

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

REFER TO CIA, DOS

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

28 February 1973

CIA REVIEWED 09-Mar-2011: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

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Summary Memorandum for Record

Subject: Secretary of Defense's Meeting with Prime Minister Meir,
1600-1745, Wednesday, 28 February, The Pentagon

Following introductory remarks, Mrs. Meir expressed appreciation for U.S. support and for U.S. arms assistance which has enabled Israel to have more confidence and more capability of protecting itself when necessary, a capability she felt had contributed to quiet on the border. Secretary Richardson referred to King Hussein's visit, saying the King had impressed him as a man who would like to contribute to a constructive solution to the present dispute. Mrs. Meir said she felt so; ~~that~~ he seemed a sensible man.

The Secretary asked whether Israel was giving any thought currently to the possibility of achieving a solution with Jordan without solving Egypt's problem first. Mrs. Meir indicated Israel had no preference and was prepared to talk to either side. As to Hussein, while he might be prepared, he did not seem to be prepared enough; he wants to go back to where events were before the war. Mrs. Meir and Ambassador Rabin both indicated, however, their feeling that Syria was still taking extreme positions and wished only the destruction of Israel. Mrs. Meir noted that the critical question was the Arabs' refusal to accept Israel's existence, even though they did not have to like it. Secretary Richardson asked whether Jordan was not willing to do so. Mrs. Meir replied that Jordan was, but even he was not prepared to accept the full reality of the situation. She then made a point of the difference between democratic regimes and the kind of regimes Israel had to deal with, headed by leaders with no direct responsibility to their people. Israel, she stressed, required defensible borders and this remained true despite all of the equipment available to modern warfare. Mrs. Meir stressed that the major stumbling block to negotiations seemed to be the Arabs' belief that someone will do the negotiating for them -- the Soviets or the U.S. -- and that Sadat wanted someone to "squeeze" Israel, so Egypt would get what it wants. Secretary Richardson noted that during his meeting with Sadat at the time of Nasser's funeral, he had attempted to point out to Sadat the impossibility of the U.S. playing at the same time the role of evenhandedness and the role of influencing Israel. He said the U.S. was obviously not in a position to "deliver" Israel on matters Israel considers vital. Rather, it

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can only encourage a process between the parties themselves. Mrs. Meir referred to the billions of aid the Soviet Union was pouring into the Middle East, remarking that the Egyptians seemed to feel evenhandedness required that the U.S. provide nothing, meanwhile, to Israel. Secretary Richardson noted that there seemed to be less sensitivity now than in the past over deliveries of F4s to Israel, noting that since the time of the first deliveries Israel's capability had been built up very considerably without too much outcry from the Arabs. He suggested that perhaps the Arabs had come to accept the idea the U.S. must assist in maintaining the military balance; to ensure that it does not shift against Israel. He noted that the questions we now face concern the pace of deliveries needed to maintain the balance, and where we go in the way of future deliveries; he said we were ready to discuss these questions. He suggested that we should proceed fairly deliberately, consistent with the proposition that should the balance unexpectedly shift adversely to Israel, we would of course be prepared to expedite deliveries as necessary. At the same time, he noted that the U.S. itself is in a situation in which we have drawn away from our own capabilities to the point where we need to restore our own force of F4s. He noted that the U.S. also is in a situation where, from the balance of payments situation, Israel was in better shape than the United States.

Mrs. Meir said that this led to two concrete problems: first, the planes Israel wants to build itself and the aid Israel would like to have toward that project; and, second, the on-going delivery of PHANTOMS for 1974 and 1975. She noted that in the past publicity had occurred only when Israel was not getting PHANTOMS and there had been no publicity in Israel or the U.S. since deliveries had been regular. This, she felt, was due to the President's policy of "on-going deliveries." She referred to the need to put orders in now because of the lead-times involved, to avoid a problem when present deliveries run out in 1974. Also, Israel needed a number of parts and approvals to its current production program.

Secretary Richardson said that all would agree on the importance of having a clear understanding on lead-times deliveries, and the numbers and kinds of planes to be delivered. He said that we understood the importance of maintaining the level of Israel's Air Force in the face of attrition losses. The larger question is what ought to be the level of Israel's Air Force in 1974-1975.

