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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY A. KISSINGER
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Briefing Book - Visit of
Mrs. Golda Meir

Enclosed is a background paper on
Israel's Nuclear Weapon and Missile Program,
TOP SECRET/NODIS, which should be inserted
under Background Papers at Tab C.

Theodore L. Eliot
Theodore L. Eliot
Executive Secretary

Enclosure:

As stated.

S/S CWm
A True Copy

TOP SECRET/NODIS Enclosure

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Background - Israel's Nuclear Weapon
and Missile Programs

Summary

It has been the consensus for some time that the acquisition by Israel of nuclear weapons would be seriously counter to our worldwide interests. We have in a number of ways tried to make this position understood to Israel's top leadership. We have to an extent screened the export of equipment and technology in an attempt to limit Israel's access; we have sought specific assurances that the aircraft we supply to Israel will not be used for nuclear delivery, and we have tried to assure ourselves that the nuclear reactor at Dimona is not being used for the production of weapons grade materials. At senior levels, we have in the past strongly urged Israel not to produce nuclear weapons. In the same context, we have expressed our readiness to meet Israel's needs in conventional weapons, and have become in fact a major supplier.

Israel resents our position, but may well have concluded that, since we have not gone beyond words in pressing our point, we are actually resigned to seeing Israel become a nuclear power. Israel has worked to acquire a nuclear weapons capability as rapidly as circumstances permit. She may already have attained it. Except in the context of discussions at the heads of government level, Israel has never made any concession or clarified any issue of her nuclear policy. On the other hand, Israel has pressed for exchanges of all other types of information.

We launched an effort July 29 to persuade Israel not to complete the assembly of nuclear weapons (and implicitly to dismantle any existing ones), to halt deployment of her missile delivery system, and to reassure the international community

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by signature and ratification of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and adherence to the IAEA inspection system. Without conclusive information about the status of Israel's nuclear program, and assurances of her intentions, we may encounter a nuclear fait accompli in the near future.

Discussion

Why We Are Concerned. Recent studies have set forth in detail the considerations which prompt us to conclude that Israel's acquisition of a nuclear capability would seriously impinge on our worldwide interests. The reasons for our concern were succinctly presented to Israel in a statement made to Ambassador Rabin on July 29, 1969 by Under Secretary of State Richardson: (The text was also given to the Israeli Embassy.)

"...the United States would regard (the introduction of nuclear weapons and delivery systems into the Middle East) as a direct threat to United States national security. Our efforts to halt the spread of nuclear weapons worldwide would be dealt a severe blow and the possible risk of US-Soviet confrontation would be enhanced... (as a nation clearly possessing an immediate potential) Israel's attitude toward the NPT is being closely watched by other small and medium-sized states who are waiting to see whether nuclear weapons non-proliferation can be made to prevail as a global principle."

If Israel were to become known in present circumstances as a nuclear power, the United States would, however unjustly, be held responsible in the eyes of the great majority of the world community, and would be charged with having betrayed its own

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principles in an issue of vital worldwide concern. We do not believe that Israel's possession of a nuclear weapons capability could remain unconfirmed to the world for long. The imminence of this possibility confronts us with a certain risk of becoming identified with Israel's attainment of nuclear status unless further and more widely known actions are taken to divorce ourselves from Israel's obvious course of action.

Our "visits" to Dimona have shed virtually no light on the role that site may play in a weapons program. Israel has been hyper-sensitive to any initiative on the part of our teams that would indicate they were conducting an inspection rather than a visit, so that the teams have felt circumscribed in what they could do and ask. Since the visits are arranged far in advance, Israel has every opportunity for concealment. The net result is that we have actually learned very little from the standpoint of a weapons program, but by visiting the facility annually may have provided some with the impression that we are fully informed of what is happening. This could well be the source of embarrassment in the future. If eventually Israel were in some way to confirm its possession of a nuclear capability, a substantial part of world opinion would assume we had played a supporting role. The Soviets, and perhaps others, might see great benefit in attempting to confirm that assumption. We can have no assurance that our "visits" to Dimona would remain unnoticed in this context.

