



April 11, 1969

National Security Study Memorandum [NSSM] No. 40, Memorandum from Henry Kissinger to Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Director of Central Intelligence, 'Israeli Nuclear Weapons Program'

Citation:

"National Security Study Memorandum [NSSM] No. 40, Memorandum from Henry Kissinger to Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Director of Central Intelligence, 'Israeli Nuclear Weapons Program'", April 11, 1969, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Mandatory declassification review request. Originally published in Avner Cohen and William Burr, eds., National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book #485 (September 12, 2014).

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Summary:

Kissinger initiated a formal bureaucratic process to address how the U.S. government should respond to the emergence of a nuclear Israel, a review process managed by Kissinger's NSC staff, known as NSSM 40. Through the NSSM Henry Kissinger tasked the DCI, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense to prepare a report for the President that included the latest intelligence findings on the Israeli nuclear program and policy options with recommendations that the President could use in making decisions.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

NO RELEASE

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL RA has seen
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

April 11, 1969

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National Security Study Memorandum No. 40

TO: The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence Special Asst has seen

SUBJECT: Israeli Nuclear Weapons Program

The President has directed the preparation of a policy study on the Israeli nuclear weapons program.

As a background for this study, a thorough intelligence study should be provided, describing our best estimate of the current state and future prospects of the Israeli program. The intelligence estimate should be provided on a selected basis to the named individuals of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Review Group and of the National Security Council listed below.

The policy should (a) discuss as specifically as possible the implications of Israel's nuclear weapons program for U.S. objectives in the Middle East, in arms limitation and in non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and (b) describe the principal policy alternatives for the U.S. and the full range of possible U.S. actions in the situations we are most likely to face. For instance, the paper might consider alternatives (a) in the present situation, (b) in a situation where Israel is known by us but not by the Arabs to have completed a nuclear device, and (c) in a situation where Israel is known by us and by the Arabs to be ready to deploy nuclear weapons. After analyzing alternatives, the paper may state a viewpoint on a preferred course.

The President has directed that this study be prepared by an Ad Hoc Group chaired by a representative of the Secretary of State and including representatives of the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of Central Intelligence and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

The paper should be submitted by April 25, 1969, to an Ad Hoc Committee of the NSC Review Group comprised of Elliot L. Richardson, Under Secretary of State; David Packard, Deputy Secretary of Defense; Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence; General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman,

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Joint Chiefs of Staff, and chaired by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The special committee of the National Security Council will be comprised of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.


Henry A. Kissinger

cc: The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

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