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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

26 February 1981

Memo For DepSecDef

Frank:

Attached is background on the talks with Israeli MOD discussed with Shamir last week. We will wait for them to get back to us for discussion of date for resuming talks, place of meeting, and agenda.

In the past these were discussed with Israelis and then given final clearance by SecDef. A memo on each meeting's results went to SecDef for his comment. Part of our discussion with the Israelis before resuming will have to be the range of topics for the next phase. You will note that initially these talks specifically excluded discussion of aid programs, technology exchange, etc., and were focused on assisting the Israeli MOD to develop their planning capabilities and on the exchange of views on regional assessments. There was a brief excursion into a three part process of joint contingency planning, but a later return to regional assessments. The Israelis probably will want to broaden the scope of the talks. We need to prepare our position on this.

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Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: AUG 08 2018

Andy

A. W. MARSHALL

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BACKGROUND HISTORY OF THE
OSD-ISRAELI MOD TALKS

WHO'S BEEN INVOLVED

On the Israeli side the team was initially (1976) headed by Mr. Ben Natan who was a special advisor to Defense Minister Peres. Ben Natan was joined by then head of long-range military planning Major General Avraham Tamir and his staff. Since 1977, the Israeli team has been headed by Deputy Minister of Defense Zipori; Assistant Minister of Defense Tamir and members of his staff are still part of the Israeli team. From the outset the U.S. team has been headed by Director, Net Assessment Andrew W. Marshall, who has been joined by members of his staff.

EVOLUTION OF DISCUSSIONS

In the summer of 1974 (and again in the beginning of 1975), the Israeli MOD sought to establish a channel for discussion with OSD as well as direct communication to the SecDef. The MOD apparently felt that the direct official communication with the U.S. either was not sufficient or could not be counted on to represent fully the views of the IDF leadership on critical defense and regional issues or to transmit U.S. attitudes and advice to Israel on a variety of security problems. After consultations with Secretary of State Kissinger, both of these initial Israeli requests were turned down. The Israelis raised the issue again in late 1975, and it was decided that such a channel could be established provided that it was not used to raise specific program or weapons requests. Rather, as Deputy SecDef Ellsworth directed, it was to be used to help Israel develop a strategic planning capability and to discuss strategic trends and problems in the Middle East of mutual concern. Because the initial requests were passed through 3rd parties to Andrew Marshall and because Marshall was within the SecDef's office, was clearly divorced from program and budgetary issues and possible requests of all sorts, including technology transfers, etc., and was a logical choice to discuss strategic trends, balance issues and strategic planning needs, it was decided that he would head up the U.S. team. The first meeting took place in the spring of 1976.

Secretary Brown, in conjunction with Secretary of State Vance and National Security Advisor Brzezinski, agreed that this channel, and these discussions between OSD and MOD teams should continue under the same ground rules. Through 1977 and 1978, the discussions and associated work focused principally on helping the Israelis develop a long-term defense planning document designed to take account of defense issues ranging from improving Arab military capabilities to emerging Israeli manpower and economic constraints. At all times, however, discussions in the meetings also involved a number of other issues frequently raised by the Israelis -- e.g., Soviet intervention tools and capabilities in the region, the implications of the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism in the area, regional perceptions of U.S. and Soviet standing, potential threats to Western interests in the Middle East, etc.

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Upon completing and refining the document entitled, "A Long Term Defense Strategy for Israel," the Israelis suggested in March 1979 that the focus of the meetings turn to the issue of the threats to Western interests in the region and the means for countering them. In this connection, they emphasized the potential contributions Israeli forces and infrastructure could make to U.S. efforts in a wide spectrum of Med/Middle East/Persian Gulf contingencies, and suggested that planning on how best to use Israeli military assets in regional contingencies could be initiated in the OSD-MOD meetings. Though wanting to discuss and jointly study other issues as well -- e.g., how to maintain Israeli qualitative superiority, the implications of emerging technologies for strategy and doctrine, etc. -- the Israelis clearly favored emphasizing contingency discussions in the OSD-MOD meetings.

Secretary Brown, after conferring with Messrs. Brzezinski and Vance, agreed that a three-phased process that could potentially lead to joint contingency planning could be initiated in the OSD-MOD meetings -- so long as it was clearly understood that the whole process would be reviewed at the completion of each phase. The process was to begin with an attempt to identify a common list of serious and likely contingencies on which joint planning might occur. Next, discussion of what would be militarily needed -- in terms of forces, logistic support, etc. -- to cope with each contingency would take place; only after this was complete, would operational questions be addressed and joint operational planning begin.

