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THE COUNSELOR
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Sec Def Has Seen

6 AUG 1981

ISRAEL

August 6, 1981

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Mr Kemp NSC Staff

Geoff,

Attached is a redraft of the Haig/Weinberger memo to the President designed to get approval in principle of the lifting of the suspension and a subsequent briefing on AMACS. The details of both issues would be worked out among us.

Yesterday, Haig signed the memo but Sec Weinberger wanted a more explicit linkage of the lifting and Israel's position on AMACS. Consequently he would not sign.

Sec Haig believes we must get a decision before the President leaves town. As a result, the Haig/Weinberger has been recast once again as a memo from Haig to the President. He will leave it with the President this morning in the hope of getting the decision before the President departs.

Bud

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Date: MAR 18 2019

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MAR 10 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

From: Alexander M. Haig, Jr.
Subject: US Relations with Israel

We face two issues this month which will importantly influence the course of our Middle East policy. This memorandum seeks (a) your approval to resume aircraft deliveries to Israel; and (b) your approval to approach Prime Minister Begin on the Saudi AWACS prior to his September visit to the US.

Resuming F-16 Deliveries. As you know, ten F-16s are currently on hold. Four additional F-16s are scheduled for delivery on August 18, as are two F-15 aircraft on August 13.

I believe the suspension has served its purpose. It has sent a sobering signal to the Israelis which has also bolstered our position among the moderate Arabs. Maintaining it, however, would increasingly undermine Israeli confidence in US support and frustrate our own goal of placing this episode behind us so that we can build on the defacto cease-fire in Lebanon and get on with the major issues confronting the region.

The timing of any announcement of resumed F-16 deliveries will be critical. Acting too soon would embarrass Sadat and undo much of the good the suspension has accomplished. Waiting too long, for example until after the September visit of Begin, would only distract us from the critical matters at hand.

A mid-August announcement might avoid these pitfalls, and would help create a much improved climate for Prime Minister Begin's visit here. Any explicit linkage between this announcement and the Saudi AWACS decision would only exacerbate tensions with Israel. At the same time, we could use the proximity of timing between the F-16 release and the August 24 informal notification of the Saudi AWACS sale to the Congress to help us on both issues.

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I therefore recommend that you announce your decision to lift the suspension of deliveries on August 12, the day before the two F-15s are scheduled to depart the US.

Approaching Begin on AWACS. We also will want to prepare the ground on the Saudi AWACS with Begin in Jerusalem so that your meetings with him on the subject will be productive. We should aim to have an exchange which is frank without being contentious. Our objective is to persuade Begin to make a less than total effort to oppose the Saudi sale, recognizing that Israeli acquiescence is not achievable.

Begin must appreciate the political and economic price the Administration is prepared to pay to engage Israeli concerns about the Saudi equipment package. Equally important, we need to ensure that Begin understands how a defeat of the Saudi AWACS case would affect your Administration's foreign policy and, inevitably, its relationship with Israel. [Begin must appreciate that a defeat on our first major foreign policy test would send a dramatic signal of weakness with extremely harmful effect on our global posture, would jeopardize our strategy for Southwest Asia, would severely damage any prospects that the Saudis would underwrite our security initiatives in the region, and would inevitably affect how we would allocate our own security assistance resources.]

Begin should come away from this exchange with a clear understanding that your Administration is the best friend Israel has ever had, but that our future relationship can be sorely tested by this issue. While we are prepared to take tangible measures--including military cooperation--to strengthen that relationship and protect our mutual interests, the defeat of AWACS could make us a prisoner of events and forces which prevented moving forward in this way.

All of this would have to be done carefully and subtly to avoid any impression of coercion or diplomatic blackmail. At the same time, we literally owe it to Begin to explain what consequences--despite our best efforts--would ensue if AWACS were defeated, so that he can judge how best to serve Israel's interests.

If you approve this approach, the details could be coordinated interagency.

Recommendations

That you approve an August 12 announcement of the resumption of F-16 deliveries to Israel as well as the regularly scheduled delivery of two F-15s.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

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Additionally, that you approve in principle an approach to Prime Minister Begin on the Saudi AWACS in Jerusalem prior to his September visit to the US.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS
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