

November 17, 1977

**Telegram from South African Ambassador to Israel,
'Israeli Reaction to the UN Arms Embargo Against
South Africa'**

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Summary:

The South African Ambassador to Israel reports on the official response in Israel to the possibility of a UN arms embargo of South Africa.

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17 November 1977

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The Secretary for Foreign Affairs
PRETORIA

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ISRAELI REACTION TO U.N. ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

There has been only one further official reaction on the subject of the U.N. arms embargo since Prime Minister Begin and Foreign Minister Dayan made their statements to the press (vide my telegram No. 143 of 10 November), viz that of Mr. Dayan last night during a radio press interview. He was asked about relations with South Africa and replied as follows :

Dayan

"Firstly, whatever the Security Council decides, or has decided, Israel will act accordingly. Secondly, we have no hidden under-the-table relations with the South African Government. On the question of Apartheid, we differ from them no less than other countries. I have asked our representative in the United Nations to vote against South Africa, to vote for resolutions condemning South Africa, on those occasions when the U.S. votes in that way, on those cases of internal suppression that accompany apartheid."

It will be noticed that Mr. Dayan's words are open to different interpretations. Taken literally, they could mean that, whatever decisions are taken by the Security Council, Israel would act according to her own interests. On the other hand, they could signify that Israel will act in accordance with the wishes of the U.N.

This Mission has not yet received any official indication from the Israeli authorities as to how they intend to act in this very sensitive matter. It seems obvious however, that they will try to employ as much subterfuge and circumvention as will be possible in order to evade the embargo. This could be done in three ways : (a) by publicly professing to uphold the embargo and, at the same time (b) by placing as restrictive an interpretation as is permissible, on the Security Council Resolution and, (c) otherwise, continuing for as long as possible, covertly, to disregard it. For such a policy to succeed, however, great circumspection and tight security will have to be maintained by both sides. We understand that the Foreign Ministry is at present busy with an in-depth study of the legal implications of the Resolution. They are presumably be on the lookout for the loopholes.

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The joker in the pack is, of course, the U.S. Government. To my mind the extent to which the embargo is made effective, will in large measure depend upon how seriously the U.S.A. wishes it to be enforced. If the Carter Administration is content with having sent South Africa a warning message, then the supply of armaments between Israel and South Africa may well be allowed to continue clandestinely. An important consideration in this regard is, furthermore, that the U.S.A. might be called upon, in the event of a rigorous enforcement of the embargo, to make good to Israel the loss of revenue resulting from such enforcement action. In view of her already hefty aid commitments to Israel, such additional expense may either be considered to be too much or, alternatively, as just part of the price to be paid for hurting South Africa and showing up Israel. The imponderables are manifold and the future still uncertain.

You will be kept informed of further developments.

Avner Zohar
 ANBASSADOR

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23 Nov 77

Military Secretary

For information of the Minister please.

Avner Zohar
 CHIEF OF THE SA DEFENCE FORCE: GENERAL

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Chief of Staff Operations

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For information.

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