

14 HAK, SCOWCROFT, L.L.

U.S.-MIDEAST WARNINGS

IN TALKS WITH HAK LAST WEEK,  
EBAN EXPRESSED LITTLE ALARM  
OVER ARAB BUILDUP.

BY BARRY SCHWEID

~~WASHINGTON TAP~~ WHEN ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER ABBA EBAN CONFERRED WITH SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER LAST THURSDAY ABOUT THE TROUBLED MIDDLE EAST HE REFERRED TO AN ARAB MILITARY BUILDUP ALONG THE SUEZ CANAL AND THE GOLAN HEIGHTS.

BUT EBAN DID NOT APPEAR TO BE ALARMED OR EVEN APPREHENSIVE AS THE TWO MEN TALKED IN KISSINGER'S NEW YORK HOTEL SUITE. THEY AGREED TO MEET AGAIN IN NOVEMBER, AFTER THE ISRAELI ELECTIONS, TO SEARCH FOR A MEANS TOWARD A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT WITH THE ARABS.

OVER THE PRECEDING SEVERAL DAYS, IN FACT, THE UNITED STATES HAD ASKED THE ISRAELIS WHETHER THEY WERE CERTAIN THAT THE BUILDUP WAS A DEFENSIVE MOBILIZATION. THE REPLY, IN EFFECT, WAS "YES."

SUDDENLY, LATE FRIDAY, THE ISRAELI ASSESSMENT UNDERWENT A RADICAL REVERSAL. THE TIPOFF WAS A WITHDRAWAL OF RUSSIAN TECHNICIANS AND DEPENDENTS FROM CAIRO AND DAMASCUS. JERUSALEM WAS THEN CERTAIN THAT EGYPT AND SYRIA WERE PRIMED TO ATTACK.

STATE DEPARTMENT SOURCES SAY THERE IS GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE THAT BEFORE THE RUSSIANS PULLED OUT THEY ATTEMPTED TO PERSUADE CAIRO TO HOLD BACK.

IF THERE WAS ANY DOUBT THAT ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE WAS CAUGHT OFF GUARD ANALYSTS AT THE PENTAGON POINT TO TWO FACTS: THE LONG TIME IT TOOK ISRAEL TO MOBILIZE AFTER THE ARABS STRUCK AND THE CIVILIAN LOSSES IN THE SETTLEMENTS ALONG THE GOLAN HEIGHTS.

HAD ISRAEL BEEN PREPARED THE ARMY WOULD HAVE BEEN READY TO FIGHT AND THE SETTLEMENTS MADE MORE SECURE, THE ANALYSTS SAY.

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