

October 17, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Israel's Nuclear Program

Ambassador Rabin called on me October 15 to deliver his government's responses to the three requests I put to him on July 29 with respect to Israel's nuclear program. As you will recall, those requests were for (a) a report on the results of the Israel Government's study of the NPT question, (b) an assurance that when Israel says it will not introduce nuclear weapons it means it will not possess such weapons, and (c) an assurance that Israel will not produce or deploy the Jericho strategic missile. A full record of my October 15 meeting with Ambassador Rabin is enclosed.

Israel's reply with respect to the NPT says in effect that this question is on ice until after the forthcoming Israeli elections. Israel's reply on what "introduction" of nuclear weapons means is not directly responsive to our request, but we will need to examine its nuances carefully to determine whether it in fact represents any advance toward the kind of assurance we seek. The reply with respect to the Jericho missile, in saying that there will be no operational deployment for at least three years, is in effect confirmation of Israel's present intentions ultimately to deploy such missiles.

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Elliot L. Richardson

Enclosure:

substantive
to Defense
Memorandum of Conversation

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: October 15, 1969

SUBJECT: Israeli Nuclear Programs

PARTICIPANTS: Lt. General Yitzhak Rabin; Ambassador of Israel
Shlomo Argov, Minister, Embassy of Israel
Moshe Raviv, Counselor, Embassy of Israel

The Under Secretary
Alfred L. Atherton, Jr., Country Director, Israel and
Arab-Israel Affairs

Ambassador Rabin said he had been instructed to reply as follows to the three questions put to him by the Under Secretary on July 29, 1969:

1. The Government of Israel is in no position to make further clarifications about the NPT until a new government will be formed after the elections. The new government will continue to study this problem, bearing in mind its importance as expressed by the President during his talk with the Prime Minister.

2. It is the view of the Government of Israel that introduction means the transformation from a non-nuclear weapon country into a nuclear weapon country.

3. As a result of the French embargo and other factors there will be no operational deployment of missiles in Israel for at least three years from now.

Ambassador Rabin elaborated on the foregoing only to the extent of noting that the response in paragraph 2 conformed to the language used in the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

The Under Secretary thanked Ambassador Rabin and said that the Government of Israel's reply was both responsive and succinct. He would

NEA/IAI:AI Atherton, Jr:mob

(Drafting Office and Officer)

not attempt to comment in detail at this time. By way of preliminary observations, the Under Secretary noted that the Israeli response to the first question was self-explanatory; we might wish to pursue this point further after formation of the new Israeli Government following elections. With respect to the response to the question about "introduction" of nuclear weapons, the Under Secretary said we would want to consider its implications carefully. The response about deployment of the Jericho missile was helpful in providing an understanding of the facts of the situation in this period of particular tension in the area.