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Israel's Spies Play for Keeps

By RAY VICKER

JERUSALEM — "When our commandos raided Egypt and seized that Russian radar station, they knew exactly what they would find," bragged one Israeli journalist in the bar of the King David Hotel here.

A radio news report had just described an abortive Al Fatah raid nipped in the Jordan Valley, thanks to Israeli intelligence. A copy of the "Jerusalem Post" on the table beside the bottle of Advat wine described an Israeli air strike so close to Cairo that bombers might have been led to targets by a radio beacon. So perhaps the journalist may be pardoned for adding: "Even the Russians envy our intelligence network."

To the extent that such boasting is merited, it underlines one of the less obvious aspects of politics in the Middle East: Little Israel's ability to create an espionage network with world-wide scope, operational capability, efficiency and individual talent rivalling that of far larger powers is an important element in the Israeli-Arab power equation.

Forewarned and Forearmed

Time and again, Israeli authorities in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem know what Arabs are thinking and doing even before word drifts into the markets of Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus. When the Arab league was being formed, an Israeli spy in Cairo transmitted top level Arab discussions back to Jerusalem. As the Six Days War started in June, 1967, Israel had every United Arab Republic plane in Nasser's air fleet pinpointed on its military maps, and the UAR air armada was wiped out in the first three hours of the war. Recently, Israeli intelligence combined with daring Israeli seamanship managed to slip five patrol vessels from a French harbor under the noses of French government officials. Such chutzpah adds to the legend of a service born in the intrigue-filled days before Israeli independence in 1948 when groups like the Haganah, the Stern Gang and Irgun operated underground.

"Israelis know all the tricks of the spy trade, and they play their game for keeps," an American veteran in the Middle East says. In Cairo, recently, a Soviet general was heard complaining that Israel had more accurate knowledge of UAR plane locations in 1967 than did the Soviet Union—even though Russia is chief weapons supplier for the UAR. Mohammed Hikal, editor of "Al Ahram" and a confidant of President Nasser, admitted recently that Israeli intelligence is superior to that of Arab counterparts and is "an integral part of Israel's military successes."

Today, Israel's intelligence is centered in five agencies. The Central Intelligence and Security Agency is comparable to America's Central Intelligence Agency, focusing on work outside Israel. Shin Bet, the internal counter-espionage agency is comparable to the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation. Police Special Branch is somewhat similar to the detective branch of a big city police force and usually works closely with Shin Bet on internal cases. The Military Intelligence Department functions as a defense ministry agency, helping funnel information which assists Israeli military planners. Often its work coincides and is coordinated with CISA. Finally the Foreign Ministry Intelligence Division of the foreign ministry. There is

close liaison among the agencies. CISA reports directly to the prime minister. Military Intelligence reports directly to Defense Minister Moshe Dayan.

Israel's intelligence services have all the miniature gadgets, electronic aids and computer filing systems necessary for intelligence work. But the Israelis understand well that, James Bond to the contrary, intelligence work is usually a matter of picking up a fragment of information here, a line in a newspaper there, an apparently innocuous picture somewhere else and then putting all the bits together like a mosaic to form a broad picture.

"Years of operating on a war economy has given us an insight into the type of information we need for survival, a knowledge of where to look for that information, and the ability to apply that information once we get it," says one source here.

The Israelis have developed substantial dossiers for every Arab country, and every country which might have a bearing on developments in this part of the world. Every Arab politician of any consequence is included in the files.

President Nasser's diabetes, for instance, has been carefully recorded in all its nuances. In Rabat, at an Arab summit conference recently, an Israeli informer may have been on hand when President Nasser hesitated at climbing a flight of stairs. Did this mean that Nasser is sicker than a lot of people realize? Medical men in Israel have probably already sifted through information obtained by intelligence and sought to answer the question for the espionage services.

Israel's intelligence network reaches far beyond the troubled Middle East to Buenos Aires, to Geneva, to London, to Munich and to numerous other places about the globe. Moreover it is an activist network equipped not only to spy but also to handle sabotage, kidnappings and any other missions considered vital for Israel's existence.

West Germany would still like to know what happened to rocket specialist Heinz Krug, a German who was helping President Nasser to develop a rocket arsenal. Mr. Krug disappeared without a trace in Munich in September, 1962. Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi killer, was kidnapped in Argentina by Israeli agents, and spirited to Israel for punishment.

