

March 29, 1969

**Memorandum from Ralph Earle, Office of
International Security Affairs, 'Stopping the
Introduction of Nuclear Weapons Into the Middle
East'**

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Summary:

This memo provided Laird with a scheme for a tough approach to Israel that involved a demarche to the Israeli government for "cease-and-desist" certain nuclear and missile [excised] activities and a demand for private assurances and, ultimately, Israel's signature on the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). To seal such a deal Earle proposed an exchange of letters between President Richard Nixon and Prime Minister Golda Meir, for which he provided drafts.

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INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

29 March 1969
I-35250/69

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Stopping the Introduction of Nuclear Weapons into the Middle East

Background

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All available evidence suggests that [redacted]

The latest DIA assessment will be separately provided through SAO channels. I would add to this assessment three further indications of Israeli intentions. First, at no time during the extensive discussions on this subject ISA had with Ambassador Rabin of Israel last November and December did Rabin attempt to deny that Israel was [redacted] second, the recent evidence of Israel's acquisition of strategic computers; and third, Israel's unwillingness to sign and ratify the NPT.

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As you know from prior ISA memoranda and your conversations with Paul Warnke, the Defense Department tried and failed last year to make the supply of F-4 aircraft contingent upon the halting by Israel of its nuclear weapons and missiles programs. President Johnson did not approve the Defense recommendations. It is of course possible to cancel any contract with another government, including the F-4 contract, as an act of sovereignty; more specifically, however, all contracts for the sale of U.S. military equipment include a provision that "under unusual and compelling circumstances" the United States reserves the right to cancel all or part of any contract not delivered. What the Defense Department did in negotiating the F-4 agreement was to (a) put Israel on notice that the USG is aware of what Israel is doing in the missile and nuclear field; (b) make an explicit connection between the "unusual and compelling" clause and Israel's assurances concerning the introduction of nuclear weapons--in effect, raising the possibility that this Administration would reconsider the F-4 sale in light of Israel's nuclear programs; and (c) identify a significant difference between US and Israeli interpretations of what constitutes "introduction". (Israeli Ambassador Rabin said that "introduction" would not occur until a weapon had been tested and its existence publicly known; Warnke's letter to Rabin made clear that the American definition is that mere possession of nuclear weapons constitutes "introduction").

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Indicators

In summary, intelligence reports indicate the following:

1. Initial development of the MD-620 missile by the French for Israel under a 1963 contract with Avions Marcel Dassault.
2. The MD-620 missile is capable of carrying a 2200 pound warhead to ranges of 270 nautical miles--it could strike the Arab capitals of Cairo, Amman, Damascus, and Beirut.
3. Of the initial buy of 25 missiles, two have been delivered to Israel, five more are due in, and the remaining 18 were expended in tests in France.
4. Missile R&D, production, test, and training facilities are now in Israel.
5. Preparation of storage facilities for mobile deployment and recent construction of silos is believed to be under way.
6. 25X1 and 6, E.O.13526 (There is, however, no hard specific evidence from our technical collection resources nor from our annual inspections of the Dimona nuclear reactor to confirm their development of nuclear weapons.)

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The Tools Available to Stop Israel's Missile and Nuclear Efforts

- a. Grant or Withhold the Supply of Weapons from the U.S.

The kinds of actions which are both available and effective in stopping these developments depend on our control over the most important arms and

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components on which Israel now relies. There is a wide range and increasing amount of military items constantly flowing to Israel both from the Department of Defense and from commercial suppliers. The most significant of these items now are combat aircraft, i.e., the A-4 Skyhawk and the F-4 Phantom. (We sold to Israel 48 A-4s in 1966; in 1968 we sold an additional 52 A-4s, for a total of 100, of which 42 have been delivered to date, and the balance are being delivered in monthly increments between now and November 1970. Delivery of 50 F-4 Phantoms will begin in September of this year and continue through 1970).

Because Israel's military strategy in the event of renewed hostilities is necessarily a pre-emptive air strike, a dependable supply of aircraft from the United States is essential to them; and for this reason, the threat to withhold these aircraft (i.e., to cancel or suspend deliveries) or the offer of additional aircraft and related items can be powerful inducements in our negotiations with Israel on nuclear weapons and strategic missiles.

