

Briefing Note
Wye River Memorandum
Security Coordination – Trilateral Committee
October 2006

The Trilateral Committee (TC) was established pursuant to article II. B. 3, *Wye River Memorandum*, which states the following:

In addition to the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation, a high-ranking U.S.-Palestinian-Israeli committee will meet as required and no less than biweekly to assess current threats, deal with any impediments to effective security cooperation and coordination and address the steps being taken to combat terror and terrorist organisations. The committee will also serve as a forum to address the issue of external support for terror. In these meetings, the Palestinian side will fully inform the members of the committee of the results of its investigations concerning terrorist suspects already in custody and the participants will exchange additional relevant information. The committee will report regularly to the leaders of the two sides on the status of cooperation, the results of the meetings and its recommendations.

The TC was established in addition to Palestinian-U.S., and Israeli-U.S. bilateral committees. The U.S. representation was from the CIA. While the committee did not succeed in substantially improving Israeli-Palestinian relationship, it did improve both sides' relationship with the U.S.

The U.S. did not have any binding decision-making role in the TC, but was able to influence the actions of the parties through diplomacy. Whenever it felt a need for political pressure, this was exercised usually through Dennis Ross intervening with the leadership of the two sides.

According to parties involved in the TC, meetings were long, allowing the parties the opportunity to 'vent', after which they started listening to the other's concerns. Thus, the committee did serve as a forum for real exchange of information and ideas.

However, contributing to its overall lack of effectiveness was the absence of individuals with powers to implement decisions at the table. This led to situations where parties would declare a lack of mandate to decide and table the issue for a later meeting.

Another criticism of the TC was that its sessions were secret and classified. There are strong reasons for security cooperation to be public, most notably regarding integrity and the ability to implement decisions. It is more difficult to implement decisions arrived at in secret and without a transparent process.