Building a Mirage

In Geneva, Switzerland, a Swiss engineer currently is in jail awaiting trial. He is charged with having sold to Israeli intelligence blueprints for manufacturing jet engine parts for the French built Mirage 35 supersonic fighter. This plane, more modern than the Mirages now in the Israeli fleet, has a modified engine which could increase effectiveness of Israeli planes. But France has embargoed sale not only of planes to Israel but parts as well.

In Alexandria, the UAR has blocked off its harbor installations from outside eyes, lest Russian military aid be too evident. High concrete walls rise between what used to be open spaces separating warehouses. Armed soldiers patrol the area, assiduously. But Greek and Italian cruise ships occasionally put into the port, carrying passengers of various nationalities. And, among them, one Egyptian

By big nation standards, Israel goes a long way with a small force. One source estimates that the total number of Israeli agents may be only a few hundred. But then he says: "You must remember that a good many people in the Diaspora are with us to the extent that they would gladly provide any information which might seem useful to Israel." The Diaspora is that body of Jews located outside of Israel. Today there are over 13 million Jews in the world, a little less than 2.5 million of them in Israel.

The very efficiency of Israel's intelligence creates some problems. In Iraq and Syria, Israeli agents have hoodwinked Arabs so often that now every Jew in these countries is suspect. Anti-Semitic purges make life difficult for many people who have nothing to do with Israeli intelligence. There is evidence, too, that in the Communist world suspicion about Jewish spies is playing a part in rising anti-Semitic discrimination in the Soviet Union, Poland and elsewhere.

Agents employed by Israeli intelligence agencies are poorly paid by most standards. Generally they work out of patriotism, fired by a dedication which is almost ruthless in its acceptance of the fact that Israel is in a battle for its life, Israeli sources claim. A department head draws only about \$450 a month. An operator in a foreign land may be getting only about \$300 a month. Like most intelligence services, however, expense accounts fit the character the agent tries to mimic, and agents seem to have adequate funds when it comes to paying informers or bribing people who might provide information.

"A little baksheesh goes a long way in the Arab world," says one Israeli source.

The 088 Story

The career of one such agent now amounts to a legend in the annals of Israeli intelligence. He was Elie Cohen, an Egyptian-born Jew who spoke fluent Arabic. As spy number 088, he became Kamal Amin Tabet, a Syrian Moslem merchant. So adept was he in his new characterization that he won the confidence of senior Syrian army officers and government officials. He even befriended the President of Syria, General Amin Hafez, and once gave the General's wife a mink stole.

Once, as part of his cover, he made a trip to Buenos Aires, where he raised \$10,000 for the Baath Party among the Syrian business colony in Argentina.

Meanwhile, he gathered minute information about Syria's military forces, passing information to Israel via a miniature radio transmitter in his Damascus quarters. Four times he toured the Golan Heights defenses of Syria with army friends; on those trips he collected information which served Israel well when the Six Day War came.

A slip finally tripped him. His radio caused interference at the Indian Embassy. Syrians started a block-to-block check with electronics devices to locate the transmitter. When a power failure occurred one day, 088 was using his battery operated set, dispatching a message to Jerusalem. Syrians quickly spotted the illegal transmitter and arrested Mr. Cohen red-handed. In May, 1967, he was hanged in Martyr's Square in central Damascus.

SYRACUSE, N.Y.

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The mastery of the seas

Intelligence services in London and Washington are reported to be standing in awe of two recent accomplishments of Israel's equivalent organization, called Shin Bet.

Our CIA officials can't remember any capers to match the spiriting away of five gunboats from the French port of Cherbourg to Israel and the capture of a seven-ton Egyptian radar station, which was to be lifted by helicopters and flown to Israel.

As expected, the Arabs have protested the sleight-of-hand that slipped the gunboats across the Mediterranean for the ships, may alter the balance of naval power in the eastern section of this important waterway.

The London-based Institute for Strategic Studies reports Egypt has six destroyers, 12 Soviet-supplied submarines and 20 missile-firing PT boats. Israel has one destroyer, four submarines and now will have a dozen fast gunboats which can carry missiles.

Israel's determination to acquire the gunboats was a reaction to the Arab successful sinking of the Elath, one of Israel's two destroyers, last October by an Egyptian missile boat.