We could also, at an appropriate point in the negotiations, offer to meet Israel's future conventional military equipment requirements. (We have already become, with the withdrawal of France, Israel's principal source of arms supply.) It is in our interest that Israel has a military capability sufficient to win any future war--and win it quickly--for the chance of U.S. or Soviet involvement increases otherwise.

b. U.S.-Israel Mutual Security Treaty

In theory at least, we could offer to Israel a mutual security pact. It may be that, in any case, Israel will request this sort of nearly unlimited U.S. guarantee of its security before abandoning its nuclear and missile programs. It is not to our advantage, however, either to make or to accept such a proposal: (1) A treaty is not necessary for the protection of Israel; Israel will have for the foreseeable future a marked military superiority over its Arab opponents. This can be assured by a continuing flow of arms from the United States. (2) We would have no control over the circumstances which would lead to the invocation of the treaty; we cannot control the actions of either Israel or the Arabs, and could not prevent renewed hostilities. (3) A treaty would establish a new and unwanted precedent in our relations with other near-nuclear states. (4) New obligations which could require the use of U.S. forces are unlikely to win the support of the Congress or the American people.

c. Diplomatic and Economic Possibilities

There are other forms of influence we can wield, but these are less easily managed and may even be disadvantageous for us. We could, for example, threaten to take diplomatic positions contrary to Israel's interests on

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various issues, particularly on the settlement proposals; or we could, by various devices, restrict the flow of American capital to Israel. It is not at all clear that either of these steps would be effective but it is fairly clear that such actions would place this Government in a more vulnerable position if and when we are required publicly to defend them.

d. U.S.-Soviet Middle East Arms Limitation Talks not a Substitute for Unilateral U.S. Actions.

The President has publicly stated his interest in discussing with the USSR arms limitation for the Middle East. Now that the Senate has ratified the NPT, and with Israel as one of the most easily remarkable non-signatories of the treaty, the subject will almost automatically raise itself in any discussion with the Soviets. Whatever is discussed or agreed with the Soviets, however, it is only the U.S. that can make the Israelis cease their development of these weapons; the connection between our negotiations with the Israelis and our negotiations with the Soviets will probably be only to see what we can obtain in the way of additional Soviet limitations on arms supplied to the Arabs in payment for what we have to do in our own interests in any case; i.e., stop Israeli production of nuclear weapons.

Conclusions

The object of our efforts is to stop now the development and production of strategic missiles and nuclear weapons by Israel. This is the most important and most urgent of our objectives in the Middle East. What we have done so far is simply to suggest to Israel the possibility of imposing sanctions after the event. This is inadequate. It is clear, moreover, that Israel is continuing its work on missiles and nuclear weapons despite the risk of sanctions, and that [redacted]

[redacted] that it halt its missile and nuclear program now under the threat of an arms embargo if they fail to comply and the promise of assured conventional military supplies if they do. Other kinds of actions are either ineffective or impractical. Specifically we should seek to:

1. Gain private assurances from Israel (with inspection privileges) that it will cease and desist from development or acquisition of nuclear weapons. [redacted]

[redacted] We should, nevertheless, seek the right to inspect in principle.)

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2. Gain private assurances from Israel that it will cease and desist from further development or acquisition of strategic missiles, i.e., those capable of reaching most Arab capitals from Israel proper. (Although stopping missile production and deployment is second in priority to stopping nuclear weapons, it is important that we stop the missiles because (a) we will have stopped one means of nuclear weapons delivery and can have greater confidence in Israeli nuclear assurances, and (b) if missiles are deployed by Israel it will be assumed that they have nuclear warheads, and the practical results may be the same whether or not the nuclear warheads actually exist.)

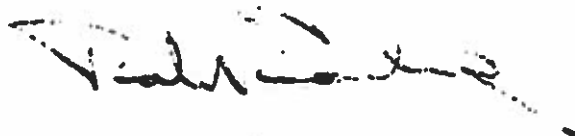
3. Gain public assurances from Israel that it will not acquire nuclear weapons by signing the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Recommendation

I recommend you propose, to Secretary Rogers and the President, an early meeting with Ambassador Rabin of Israel with the object of stopping Israel's missile and nuclear weapons programs and obtaining from Israel necessary assurances to this effect.

Rabin should be called in by the President, or by you and Secretary Rogers. Although the negotiations with Israel will be especially difficult, they will be less difficult if our demands for assurances are unequivocal and made at the highest level. The kinds of assurances we require are as indicated above. It is obvious we cannot obtain absolute guarantees that Israel will forego strategic missiles and nuclear weapons forever; we can, however, make it more likely that missiles and nuclear weapons will not be used by stopping their production now and by creating a political obstacle--the necessity to renounce agreements and risk confrontation with the United States--to their later use.

