

White House Sides With State Department on Israeli Spying Issue

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 10 — The White House today publicly took the side of the State Department in its dispute with the Justice Department over whether there is evidence of wide Israeli spying in this country.

The State Department, asserting it spoke for the whole Government, said Monday that there was "no evidence of any espionage ring involving Israeli officials" other than those implicated in the case of a Navy analyst who admitted to spying for Israel.

Today, Larry Speakes, the White House spokesman, suggested that Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d originally agreed to the wording of the statement, meant to mollify the Israeli Government, but withdrew his support late in the day.

In the aftermath of the guilty pleas made by Jonathan Jay Pollard, the analyst, and his wife, Anne Henderson Pollard, Justice Department and White House officials have said that Mr. Pollard was supplying information that could lead to the arrest of other Israelis involved in other spying cases. The Israeli Government denied any involvement in spying on the United States and denied accusations that it was not cooperating fully with the investigation.

State Department Attitude

The State Department, while not denying that it was possible further arrests might result, has taken the position that in the absence of firm evidence contradicting the Israeli Government assertions, it made no sense to engage in a public dispute with Israel at a time when the United States had close and important ties with that government cutting across diplomatic, intelligence and other relations.

Another distinction drawn by the State Department is that despite widespread skepticism within the Reagan Administration, there was no evidence to prove that the Israeli Government was itself involved in espionage operations against the United States and not simply an unauthorized "renegade" intelligence group headed by Rafael Eitan, a veteran intelligence agent, who was one of four Israelis listed as co-conspirators last week but who were not indicted.

Senator David Durenberger, Republican of Minnesota, the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told reporters today that the United States still did not know the extent of Israeli spying in this country.

"What we know today that we didn't know a year ago is that we need more information," he said at a National

Press Club breakfast. "In other words, we're not taking people's word for the fact there's nothing going on."

House Inquiry Opening

In another development, a spokesman for Representative John Conyers Jr., Democrat of Michigan, chairman of the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice of the House Judiciary Committee, said today that the committee was opening an inquiry on Israeli espionage practices in the United States.

White House and State Department officials said today that a meeting at the White House on Monday morning was called to assure that the Administration spoke with one voice on the Pollard case.

Secretary of State George P. Shultz, armed with a statement drafted by his legal adviser, Abraham D. Sofaer, presented the document to the other senior officials: Mr. Meese, Donald T. Regan, the White House chief of staff, and Adm. John M. Poindexter, the National Security Adviser.

Mr. Speakes said "the assumption at the end of the meeting" was that Mr. Meese had agreed it would be "appropriate" to issue the statement.

The statement, read by Bernard Kalb, the State Department spokesman, said in part:

"The U.S. has no evidence of any espionage ring involving Israeli officials other than the ones described in the indictment of the Pollards. We also wish to note that the indictment and successful prosecution was made possible through the cooperation of the Government of Israel."

He also said that he was speaking for the Administration as a whole.

But late Monday, the Justice Department spokesman denied that Mr. Meese had approved the statement. To explain the contradiction, Justice Department officials contended that there was a misunderstanding over whether Justice Department officials had

agreed to Mr. Sofaer's draft.

Today, Mr. Speakes said, "We stand by exactly what the State Department said yesterday and have nothing new to add to it."

When asked about the Justice Department denial, Mr. Speakes said: "Well, I don't think they differed from it except to say that they had not approved of this statement."

How Two Agencies Differ

Mr. Kalb said today, "Everything I'm going to say on this subject, I said yesterday." The Justice Department also had no new statement to make.

The upshot of the different statements was to leave matters where they have been since the arrest of the Pollards last November. The Justice Department has sensed that they were only part of a larger spying network in

this country and has been extremely skeptical of the Israeli Government assertions that the spying was a "renegade" operation contrary to Israeli Government policy of not conducting espionage against the United States, and was unauthorized by Government officials.

The State Department, which has a close working relationship with Israel, in part the result of the friendship of Mr. Shultz for Prime Minister Shimon Peres, has tended to give the Israeli Government the benefit of the doubt. At the same time, the State Department has told the Israelis that they must provide full cooperation until the case was closed.

The White House throughout has said very little about the case, tending to go along with the approach favored by the State Department.