What Israel Has Done. Available evidence suggests that Israel has moved as rapidly as possible since about 1963 to develop strategic missiles and the nuclear warheads for them. Israel

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already has an airborne delivery capability in the Mirage, A-4 and F-4 aircraft. The last several copies of a prototype medium range missile, developed for Israel by the French Dessault Company as the MD-620, are believed to be in Israel's possession. It is the consensus that Israel could test fire the "Jericho", its domestically produced version of the MD-620, at any time. There is evidence strongly indicating that several sites providing operational launch capabilities are virtually complete. Despite the fact that such a missile could perform other roles, the investment of funds, technology and facilities required only equates with a nuclear delivery capability in our view, and we are convinced that others would similarly interpret the deployment of such a missile system. Israel has carefully guarded and withheld all information and comment concerning this missile and has met with an absolute stone wall all inquiries and speculation.

Israel has the technical ability and material resources, including unsafeguarded uranium, under her control to produce weapons grade material for a number of weapons. All the facilities required for production of plutonium have been identified with the exception of a separation plant. Israel may also have acquired highly enriched U-235, possibly through development of a small gas centrifuge separation capability. Some have reservations about whether or not Israel has produced and assembled a complete nuclear weapon, but do not dispute the likelihood that she could and soon might: others feel confident that Israel already has one or more complete nuclear weapons now. The first of such weapons would probably be in an air-drop configuration, so that Israel might very well now have a nuclear bomb.

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How Israel Views Our Representations. Israel seems to have applied in the nuclear case its frequently cited axiom, "Never mind what they say, it's what they do that counts." The history of the representations we have made clearly shows that only the Israeli Prime Minister has breached the absolute stone wall of silence concerning Israel's intentions in the nuclear field, and then only by accepting American observation of the Dimona reactor. At all other levels we have received only a reiteration of policy without speculation or elaboration. One can conclude that Israel has never felt compelled to share in the nuclear field the confidences Israel has so vigorously cultivated in other areas.

Israel may believe that we are prepared to accept an Israeli nuclear weapons capability if, having attained it, assurances are offered that the weapons would be employed only in ultimate defense of the national existence. Among indications which might lead them to such a conclusion are our acceptance, though protesting, of Israel's strict limitation on the frequency, duration and character of our observations at the Dimona reactor. More significantly, after raising the question of Israel's nuclear intentions in November, 1968, in connection with the conditions of sale of the Phantom aircraft, a matter of obvious importance to Israel, we did not carry through at that time. Meanwhile, we have increased the level of arms sales to Israel and have met Israel's defense needs virtually without condition.

Israel does not share our concern about the future of the NPT or the dangers of confrontation with the Soviets, and clearly feels that Israel's national defense needs override such issues.

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Israel's sole and meticulously worded position on the subject has long been "Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Near East." Mr. Eban stated "Israel is not a nuclear power" in conversations with us in March, 1969. Ambassador Rabin appeared to rule out one possible interpretation of Israel's stated position when he noted in a public interview in February, 1969 that possible possession of nuclear weapons aboard U.S. or Soviet warships in the area had no bearing on the validity of Israel's statement.

The most recent formal and private assurance by Israel is contained in Mr. Eshkol's letter to President Johnson on December 4, 1968:

"I am fully aware of the deep interest which you attach to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In the statements of its accredited representatives Israel has given full positive weight to the Treaty's international significance. We have also reaffirmed to you all the assurances which we have given in the past. The deployment of operational strategic missiles in the Middle East is still remote. Our position on the Treaty is that, like many other states, we have to give the most careful examination to all its implications for long term security and scientific and technological development."

Ambassador Rabin failed to go beyond this position, or to agree to any refinement of understanding of the word "introduce" in connection with the conditions of sale of the F-4 aircraft in an exchange of correspondence with Assistant Secretary of Defense Warnke in November, 1968.

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Our Present Posture. On July 29, 1969, Under Secretary Richardson explained our concern to Ambassador Rabin and put the following specific requests to him:

1. We would like a report on the result of Israel's study of the NPT question.
2. We want Israel's assurance that when it says it "will not introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East", it is meant that Israel will not possess such weapons (an interpretation put forth by Mr. Warnke in his letter of November 27 to Rabin in connection with the sale of F-4 aircraft to Israel. Israel made no reply to this interpretation).
3. We want Israel's assurance that it will not produce or deploy the Jericho strategic missile.

Ambassador Rabin on that occasion added nothing to Israel's previous statements, and on August 28 when the subject was again raised, said only that it would be difficult to discuss prior to Israeli elections in October. It seems clear that only substantial material pressure in an area sensitive to Israel could change Israel's determination to avoid meaningful discussion of the nuclear problem.

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