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Date: MAY 20 2019

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THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

NOV 28 1981

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November 11, 1981

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Dear Cap:

As you know, the Israeli delegation headed by General Tamir is scheduled to arrive Wednesday evening for meetings at the Pentagon on Thursday and, if necessary, Friday. Although we discussed US-Israeli strategic cooperation at our recent breakfast, I wanted to take this opportunity to set out my thinking on the subject more completely.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of your forthcoming meetings with the Israelis. You are familiar with the context: the uneasy relationship which has developed between the United States and Israel, both generally and over Osirak and Lebanon in particular; AWACS; Sadat's assassination; Fahd's peace plan; and the current controversy over the MFO. The net result is an Israel that feels beleaguered and unsure of the American commitment. ✓

I continue to believe that strategic cooperation offers a valuable means by which we can reassure Israel. I say this knowing all too well how sensitive this relationship is with respect to our moderate Arab friends. We can, however, use this process to underline our support for Israeli security, acknowledge Israel's strategic importance to us, and improve our ability to defend against Soviet threats to the region. In the broadest sense this effort can strengthen our relations with Israel and have an important effect in determining Israel's willingness to take risks for peace, be it in Lebanon or more broadly. ✓

|| Israeli expectations are high and their proposals are sure to be overly ambitious. Tamir will deplane carrying a draft MOU in hand. Sharon, who is due here on the 30th, is known to place a high premium on a formal MOU itself. Begin holds a similar view. ||

I doubt whether formally agreeing to a MOU during the Tamir visit will be necessary to satisfy the Israelis. Indeed, we must save something in reserve to give to Sharon when he comes to town. At the same time, however, I fear that the

The Honorable
Caspar W. Weinberger,
Secretary of Defense.

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Israelis would interpret an entirely listening mode on our part as a sign that despite the commitment to an MOU that you and I made in the Cabinet Room in the presence of the President and Prime Minister Begin, we were not interested in pursuing a strategic relationship with them. I am sure you will agree that we must avoid a situation in which Sharon decides not to come to Washington at all and our bilateral relationship then takes a further downward spiral.

OSD 3.3(b)(6)
Thus, I believe we must be sure to communicate to Tamir our strong commitment to this cooperative endeavor and to give to him a general idea of the categories of cooperation we believe should be pursued in the near term. Saving the details for Sharon, we should tell Tamir that we desire a more intimate relationship in the following areas: pre-positioning, planning for Soviet contingencies, increased naval interaction, and offshore procurement.

When Sharon arrives, we must be prepared to sign some form of document which would provide some detail, but not too much, in these general categories. It would also be in our interest to indicate our willingness to discuss additional measures as the relationship matures, as it would to indicate what proposals are beyond consideration. In short, our basic goal for the Tamir visit ought to be to convince the Israelis that Sharon should come; for Sharon's visit, our goal must be to make clear to the Israelis that we are serious about strategic cooperation.

I suggest all this in full awareness of just how high are the stakes. Israeli restlessness over the situation in Lebanon is mounting. This week's IAF overflight of Saudi Arabia underscored Israel's ability to complicate our position in the region. A breakdown in the emerging strategic relationship would only fuel Israel's proclivity to act unpredictably and independently.

I recognize that going down this road will cause us problems in parts of the Arab world. However, I am convinced that we can manage this with careful drafting of the MOU, our handling of the public and the press, and through diplomatic initiatives to contain moderate Arab reaction.

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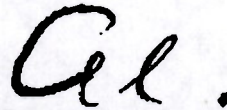
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My recommended approach to strategic cooperation is not based upon any expectation that agreeing to specific cooperative steps or signing an MOU will settle Israeli anxieties. Indeed, even if we can get through November unscathed, the road ahead will be long and difficult. Yet, our strategic requirements--militarily and politically--argue that we do what we can to make the Sharon visit a success.

Given what is at issue, it is important we proceed together on this. If you find difficulty with the approach I have outlined here, I would appreciate either your getting urgently in touch with me or having Fred Ikle contact Bud McFarlane.

Sincerely,



Alexander M. Haig, Jr.

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