Pointing out that this was the first attack on a naval ship by surface-to-surface missiles, the United States Naval Institute Proceedings concluded that "a new era in naval warfare has unfolded."

The sinking of the Elath produced in reprisal a destructive Israeli shelling of Egypt's Suez oil refineries. This in turn touched off a new round of ground and air fighting.

So we can expect that, if the Arabs try to counter Israel's covert purchases of the gunboats, another escalation of the bitter conflict will occur.

In all the flurry about Russia's decision to supply land and air weapons to the Arab nations, something was overlooked — the Soviet supplying of missile-firing PT boats to Egypt, Syria, Algeria, and Cuba.

Thirty of the PT craft went to Cuba, bringing the type of capability that sank the Elath to our doorstep.



Russian naval aid is seen as part of an ambitious plan to increase Soviet influence in all parts of the world washed by the oceans.

Since the mid-1960s, Russia has expanded her sea power in the eastern Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and most recently in the Caribbean sea, previously regarded as an American lake.

Her surface fleet is no match for the U.S. Sixth Fleet which has prowled the Mediterranean since the 1950s, but it must be taken into account in all strategic and diplomatic planning.

For example, when the Egyptians sank the Elath, the Israeli's refrained from dashing into the harbor of Port Said to exact retribution because Russian ships were based there.

Earlier in the 1960s, we witnessed the decline of the British fleet. In the days of the Empire upon which the sun never set, that fleet kept the peace of all the world. But British economic capabilities, strained by post-war decline, caused the reduced power of this important defense line.



And now there is talk of reducing our naval power to trim our defense spending.

If we follow the trend of Britain, will the boast of the Soviet admiral, Sergei Gorshkov, come true? He tells us:

"The flag of the Soviet Navy now proudly flies all the oceans of the world. Sooner or later, the United States will have to understand it no longer has mastery of the seas."


With British power eased out, and domestic attacks on our naval defense spending going on, it is easy with a little thought to realize how important five gunboats must seem to Israel. . . . important enough to risk one of the greatest intelligence coups in memory.

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KUP'S COLUMN

WASHINGTON SOURCES REPORT our CIA is standing in awe of two recent accomplishments by Israel's equivalent organization, called Shin Bet. Sailing the five French-built gunboats from Cherbourg to Israel was topped by the capture of a seven-ton Egyptian radar station, which was lifted in toto by helicopters and flown to Israel. CIA officials can't remember any capers to match these secret operations.

KUPCINET

INSIDE WASHINGTON

STATINTL

Johnson Still Bars Jets for Israelis

By ROBERT S. ALLEN and JOHN A. GOLDSMITH

WASHINGTON — One man alone — President Lyndon B. Johnson — is blocking the sale of 50 A4 Phantom fighter-bombers to Israel.

Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey and former Vice President Richard M. Nixon have publicly strongly advocated making these supersonic planes available to Israel. In July, both branches of Congress overwhelmingly approved a resolution urging this. The Republican and Democratic platforms favor it. And top Pentagon and CIA authorities have recommended it.

But the President has adamantly turned a deaf ear.

HE DID it again last week in an unannounced meeting with two top Israel officials — both war heroes: former Gen. Wigal Alon, now deputy prime minister, and Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin, chief of staff during the meteoric six-day war in 1967.

To their request for a conference with the President they were told he would see them, but it would have to be strictly secret. They entered and left the White House by a side entrance. Present at this carefully unpublicized meeting were Walt Rostow, special foreign affairs adviser to the President, and Lucius Battle, assistant secretary of state for the Near East.

In renewing Israel's long standing request to buy 50 A4s, Alon and Rabin stressed the following:

• Egypt and Syria, as a result of massive rearming by Russia, now have a 6-to-1 superiority to Israel in supersonic war planes. Also, there are an estimated 2,000 Soviet pilots and crewmen training the Arabs and operating the jets. All TU16 medium jet bombers in Egypt are manned by Russians, although bearing Egyptian markings.

• Since the six-day conflict in the spring of 1967, Israel has not received a single supersonic plane from any source. DeGaulle has refused to turn over 50 Mirage IVs, bought and paid for, and the White House, despite widespread bipartisan support for the sale of A4s, has been similarly unyielding. The only planes Israel has been able to purchase are 50 F4 supersonic fighters.

• In the day-long artillery fighting that raged recently along the Suez Canal, Russian officers commanded Egyptian batteries. They used highly sophisticated electrical and radar sighting and aiming equipment, and the firing was the most accurate ever received from the Egyptian side.