Ambassador Rabin then summarized Israel's needs as being based on the increased level of aircraft in Arab air forces, plus the concept of Israel's use of air power to carry out a variety of missions. He said that Israel's request for 1974-1975 was for 30 SKYHAWKS and 36 PHANTOMS, and that this was more than just attrition. He said that deliveries this size would carry Israel to

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where it was capable of producing its own planes in significant numbers, if the U.S. would provide a satisfactory response on the matter of full support of production. He said he did not understand the U.S. policy of supporting only a prototype, since naturally Israel would wish to push ahead once there was reason to believe it was successful. The U.S., he said, had had this problem under study for a long time, including a team visit to Israel. What we want, he said, is a decision. He added that during the meeting earlier that day with Secretary Rush there had been no disagreements over efforts to be made in the diplomatic area, so this should not be a factor in our decision. He repeated again that Israel was waiting for "your decision."

Mrs. Meir said that Israel "knows" the Soviets are planning to provide Syria with the MIG-23, and that one way to peace is for Sadat to know that Israel is not becoming weaker. Secretary Richardson noted that we certainly can agree on the need to prevent Israel becoming weaker, but it is our assessment that there has been a relative gain in Israel's strength. He said that we do not want to feed a process of arms growth in which both sides would increase their forces with no increase in Israel's security, but at much higher cost. He said he felt we would not really be assisting by overdoing our support if this resulted in increases in Soviet arms shipments. He noted the high quality of Israel's pilots and other forces and said our problem was whether Israel really needs what they said they needed. He suggested that while Israel undoubtedly asked only for what they thought they needed, the U.S. could help by exercising an independent judgment.

Mrs. Meir referred to the aircraft and other deliveries to Syria, and said that while Israel's pilots were good, they could not fly without planes. She said she wished to note that missiles also counted for something, and that Israel does not have any. She argued that even if there were a difference of estimates, and Israel got a few more planes than it ought to have, this would certainly not be dangerous since Israel would not misuse them. All that would happen is that little Israel would feel more confident. Secretary Richardson said he hoped that we could agree on a process of achieving a consensus as to Israel's needs, taking into account three factors: first, the number needed to assure Israel's security; second, recognizing that any excess would increase costs, and, third, would also afford a temptation to the other side to catch up. He said we prefer to approach the problem in these terms, as a friend, in hopes of achieving a consensus. In response to Mrs. Meir's question, the Secretary said he felt that U.S. arms shipments were indeed a factor to the Soviets since certainly Sadat uses this as an argument when he visits Moscow. He stressed that this was very much involved on the question of the missile issue where, in our judgment,

SECRET SENSITIVE

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a first deployment in the name of security could have just the opposite effect. Mrs. Meir said she was sorry but she had to disagree, that she was convinced 100% that military equipment deliveries by the Soviets had nothing to do with whether the number of PHANTOMS was more or less; instead, it was a matter of Syria getting what it wanted. Secretary Richardson then turned to General Brett and asked him, in view of his recent trip, to comment, noting that, in the DoD view, Israel's relative strength had improved significantly over the last three years, although he said the U.S. surely did not want Israel's position to worsen. General Brett noted a briefing two years ago by the Deputy Commander of the Israeli Air Force, urging U.S. support for a level of 350 modern fighters. He reviewed U.S. studies of this request and our conclusion that 350 was a reasonable number. He noted that Israel soon will have more than 400 aircraft, well over this number. He said that the U.S. team had identified an area of considerable disagreement between the U.S. and Israel in connection with intelligence estimates of the Arab threat. He said the U.S. studies convinced us that 350 was still a good figure. He noted that with current deliveries and Israel's MIRAGE-5 assembly it would have 450 airplanes. He suggested that it should be possible for the U.S. and Israeli experts to discuss our intelligence differences. He stressed that there was no doubt in the team's mind of the superiority of Israel's pilots, which was tremendous, and Israel's were getting better while the Syrians were not. Ambassador Rabin suggested the U.S. had not taken into account possible future deliveries. General Brett said that this had been examined carefully and that the key to our findings lay in Israel's great bedrock capability, in both pilots and maintenance. He stressed that raw numbers of aircraft are not that meaningful, and that Syrian aircraft in crates or deadlined for lack of repair were no threat. He also noted that our studies had taken full account of the many roles the Israeli Air Force performed, and in this connection noted the great superiority of the PHANTOM as an attack aircraft over the Arab MIGs. Ambassador Rabin pursued in some detail his disagreement with the U.S. conclusions and said that these differences must be resolved. He said, however, that what Israel wanted was a decision for the next 2-3 years only, and that we need not decide on longer term needs at this time. He said that the U.S. had dragged along for months without deciding on Israel's production request, and that all questions had been answered, but still there had been no decision. He turned to Secretary Richardson and asked what his policy would be vis-a-vis helping Israel on production? Second, he said Israel needed an answer on the supply of planes for 1974-1975.

