

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

WASHINGTON

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Authority: EO 13526

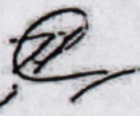

Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS

Date: FEB 26 2019

September 1, 1981

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MEMORANDUM FOR: The President

FROM: Aleksander M. Haig, Jr. 
Caspar Weinberger SUBJECT: Strengthening Strategic Cooperation
with Israel

Prime Minister Begin's visit will come at a critical time for us and for our foreign policy objectives in the Middle East and Southwest Asia. His decisions will be critical as we attempt to protect the fragile cease fire in Lebanon, shepherd the Saudi AWACS case through Congress as part of our regional security strategy, and try to get the Middle East peace process moving again.

The Israelis worry about any criticism of their actions. They hope for US support for their policies, and are upset and uncertain in the wake of the UN condemnation of the Iraqi reactor attack, the proposed Saudi AWACS sale, the suspension of F-16 deliveries, and US-Saudi diplomacy and closeness as a product of the Lebanon crisis. Although these actions have caused unfortunate tension between the US and Israel, we need to emphasize that we still desire a strategic partnership, but that this requires that both sides take each other's interests into account.

One way to reassure Israel that the US commitment is firm is to persuade Begin that we have a self-interested stake in Israeli security because we derive direct, tangible benefits. Our security strategy for the Eastern Mediterranean and Southwest Asia imposes demanding requirements on our military capabilities which Israel -- with its strategic location, extensive support infrastructure and, in certain circumstances, its highly trained manpower and sophisticated weaponry -- could help satisfy. It is clear, though, that political constraints will limit cooperation involving Israeli projection forces at least initially to those scenarios involving the Eastern Mediterranean component of our regional strategy. By taking advantage of those opportunities for cooperation which are both available and appropriate, however, we could serve Israel's interests as well as our own.

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We have held sensitive discussions with the Israelis in the past about military cooperation, but have not made the decision to move from talk to action. You may wish to take that step during Begin's visit, indicating that a mature partnership entails both mutual obligations and mutual benefits.

It would be unwise to commit ourselves at this time irrevocably to any specific measures (which would reduce our leverage). Begin should come away with a clear impression that we see advantages from closer cooperation between our two countries. The result could increase the prospects that Israel will play a constructive role on key regional diplomatic and security issues.

The major political constraint on closer US-Israeli security cooperation is the potential reaction of moderate Arab states which also play a central role in our regional strategy. We will, however, attempt to moderate potential Arab response by suggesting forms of cooperation with the Israelis which, at least initially, have minimal visibility. We also will want to move forward at the same time on programs which will strengthen US defense cooperation with key Islamic states such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Pakistan.

Closer cooperation with Israel in some or all of the following areas could provide genuine military benefits to the US and political reassurance to Israel within the boundaries of manageable Arab reactions. They are certain to be well received by Begin, who spoke of his readiness to enter into increased cooperation in the naval and medical areas during a recent conversation with our Charge in Israel. If you agree, you might propose these steps in your meeting with Begin and suggest that Cap take them up in detail with Minister of Defense Sharon.

We recommend the following:

Prepositioned Medical Supplies: Israeli medical facilities are among the best in the region, and adequate medical support is a critical shortcoming of the Rapid Deployment Force. We would suggest that a US medical survey team return to Israel this autumn to continue the exploratory dialogue begun in July.

Increased Naval Interaction: Increased port calls and low profile exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as search and rescue rehearsals, could provide training opportunities for US forces and increase our familiarity with Israeli

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power calls*

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naval capabilities and facilities. We should suggest these be arranged through normal defense channels.

Joint Strategic Planning: Making the most of Israeli resources in a situation will require a much more detailed exchange of information and plans between us. We need to make clear to Israel that cooperation involving its projection forces will have to be focused, at least initially, on the Eastern Mediterranean component of our Southwest Asia strategy. Strategic planning provides a realistic context in which to do so.

Military planning is primarily a JCS function. To the extent it might produce a role for Israel in our Southwest Asian strategy, State, DoD and the JCS will have to review the options and assess their implications. Further exchanges of information and plans which do not yet involve operational matters are a good idea. We could offer to Begin that existing exchanges be afforded a higher priority and sense of urgency. In addition, after we have made decisions on RDF prepositioning, throughput and funding requirements, we might propose a "capacity analysis" of Israeli airbases, a necessary step if we are to suggest later either prepositioning or expansion of Israeli facilities so they can better support US forces in a contingency.

Defense Trade: As part of our offset package, we agreed to improve Israel's competitive position in bidding on DOD contracts. We have a goal of \$200 million which Israel considers a promise. It was made explicit and bears repeating that this program would not go forward in the face of the kind of Israeli effort to defeat the Saudi AWACS sale that we are now experiencing. We also intend to encourage US-Israeli industrial teaming and to facilitate third country transfer of US-origin items. You might wish to consider authorizing Israel to use up to \$100 million in FY 1982 FMS credits for procurement of defense articles in Israel as a short-term industrial stimulant.

We have also considered a number of other forms of US-Israeli strategic cooperation, including prepositioning, air and army exercises, and increased and more generous security assistance programs. These potential initiatives, as well as even more far-reaching possibilities such as homeporting, peacetime basing of RDF units, and a security guarantee, would be premature under existing circumstances. Should Begin raise them, we recommend you be non-committal.

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Recommendation

That you approve these concrete steps for closer security cooperation with Israel (talking points for your meetings with Prime Minister Begin will then be developed) and that you authorize the Secretary of Defense to work out the details in his meetings with Defense Minister Sharon.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

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Date: 26 FEB 2019 Authority: EO 13526
Declassify: X Deny in Full: _____
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Reason: _____
MDR: 18 -M- 1173

5 U.S.C. § 552

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FROM: Alexander M. Haig, Jr. *AMH*
Caspar Weinberger *CW*

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