MORE STALLING — Alon and Rabin left the White House as they came — with empty hands.

The only word they got from the President was the "matter is still under study." That's what he has been saying to all inquirers and pleaders for more than a year. Always it's the same stall, and always the meaning is the same — nothing doing.

Administration insiders credit the President's obdurance to three reasons: His burning desire to reach some kind of a detente with the Kremlin rulers before leaving office; an equally deep-rooted desire to maintain a position of being able to exert pressure on Israel; and the potent influence of Secretary Rusk, who not only fully concurs with these views but feels the U.S. should seek to moderate Arab hostility toward this country.

The long-time head of the State Department is the only top administration official to hold this stand.

IT IS AN open secret that the President's stubborn refusal to yield on the A4 issue is proving increasingly embarrassing to Vice President Humphrey and his campaign managers. While they fervently assure all and sundry of wholehearted support for the sale of the supersonic fighter-bombers, the Republicans are deservingly demanding why they aren't matching their words with deeds.

House Republican Leader Gerald Ford of Michigan caustically hurled such a challenge at Humphrey after he told the convention of the B'nai B'rith that he heartily favored selling A4s to Israel.

"If Mr. Humphrey really favors providing Phantom jets to Israel," said Ford, "he should argue his case at the White House without further delay. All that is required is President Johnson's approval, and Hubert Humphrey is his political protege. Not alone for Israel's sake, but in the in-



Allen



Goldsmith

the free world, further Russian penetration of the Middle East cannot go unanswered forever.

"Does the Vice President agree with the steadfast policy of the Johnson Administration in denying this necessary protection to Israel on the specious grounds that the Russians may still be persuaded to limit the Middle East arms race. Since the tragic event in Czechoslovakia, it should be apparent even to those who have repeatedly ignored the brutal facts of Soviet power politics that Moscow will make maximum use of its conventional military force in international affairs.

"Mr. Humphrey owes it to the American people to explain whether or not he is openly repudiating the present Middle East policy, or non-policy, of the administration to which he owes his candidacy."

BLACK IMPERIALIST — Stokely Carmichael's recent expulsion from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was the climax of a long and bitter backstage power struggle — in which he lost out to James Forman and Lester McKinnie.

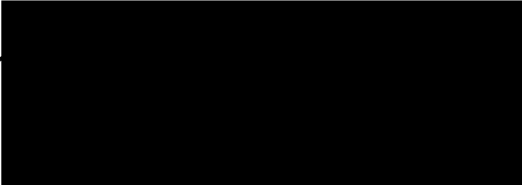
Definitely playing a role in Carmichael's ouster was a fist fight between him and Forman in the SNCC New York office.

Carmichael and some Black Panthers, among whom he now holds the title of "prime minister," forcefully entered the SNCC headquarters and started pushing employes and equipment around. Forman ordered them out, and in the ensuing heated argument with Carmichael they exchanged blows.

At this point hastily summoned SNCC reinforcements arrived and Carmichael and his Black Panther gang were run out. Later, they tried the same raiding tactics at the SNCC office in Newark, N.J., but without success.

AT THE MEETING of SNCC leaders where it was decided to expell Carmichael, it was caustically charged that while he rants and rails against U.S. imperialism and capitalism, he had taken to living like a capitalist since his marriage to African singer Miriam Makeba.

STATINTL

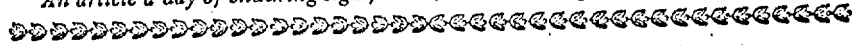


47TH YEAR

The Reader's Digest

AUGUST 1968

An article a day of enduring significance, in condensed permanent booklet form



The Week the Hot Line Burned

On two chilling days during the Arab-Israeli conflict, a year ago, Moscow and Washington were embroiled in a terrifying test of will. At stake: the fate of the world. Here, for the first time, is the inside story

Condensed from a forthcoming book, "Countdown in the Holy Land"

LESTER VELIE

FOR Lyndon B. Johnson, June 6, 1967, was "the most awesomely difficult day of my life." It was the second day of the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War; and while the world was engrossed in that drama, a more momentous struggle unfolded in secret between the United States and the Soviet Union. For the first time the Russians used the

"hot line" between Moscow and Washington in anger. In this confrontation—and again four days later—Premier Aleksei Kosygin and President Johnson waged a war of nerves and wills. As one Presidential adviser put it, "we moved very close to the precipice."