Secretary Richardson said that on the question of additional aircraft the U.S. needs to have a clearer understanding on the findings that the DoD team had brought back. These findings seemed to indicate a need for further discussion between the U.S. and Israel, and that General Brett would be

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available to meet with whomever Israel chose to consider the intelligence differences. On production, he said he believed we should go forward in helping with production using some parts from the United States, but that the number of aircraft Israel produced would be a factor in considering its needs in other areas. He asked what Israel proposed in the way of production. General Brett said that Israel wanted to start with 100, and possibly produce another 200 later. The Secretary said that we were persuaded that production at the rate of two per month was economically sound, but we were concerned that Israel might later consider that to sustain the buildup of its aircraft production it would need to become an exporter of aircraft. Ambassador Rabin said he was not sure whether he understood the Secretary, and asked if he was ready to support production of 100 or not.

Assistant Secretary Eagleburger answered that the question of supporting production of 100 was under study against the background, as the Secretary had indicated, of the impact of building up an Israeli capability to export aircraft. He added that on the Ambassador's second point, our own Air Force needs are serious at this point and require careful review in connection with Israel's requests. Secretary Richardson suggested that this was as far as we could go in discussing this question at the moment.

As the meeting broke up, Mrs. Meir took the opportunity to urge the Secretary strongly, in somewhat emotional terms, as to Israel's needs for support, particularly of aircraft.

Prepared by:

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Approved by:

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EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

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4. Other Topics

The Middle East, I assume, will be handled separately, but it is worth noting that he lists this as the second most important summit topic.

The MBFR and CSCE passages seem routine. He "accepts" the idea of talking about MBFR at the summit. (Obviously, in view of Allied worries, this would require great circumspection.)

He urges the admission of the two Germanies to the UN. (In this connection, and since the President wants to go slowly on East German recognition, it may be worth holding off on any US moves until after the Brezhnev visit, allowing him to get some cheap credit.)

I note some omissions

-- no mention of natural gas;

-- no mention of CW limitation, which was explicitly in the President's last letter; this is still a potential summit topic, especially if you are interested in a moratorium on production while negotiations continue on a treaty;

-- grain sales: all of our intelligence points to another unsatisfactory harvest -- and estimates of Soviet needs suggests they will be in the market for feed. Brezhnev (and Kosygin) have mentioned a long term grain agreement and a further agreement as a summit topic is worth considering.

THE SUMMIT

As of now the summit might look like this:

1. Non-use.
2. SALT, two agreements, supplementary and principles.
3. Middle East
4. MBFR and CSCE items, maybe.

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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. KISSINGER

FROM: Helmut Sonnenfeldt
SUBJECT: Comments on Brezhnev's Letter

As requested, this memorandum contains comment on the substance of Brezhnev's latest letter. Since only somewhat more than three months may remain between now and a summit, I have also set forth an approximate scenario of summit preparations, both with the Soviets and internally within the US Government.

1. Nuclear Non-Use

The letter reinforces the impression that Brezhnev is escalating the importance of this proposal. He states explicitly that in the remaining time for preparations this should be finished "first of all." He is still talking of a "Treaty" and refers to his last communication in which he said, in effect, that their draft had met all of our problems.

Following that earlier message I sent you a separate memorandum on this which gives some analysis and options (copy at Tab A). If we can no longer evade this project, our options are (1) a hortatory declaration establishing a commission to do further work; (2) fold it into SALT in a May 20 type of announcement; or (3) add the commission idea to the present drafts. (Drafts are included in the earlier memorandum.)

In light of the Brezhnev comments on SALT (dealt with below), the idea of folding this into SALT may be the least damaging choice.

If you intend to air this with the British, it is important to remember that they are at least one draft behind.

2. SALT

Brezhnev restates the more or less formal position of making the interim agreement permanent, but covering more systems, including FBS

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