



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350

-8 MAY 1981 14 51

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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

#56

IN REPLY REFER TO  
Ser 00/S300186  
8 May 1981

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EGYPT

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subj: NPW Transit of the Suez Canal ~~(S)~~ - INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

~~(S/NP)~~ You recently expressed interest in the history of the Egyptian Government's position on NPW transits of the Suez Canal, in the light of our recent inability to obtain permission for the CALIFORNIA transit. Since 1977 we have been unsuccessful in our attempts to get concurrence from the Government of Egypt for U.S. nuclear powered warships (NPW) to use the Suez Canal. CALIFORNIA was only our most recent frustration.

~~(S/NP)~~ In 1978, we sent a Navy expert to discuss the Egyptian concerns about NPW use of the Canal with the top officials of the Suez Canal Authority, Egyptian Atomic Energy Establishment and Foreign Ministry. He was able to get agreement in principle for NPW transits, but shortly thereafter a major shift in administration of the Egyptian agencies caused the issue to stall. The Three Mile Island reactor accident in early 1979 made the new agency officials unwilling to accept the decisions of their predecessors and ended our progress on the issue.

~~(S/NP)~~ In August 1980, a U.S. technical team was sent to Cairo. They left a substantial amount of information with the heads of the various agencies, and all questions arising from the meetings were answered. The head of the Egyptian Atomic Energy Department indicated he had all the equipment needed for any monitoring and that was not a problem. Despite agreement in principle, Egypt still did not grant approval for the subsequent NPW transit requests we submitted.

~~(S/NP)~~ During a 15 October 1980 meeting with former Secretary Brown, Vice President Mubarak asked the U.S. to assist in drafting a set of NPW transit rules for the Canal. He requested that we work with his Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Boutros Ghali, in attempting to satisfy remaining Egyptian concerns over the U.S. proposal for NPW transits. On 3 November 1980, Ambassador Atherton delivered to Ghali an extensive package consisting of draft Canal regulations for NPW and a proposed public announcement. The package was consistent with our worldwide policy for NPW visits and transits, and had been jointly prepared by the Navy, OSD and State. We never received any response from the Egyptians.

~~(S/NP)~~ The Ambassador delivered a letter from President Carter to President Sadat on 3 January 1981 asking for Sadat's help in resolving the issue. In Atherton's presence, Sadat told

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Mubarak to look into the matter. When no reply to the presidential letter was forthcoming by 31 January, the Ambassador pressed Mubarak for an answer and was told that Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Osama El Baz, was working on the problem. On 22 February, Atherton asked El Baz about his progress and reminded him that we were still awaiting Egypt's answer. El Baz replied that on instructions from Mubarak, the various Egyptian Agencies were working to complete technical studies before 1 April.

~~(S, NP)~~ During his 4 April trip to Cairo, Secretary Haig raised the issue with Foreign Minister Ali and discussed the transit by CALIFORNIA. Ali responded that we could take the matter as already decided. He thought the issue could be resolved by a public declaration, between 16 and 20 April, opening the Canal to NPW. The declaration never came.

~~(S, NP)~~ On 15 April, with the deadline for the CALIFORNIA transit drawing closer and no apparent action from Egypt, Atherton asked Ali about the status of our request. Ali said that Vice President Mubarak planned to chair a meeting of all concerned Egyptian agencies, as well as Governors of regions contiguous to the Canal, to discuss implementation of the decision, already made in principle, to grant NPW transits to the U.S. and other nations. Ali said he regretted that there was not enough time to give an answer before CALIFORNIA's deployment date.

~~(S, NP)~~ On 21 April, Ali informed Atherton that about six months will be required for Egypt to install environmental monitoring equipment and formulate NPW transit requirements. Contrary to some of his earlier statements, Ali said that the equipment will have to be in place before NPW transits can begin. Ali made it clear that no NPW transits, except perhaps in a genuine national security emergency, will be permitted until laboratory and radiological decontamination equipment is in place.

~~(S, NP)~~ During General Abu Ghazala's visit here last month he suggested that he had some ability to influence the decision to permit the CALIFORNIA's transit with AMERICA. The issues of equipment and liability assurance he raised, however, had already been discussed with the concerned Egyptian agencies and Foreign Minister Ali without positive results. It is likely that Ghazala was simply trying to improve his own position and, in fact, is not a major player in the NPW question. Regardless of Ghazala's influence or lack of influence, our need to get CALIFORNIA to the Indian Ocean had forced us to turn the ship around and begin a transit via the Cape of Good Hope.

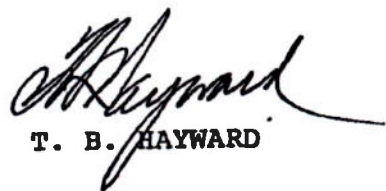
~~(S, NP)~~ Our effort on the NPW transit issue will continue, with the goal of getting permission for a nuclear submarine transit as soon as possible and a fallback position of having CALIFORNIA return to the U.S. with the AMERICA battle group via

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the Canal about six months from now. Ambassador Atherton is being provided with background talking points to allow him to pursue the issue further with various Egyptian officials and see if we can overcome the "runaround" we have been getting to date.

  
T. B. HAYWARD

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