The "most difficult day," a Tuesday, began at 5:50 a.m. when the

"COUNTDOWN IN THE HOLY LAND," COPYRIGHT © 1968 BY LESTER VELIE, WILL BE PUBLISHED IN 1968

STAG

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RED WORLD

STATINTL

SOVIETS ARE PLANNING A COED SPACE TRIP, WITH A MAN AND WOMAN IN ONE CAPSULE. Men and women are now in training for the flight, but husbands and wives of those involved are raising the roof . . .

SUDDEN CRACKDOWN ON EASY ABORTIONS IN RED SATELLITE RUMANIA (IN AN EFFORT TO JACK UP THE FALLING BIRTH RATE) IS COOKING UP A STORM. PREGNANCIES ARE COMING SO FAST AND FURIOUSLY THAT SOME HOSPITALS ARE PILING IN THREE MOTHERS TO ONE BED. Unwanted offshoot of the ban on abortions: Red medical students are doing a land-office business in illegal operations -- at a price equal to THREE MONTHS' WAGES FOR AN AVERAGE RUMANIAN . . .

When the sex-and-spy case of "Moscow's No. 1 Agent" broke in Bonn, Germany, recently, the following came to light: East Germany has planted 6,000 professional spies plus 10,000 "helpers" in the West. On top of that, Bonn is also flooded with Western intelligence agents from every friendly nation to counter any move the Red agents make . . .

RUSSIAN GIRLS WHO HAVE SEX RELATIONS WITH STEADY BOY FRIENDS ARE NOT CONSIDERED "BAD." It's only the promiscuous Russian female who gets the abuse . . .

In some Russian towns, a criminal has something almost as tough to cope with as his jail sentence. When he's released, he must face all his neighbors, a personal nightmare very few stand up to without breaking down . . .

BIGGEST MISCALCULATION RUSSIA'S TOP INTELLIGENCE AGENCY -- THE KGB -- PROBABLY MADE WAS IN THE MIDEAST WAR. They grossly overestimated the Arabs' ability to fight and to win. Our CIA, on the other hand, HIT IT ON THE HEAD. THEIR ESTIMATE: AN ISRAELI VICTORY IN SIX DAYS . . .

For the adventurous traveler -- a motor trip across Russia. You rent a car, drive like a top road rally racer over narrow highways loaded with trucks, and spend half your time looking for a nonexistent gas station or refreshment stand. If you survive, you'll have the best look at the real Russia ever offered . . .

73 73

Allen-Scott ReportNuclear Treaty
Seen BoggedBy ROBERT S. ALLEN
and PAUL SCOTT

Mr. Allen

STATINTL

WASHINGTON — The highly praised American-Soviet agreement on all except the inspection provision of a treaty to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, appears to be having just the opposite effect.

In South America, the proposed nuclear non-proliferation pact is causing two potential nuclear powers to join forces to step up their atomic research to develop the bomb.

U.S. intelligence sources have warned the White House that Brazil, the largest and most advanced nation in Latin America, is secretly negotiating with Argentina to pool their atomic scientific know-how and resources to develop nuclear weapons.

These negotiations were started by the two governments after President Johnson flatly refused their requests to change the proposed treaty to permit non-nuclear powers to conduct their own atomic explosions for peaceful purposes.

Uriel Da Costa Ribiero, chief of Brazil's nuclear-energy program, in private talks with U.S. diplomats made it clear that if the treaty wasn't changed "Brazil and Argentina would jointly undertake the development of atomic weapons."

Acting for his government, the Brazilian nuclear head complained bitterly that the U.S. had steamrollered the objections of those who could produce their own nuclear weapons if they chose, but hitherto, had denied themselves the enhanced political status this would bring.

The State Department earlier had tried unsuccessfully to win Brazil's backing for the proposed treaty by warning that the U.S. planned to cut off all aid for peaceful development of atomic energy to nations refusing to go along with the U.S.-Soviet accord.

Other nations also hinting a step up in their nuclear development unless the proposed treaty is drastically altered, include Sweden, India, and Israel.

These three countries, according to latest U.S. intelligence estimates, now have the capability of developing atomic devices for testing within a year.