In the July 1979 meeting, this process was initiated as each side presented a candidate list of regional contingencies. Though no single list was agreed upon during the July discussions, it was decided that we would try to agree to a common list before our next scheduled meeting in December 1979. Once a candidate list was agreed upon (and accepted by Secretary Brown and Defense Minister Weizman), we planned on assessing the military threats in each contingency and the kinds of capabilities that would be needed to respond to these threats.

In November 1979, Secretary Brown decided that the evolving contingency discussions were moving toward a turning-point and a decision about whether they should proceed should be made; after consulting with Brzezinski and Vance, it was decided that the contingency part of our discussions should go no further at this time. Since more than half of the planned agenda for the December meeting was devoted to the contingency discussions, it was decided that the upcoming meeting should be postponed to give us time to re-focus the talks and re-structure the agenda accordingly. Zipori suggested that it might be useful for him to come to Washington to talk about the future direction of the talks; this was agreed and he came in January 1980.

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In this meeting, it was agreed that future meetings might usefully consist of three broad categories of discussion:

- The strategic environment of the Middle East.
- Emerging weapons technologies and their implications for Israeli military forces, military strategy, tactical doctrine, etc.
- Discussion and drawing results of relevant internal and external research and evaluation methods.

Of these three, the discussion of the Middle East strategic environment was thought to be most important. In approving these broad categories for discussion, Secretary Brown noted that the range of issues falling under the strategic environment heading (e.g., the sources of conflict in the area, the conflicts most threatening to Western interests, political-military trends and potential new problem areas, evolving Soviet strategy and capabilities in the area, Western means for competing with the Soviets, etc.) would allow us to fit into this discussion all the contingencies we might later choose to plan on.

Subsequently, it was agreed to meet in late April with the principal thrust of the meeting to be the discussion of a paper prepared by the U.S. side on the strategic environment in the area. In addition to discussing this paper -- which was designed to give a broad overview of the new political-military realities in the area, and comparative U.S. and Soviet strengths and weaknesses in the region -- the U.S. side was prepared to discuss U.S. P2 capabilities to the Middle East and also present some preliminary results from a RAND project using a new methodological approach for assessing the Arab-Israeli military balance. For their part, the Israelis were going to discuss: regional perceptions and attitudes toward the Soviets after Afghanistan, Israeli long-reach forces in terms of their purpose, role, and priority in Israeli strategy, and the battlefield of the 1980s and its implications for such tactical issues as the role of small unit operations, [REDACTED] etc.

Due to Mr. Marshall's illness, the U.S. side was forced to cut the meeting short. While several of the agenda items were discussed in a preliminary fashion, several others were deferred for the next meeting. In planning for the next meeting (which the Israelis wanted to be held in early September), it was tentatively agreed that in addition to the carry-over items, the U.S. would incorporate the Israeli comments on and further develop its strategic environment paper [REDACTED]

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OSD 3.3(b)(6)

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In response to the report on this meeting, Secretary Brown directed that September was too soon to hold the next meeting, but deferred giving guidance on the timing or the content of the next OSD-MOD discussions. Since no word on the scheduling of the next meeting was forthcoming, the Israelis began to press to find out why the meeting was being delayed and what was holding up a decision on our part. Many separate inquiries were made before the Israelis were told that we would be able to talk about fixing a date early next year. At this point, they went public with the existence, but not much of the substance of the talks.

CONCLUDING NOTE

The above outline of the evolution of the talks gives some sense of the type of issues or concerns that have been raised in the OSD-MOD meetings. Some recent agendas of past meetings have been attached at TAB A to provide a better view of the scope and breadth of the topics that have been discussed. A quick scan of the items on these agendas highlights something rather important about the evolution of the meetings -- that being, that they have increasingly come to represent a kind of joint research program on emerging political-military problems and on methods of doing military analysis and assessing strategic trends. Both sides have not only prepared themselves to discuss new substantive and analytical problems, but have also commissioned outside research to investigate areas that require additional study and discussion. This underlying sense that the U.S. and Israeli teams are embarked on a joint research program or venture may be one of the reasons the Israelis appear to place such high value on these talks.

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* Not included, but available if you wish to see them.
Acem.

~~SECRET, EYES ONLY~~

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OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
FOR POLICY

28 Feb 81

MEMO FOR Military Assistants to DEPSECDEF

SUBJECT: U.S.-Israeli Strategic Talks

DEPSECDEF wanted to be informed about the "U.S.-Israeli Strategic Talks". Dr. Ikle desires the attached paper, prepared by Andy Marshall, be provided to Mr. Carlucci.

Very respectfully,

Pete Cormack

J. P. Cormack
Capt, USN
Military Assistant
USD/P

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BG Powell / Orlan Balchman ^{3/2}

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