



POLICY

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THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

#26

I-23335/81

July 2, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: F-16's for Israel (U) -- INFORMATION MEMORANDUM  
for Possible NSPG Discussion

The NSC this afternoon--or perhaps the NSC planning group this morning--may get into the question of lifting the hold on four of Israel's F-16's which were slated for delivery immediately after the raid on Iraq's nuclear facilities.

There are three issues in this decision:

-- We must consider the drawback of being inconsistent with our previous public position, when we said we were conducting a "review of the entire matter" (Tab A). Should the results of this review be announced before the hold is lifted?

-- The delay of four F-16 deliveries is entirely symbolic. All other deliveries continued openly, in a sign of our continued strong support for Israel's security. What we need now is an explicit statement of reassurance on the part of Israel that it recognizes and respects US law concerning the use of US war material. This is important; the US position is that Israel's action "hurt not helped peace and security in the region." At base, we must be able to show the Arab world, the Israelis, Europeans, and our own public that some restraints exist on Israeli military action. Without this type of gesture on the part of Israel, the cycle of preemptive attack without strong grounds for self defense is likely to repeat itself--perhaps soon. Our interests and relationships in the Middle East, including with Israel, would suffer increasingly.

-- Of course, our larger interest with regard to GOI attitudes relates to the AWACS/F-15 enhancement package. Evron will return to Israel next week and would like to

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report, in more detail than he has been able to do so far, on the Administration position toward this issue and on the alleged or actual security implications for Israel. Evron thought yesterday the new government might be formed in two weeks (Tab C).

(S) We should do or say nothing in public on this subject until the government in Israel is formed, since we do not want it to become an issue in Likud or Labor efforts to put together a coalition. Also, neither is likely to be flexible and far-sighted until they are in power.

(S) Bandar is, at this moment, in Saudi Arabia trying to get approval of the Crown Prince and Minister of Defense to the notes on the AWACS understanding.

*F. C. Ikle*  
Fred C. Ikle

Attachments

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