or weakening the right of the U.S. to safeguard its own security and completely to control the entrance of aliens...." An authoritative 1953 State Department opinion by the Assistant Legal Advisor for U.N. Affairs states that the Section 6 reservation was an expression of congressional opinion "that the U.S. must have at least some control over the entrance of aliens into the Headquarters District and its immediate vicinity...."

Evidence regarding Arafat's terrorist activities has been mounting. In 1973, a PLO faction in Khartoum murdered three people, including two U.S. diplomats--Ambassador Cleo Noel and Charge d'Affaires G. Curtis Moore. Arafat's voice was allegedly monitored and recorded, indicating that he was present in the operations center controlling the incident and that he congratulated the guerrillas after the execution.

On February 12, 1986, Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Charles E. Grassley (R-IA), and 42 other Senators signed a letter asking Attorney General Edwin Meese III to indict Arafat on the basis of this evidence. Last week, Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (R-KS) stated on the floor of the Senate: "It disturbs me that we seem to keep the door open for people like Arafat to come and spread their poison either at the United Nations or anywhere in the United States....I believe it is an insult to Americans who have been the victims of terrorism around the world that we have to sit back and listen to people like Mr. Arafat, especially in a forum like the United Nations...." Congressman Jack Kemp (R-NY) sent a letter to Secretary of State George Shultz demanding the same, and a similar letter is being sent by Senators Lautenberg and Jeremiah Denton (R-AL) to Shultz.

In addition to denying Arafat a visa, the Reagan Administration should:

- o Ask the Department of Justice Legal Counsel to render an opinion on the U.S.'s right to enforce the Headquarters Agreement against members of the PLO generally.

- o Investigate PLO activities in the U.S., including violation by the Palestine Information Office, based in Washington, D.C., of the Voorhis Act (Title 18, Section 2386 of the Criminal Code). This Act mandates registration of an organization if one of its purposes is the seizure or violent overthrow of a government.

- o Consider legal action against the PLO mission to the U.N. in New York, including closing it down.

- o Consider indicting Arafat for the 1973 murders of U.S. diplomats.

If the U.S. is serious about fighting terrorism, it must deny Arafat, a chief terrorist, the right to come to the U.S. And if the U.S. is serious about its membership in the U.N., then it must deny Arafat the right to visit U.N. headquarters in New York City.

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For further information:

Juliana Geran Pilon, "The PLO's Valuable Ally: The U.N.,"
Heritage Foundation Background No. 473, December 17, 1985.

"Arresting Arafat", The New Republic, December 30, 1985.