One Central Intelligence Agency report, prepared during the recent Middle East fighting, states that Israel's atomic research is so far advanced that her scientists could produce a bomb within six months.

West Germany and Italy are vigorously opposed to the proposed non-proliferation treaty in its present form. However, neither of these governments so far has threatened to build its own atomic weapons if the U.S.-Soviet draft treaty stands.

Because of this growing opposition, U.S. officials now believe there is scant chance of the final treaty's being agreed on before 1968.

That is the private estimate that William C. Foster, U.S. delegate to the 13-nation disarmament conference in Geneva, has given to Democratic congressional leaders.

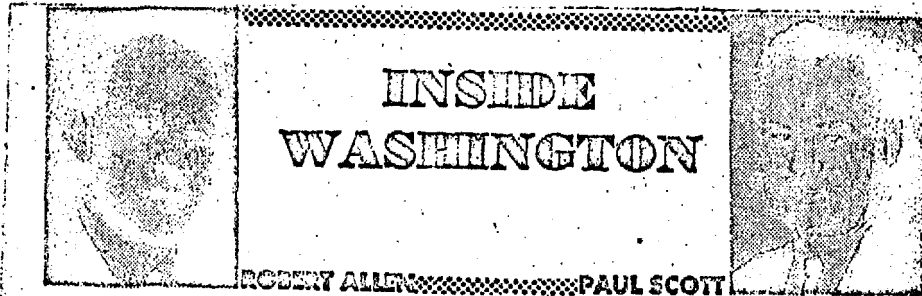
The legislators were told that the hope for a final accord this year inspired by the American-Soviet agreement had been dampened by the cool reception it had received from these six nations.

Foster also revealed that Soviet Disarmament Delegate Alexei Roshchin's violent attack against West Germany for its objections to the treaty had caught the U.S. delegation by complete surprise. He reported that U.S. officials had expected Russia to blast India for refusing to go along.

Details of former President Eisenhower's plan for making the Middle East desert bloom like the Garden of Eden have been turned over to President Johnson.

As prepared by Admiral Lewis L. Strauss, former Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission under Eisenhower, the proposal calls for building three very large nuclear desalting plants to provide both water and power to Israel and the Arab nations.

Two of the nuclear installations would be located on the Mediterranean coast of Israel and the third at the northern end of the bitterly contested Golan Heights of Israel.



Anti-Israel Training

WASHINGTON — Algerian President Houari Boumedienne is offering his country as a guerrilla-war training base and supply center for all the Middle East and African countries opposing Israel.

In his recent conferences with Egyptian, Syrian, and Iraqi officials, the pro-Soviet Algerian leader made the proposal while urging a sustained guerrilla war against Israel like the Algerians fought against France from 1954 to 1962.

Boumedienne's offer, drafted during his recent Moscow visit, provides for thousands of Soviet and Algerian instructors to train the guerrillas for infiltration behind Israel's extended military lines.

HIDDEN WEAPONS

Under this battle plan, the guerrillas would attempt to link up with the hundreds of thousands of Palestine refugees living in the Gaza strip, in the Jordan West Bank region, and Jerusalem. Several thousand of these are Arab commandos, who during the recent fighting hid their weapons for later use.

Syrian officials, who welcomed the Algerian plan, were told by Boumedienne that Soviet leaders agreed not only to equip and train the guerrillas but to finance their travels to and from the training camps.

U. S. intelligence sources report that the Algerian plan fits into Russia's over-all strategy of perpetuating the Arab-Israel conflict, since this makes it easier for them to penetrate the Middle East. Peace in that region, according to these sources, would tend to slow down expansion of Russian influence.

DE GAULLE'S ROLE

This Soviet strategy also explains why Premier Kosygin during his two recent Paris visits with President deGaulle did not object to France's continued arms sale to Israel.

DeGaulle, who has consistently supported the Soviet position in the Middle East since the fighting broke out, raised the Israel arms issue with Kosygin, who reportedly encouraged him to continue the shipments.

Israel is currently negotiating the purchase of 50 French Mirage M-5 ground-support planes for delivery later this year. The M-5s, which cost about \$1.2 million each, have longer range and can carry more rockets than the Mirage that Israel used so effectively in the recent fighting.

U. S. intelligence authorities also say an agreement has been reached for the French firm Turbomeca to set up a jointly-owned plant in Israel to produce jet engines.