Our more detailed comments on the proposed negotiations are at Tab A. A draft exchange of letters between the President and the Prime Minister of Israel is at Tab B. This could, in modified form, represent the end product of the negotiations, and is illustrative of the demands we would make of Israel and the things (i.e., assured military supplies) we would offer in return.



Attachments

Dr. Tucker and Dr. Walske concur.

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Considerations in the Negotiations with Israel

1. The talks should be held in Washington, not Tel Aviv. Better control over the operations will exist here; it is extremely difficult for any ambassador to convey fully the serious purpose of the United States Government and to be as tough as will be required in this case. Furthermore, we are unlikely to find anyone in Israel more honest than Ambassador Rabin.
2. The first demarche might best be made by the President, or by you and the Secretary of State together. High level participation is needed to convey the strength of our purpose.
3. The subsequent talks should be disassociated from the peace settlement negotiations in order to avoid a direct connection between the two by which Israel could claim we are aligning ourselves with the Arabs and the Soviet Union to their detriment. Defense representatives should of course be full participants in the preparation for and during the actual negotiations.
4. We should from the outset put the onus on the Israelis. We should dispel any illusions Israel may be under that the theory of nuclear deterrence that applies between the U.S. and Russia can apply between Israel and its emotional and irrational enemies. The Israelis are the ones who are introducing a new and vastly more dangerous element into the Middle East. They, not we, are raising the possibility of nuclear war. They are the ones endangering the security of the United States. They are the ones who threaten the failure of the NPT. It is they who risk a confrontation with the United States. They are the ones making our position in support of Israel untenable. As soon as they halt their missile and nuclear programs, our relationship can return to normal.
5. The earlier we begin the better, for the closer Israel gets to nuclear weapons and missiles, the harder it will be to get them to stop. Moreover, we may soon lose control of the situation, for it will almost surely enter the public consciousness in the very near future; in fact, it is already starting to do so.
6. Our demands must be unequivocal. Moral suasion and prolonged discussion does not work with Israel. We must set some time limits. The Israelis present an unusually coherent and aggressive front when pursuing their objectives. Israel almost certainly will try to delay formal discussions and a decision as long as possible, stalling for time as it rushes to complete its programs.
7. Negotiations with Israel on this matter will be especially difficult. By placing demands on Israel to stop making nuclear weapons, a public confrontation with that government is possible--although only

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likely if (a) they think we are bluffing, or (b) they believe they could reverse our position by so doing. They could use their full range of assets in the United States to persuade us to abandon our demands. They would not, however, enter lightly into such a course, because the introduction of nuclear weapons by Israel will not be an issue on which they could expect the kind of uncontested American support they have achieved on other issues and because, if they failed to reverse our policy, the long range effects could be very bad indeed.

8. The kinds of demands we must make of Israel are:

a. unequivocal written assurances by them that they will stop developing or manufacturing, and will not otherwise acquire, strategic missiles or nuclear weapons; and that they will not test or deploy those strategic missiles they now have;

b. that Israel will sign and ratify the NPT within a certain specified period; and

c. that the United States will be offered the opportunity to "visit" (inspect) appropriate sites in Israel on a periodic basis.

9. There are several problems with the proposal for inspection rights that we have not yet resolved. What sites, for example, should we inspect? We believe we can identify their missile facilities, but we have not located a nuclear weapons facility. We believe it is possible for Israel to develop nuclear weapons in secrecy which we would not be able to detect with our technical collectors or with inspection privileges. (For a judgment of the level of assurance that we could continue to detect such developments by clandestine means, we recommend that you ask Dick Helms.)

10. It is important that we seek assurances from Israel for halting both strategic missiles and nuclear weapons programs: (1) [redacted]

(2) The missiles are of little or no value with high explosive (HE) warheads except as terror weapons similar to the German V-2 rockets. They are not militarily cost-effective (they have a CEP of about one-half mile); aircraft would be far more effective and efficient for conventional weapons delivery. It would be out of character for Israel to ignore the cost-effectiveness relationship. Continued Israeli production of missiles would suggest Israeli intention to use non-conventional warheads. (3) Stopping strategic missile production and deployment is intimately connected to stopping the nuclear weapons program. We can more easily, [redacted] monitor Israeli missile progress and, by stopping missile development, can have greater assurance that Israel is not secretly proceeding to produce nuclear weapons. (4) Once the missiles are deployed it will be generally assumed that the missiles do in fact have nuclear warheads, and the practical results may be the same whether or not the nuclear warheads actually exist.

