

October 28, 1973

**Letter by the Federal Chancellor, Brandt to the
President of the United States of America, Nixon 28
October 1973**

Citation:

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Summary:

Federal Chancellor, Brandt writes to President Nixon about the discover on 24 October 1973 that Israeli ships in Bremerhaven were loaded with American munitions for Israel. Brandt voices his concerns about Middle Eastern Peace and importance of transparency in transatlantic relations.

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Original Scan

No. 4

Letter by the Federal Chancellor, Brandt, to the President of the United States of America, Nixon¹

28 October 1973

NARA, Nixon Presidential Materials Staff, NSC, 1969–1974, Presidential Correspondence 1969–1974, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, Box 61.

Published in: Berliner Ausgabe, vol. 6.

English translation: Dwight E. Langston

Dear Mr. President,

I am deeply concerned by officially and publicly insinuating reactions which are connected with insufficient information during the October War in the Middle East.²

In the interest of our untroubled and trusting relations as well as for the benefit of cohesion in the Atlantic Alliance, I would like to communicate my thoughts to you without delay, so as to prevent serious misunderstandings arising between us or within the Alliance.

Without knowing in detail any actions or reasoning which your government has carried out to bring things under control in the Middle East, I was and remain of the opinion that only the USA, in cooperation with the Soviet Union, was capable of achieving this. It appears that your efforts were successful.³ Who could not appreciate that! To assure peace in its own way, my government has attempted to take measures which are very modest by comparison.

It would therefore be a serious mistake to assume that my government has not sufficiently appreciated the necessity of a balance of powers in the Middle East and the responsibility which you are saddled with.

At the same time it is necessary to clarify that the October War – as with earlier crises – not a matter of a shared responsibility by the Alliance.

More than once we have demonstrated that we are not indifferent and that we know who our principal ally is. But it is an entirely different matter when, on the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany – without the Federal Government having been completely informed, not to mention even asked in advance –, American materials are available for purposes which are simply not part of our responsibility in the Alliance.⁴ In principal the Federal Government cannot react any differently than my predecessor did in 1958.⁵ Then as now, that should not and does not need to lead to tensions, neither bilaterally nor within the

Alliance, simply because our common interests cannot and must not be affected when we discover deficiencies in communication and coordination.

Should it be necessary, I will gladly explain this in detail. Today I am concerned with emphatically contradicting any speculation that the Federal Republic of Germany could be lacking in solidarity with the Alliance.

I am convinced that the misunderstandings and frictions which have occurred will lead to better deliberations on the complex of problems in the Alliance. The goal, which we all pursue, is to strengthen and deepen the Alliance at a difficult time.

These incidents have demonstrated how necessary the tasks are which shall prepare your trip to Europe⁶. In doing so, substance will be even more important than words.

Yours truly,

<Willy Brandt>⁷

¹ The template copy here is the original letter which bears the notation "Secret." Published also in: AAPD 19873, III, p. 1668-1670.

² The Federal Government had discovered on 24 October 1973 that Israeli ships in Bremerhaven were loaded with American munitions for Israel and subsequently, on 25 October 1973, informed the American ambassador in Bonn that such an action was not in keeping with the strict neutrality of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Middle East conflict. Cf. Introduction.

³ On 22 October 1973 the American Secretary of State Kissinger had visited Tel Aviv after his Moscow visit for talks with the Israeli government.

⁴ Cf. Note 2.

⁵ Brandt is alluding to the reaction of Federal Chancellor Adenauer during the Middle East crisis in July 1958 and the American intervention in Lebanon, about which the Federal Republic of Germany had received no information in advance. Cf. thereto AdG 28 (1958), p. 7190 and 7204.

⁶ Cf. No. 77, Note 6.

⁷ Signed by hand.