★ ★ ★ GOP PROSPECTS

Senate Republicans are setting their sights on capturing eight Democratic seats in next year's elections.

Latest confidential survey being studied by the Senate GOP campaign committee gives their party a 50-50 chance of winning seats now held by the following Democratic Senators:

George McGovern, S. Dak.; Edward Long, Mo.; Ernest Gruening, Alaska; George Smathers, Fla.; Carl Hayden, Ariz.; Daniel Brewster, Md.; A. S. Mike Monroney, Okla.; and Joseph Clark, Penna.

This article did not appear in the Northern Virginia Sun.

JUN 28 1967

STATINTL

Washington: A Steadier Administration

By JAMES RESTON

WASHINGTON, June 27 — The Johnson Administration is a little steadier, a little more confident, and a little stronger politically as a result of its handling of the Middle Eastern crisis.

There are several reasons for this. The U.S. military estimates of Israel's capacity to deal with the Arab armies were remarkably accurate. The Central Intelligence Agency and the Joint Chiefs of Staff actually gave President Johnson an even more precise prediction of what would happen on the battlefield than the Israeli intelligence gave President Eshkol.

In fact, the Joint Chiefs were convinced — as the Israeli Cabinet was not — that Israel would win in a few days even if the Arabs made the first major strike from the air. Whether or not this prediction was justified, the truth is that Mr. Johnson was left with enhanced confidence in his military advice.

The Political Advice

Second, while there was a lot of hesitation about whether and where to meet Mr. Kosygin, Mr. Johnson's political advisers finally came around to a unanimous conclusion that he should, and their estimates of what the Soviet leader would say and do

proved to be highly reliable.

Third, the President himself apparently handled the talks with considerable patience, skill and grace, and this has undoubtedly added to his own sense of assurance. He knew that the Russians had criticized President Eisenhower for always turning to John Foster Dulles at critical moments in the 1955 summit meeting. So he insisted that nobody else be present except the two leaders and their interpreters. He knew also that President Kennedy had allowed the last summit meeting with Khrushchev in 1961 to develop into a shouting match, so he turned the conversation away whenever there was the slightest drift toward threats or intimidation.

Finally, the President managed to make clear to Mr. Kosygin what he would and would not do in Vietnam and the Middle East, and while he did not move the chairman one millimeter off the rigid line laid down in Moscow, he left the Soviets some room for maneuver and undoubtedly improved the Johnson caricature in Kosygin's mind.

We will see later on whether this has any influence on Mr. Kosygin. He is a plain and practical man. He knows probably better than anybody else in the Council of Deputies how far his

country has to travel to transform itself into a modern society, and his few glimpses of the power, energy, and progress of the United States cannot have left him with many of the old Khrushchev illusions about Soviet technical superiority.

Who's in Charge?

The question is whether he is or can become the decisive voice in the Kremlin. The contrast between his personal affability and his political rigidity was striking. Certainly, he said nothing to indicate that he was putting the economic development of his own country ahead of the expansion of Soviet influence in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, or even Cuba.

In the private meetings with the President, and in a long talk with Secretary of Defense McNamara at lunch, it was suggested to Mr. Kosygin that another round of the cold war, another upward lunge of the arms race, an expensive and probably useless competition in antiballistic missiles, and a return to the belligerent *status quo* in the Middle East was an odd kind of "peaceful coexistence." And he came back, of course, not without some logic, to the idea that Vietnam was not a very good way to build peace and prosperity either.

Nevertheless, even if all this

makes no impression in Moscow, it has made some impression here. Mr. Johnson is, of course, still muttering darkly about the "cussers and doubters" who keep complaining about Vietnam, but he has not come back here with much enthusiasm for sending those extra 100,000 men to Saigon. In fact, he seems more eager to avoid keeping his promise to give General Westmoreland what the general wants than to keep it.

The Popular Reaction

Also, the reaction here and in the country to the President's cautious policy in the Middle East and his steady and patient demeanor with Kosygin may very well have made the President question his assumption that the country is hell-bent for tougher policies.

He moved at the start of the Middle Eastern crisis to renew his old friendly association with Senator Fulbright. He expressed to Kosygin his good impressions of the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, and Kosygin, in turn, spoke warmly of his confidence in the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow, Llewellyn Thompson.

There, of course, are the merest straws. All the ugly facts remain, but the mood is better and the Administration's feeling about itself is undoubtedly improved.