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11. It is obvious we cannot obtain absolute guarantees that Israel will forego missiles and nuclear weapons forever; we cannot take away their capability. The key point is, however, that we would make it more likely that nuclear weapons would not be used by stopping their production now and by creating a political obstacle--the necessity to renounce agreements and risk confrontation with the United States--to their later use.

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Draft/21 March 1969

Dear Madam Prime Minister:

My colleagues and I have met with Ambassador Rabin on the issue of Israel's missile and nuclear weapons programs, and the relationship of these programs to Israel's security and military needs and American security interests. As you well know, the U.S. Government, my predecessors and I have a consistent fundamental interest in the well being of Israel; this will be true of future American Governments also, for it represents the beliefs of the American people, and has been reflected in both our public and private statements and actions since the rebirth of Israel in 1948. I do not have to recall for you the strong associations of our two countries over these past years. It is because of this deep commitment of the American Government and people to Israel and Israel's security that we have been assisting in the maintenance and improvement of her military posture, despite the adverse political consequences this entails for American interests in the Middle East and the difficulties I believe this poses for the working out of a settlement in the Near East.

There is, however, an issue of overriding importance to the security interests of both our countries about which understandings between us must be reached: the issue is Israel's development of strategic missiles and nuclear weapons. It appears that your Government is proceeding with the acquisition and production (and perhaps anticipates testing) of strategic missiles, and has taken long strides toward the acquisition of nuclear weapons. I know of no reason that requires such a step by Israel. Your conventional capabilities

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are now and will continue to be markedly superior to the Arab capabilities. The Egyptian missile program is insignificant, and their nuclear capability non-existent.

We have had many long years of experience with nuclear weapons. They cannot be measured solely in kilotons of destructive power or abstract theories of deterrence in the Middle East. You cannot count on the rationality of your opponents when they themselves represent basically irrational forces. The use of nuclear weapons would affect the very fiber of society, and would involve not just Israel and her Arab opponents, but all countries and all peoples. The introduction of either strategic missiles or nuclear weapons into an area so unstable and so volatile as the Middle East vastly complicates the security problems of all nations and greatly endangers the security interests of Israel and the United States. The course you are embarked upon is extremely dangerous for all of us. You run great risks and by so doing you involve directly the security of the United States. You make the position of the United States in support of Israel and as principal supplier of Israel's conventional military arms quite untenable. It is for these reasons that I must insist on certain assurances.

The assurances we require are the agreement that your Government will not test or deploy those strategic missiles now in Israel; will not acquire or produce additional missiles; will not develop, manufacture, produce or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons; and will sign and ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In order to insure a feeling of mutual trust between our countries on this subject, I ask that United States representatives be

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briefed fully on the missile/warhead program of Israel and that they be permitted to visit related facilities. Such visits would follow the pattern of our visits to your installation at Dimona. These conditions are difficult for you I realize; however, the consequences of nuclear proliferation are so devastating, and so dangerous to both our countries, I must put them forward as essential.

We for our part are prepared to see that Israel will continue to receive sufficient conventional military equipment to meet its legitimate security needs. Our willingness to sell F-4 aircraft--the most modern fighter/bomber in the world now in active service--and to engage in discussions of future Israeli military equipment requirements make this quite clear.

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DRAFT/20 March 1969

Dear Mr. President:

I have received your letter of _____ April 1969, and have studied carefully the detailed reports of the conversations in Washington. I wish to assure you that my Government now fully understands the position of the United States with respect to the introduction of nuclear weapons and strategic missiles into this area. I wish to reaffirm to you the prior assurances of my Government that Israel will not be the first to introduce strategic missiles or nuclear weapons into the area, and that we will not develop, test, manufacture, or otherwise acquire strategic missiles or nuclear weapons without prior consultation with the United States, and will provide to the United States full information on our present strategic missile and nuclear programs and the opportunity to visit quarterly the sites in Israel related to these programs. As you know, my Government has today signed and will soon ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

My Government further understands that it is the intention of the United States Government to meet Israel's legitimate conventional security needs, and to this end it is our understanding that representatives of the United States Government will meet at an agreed early date with representatives of the Government of Israel to begin discussions of Israel's requirements for conventional military equipment during the next five years.

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