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AIR BAG
SECRET

1192/3713
BRITISH EMBASSY,
WASHINGTON, D.C.
March 24, 1956.

1) Mr. B...
2) Mr. S...
W. Morris

Dear Hadow,

Will you please refer to my letter of March 23 about the supply of arms to Israel?

2. I asked Bergus in the State Department today if he could tell me what United States intentions were about arms for Israel. He said he wished he knew, and so did Mr. Dulles! The State Department were having great difficulty in making up their minds what to do. A suggestion which he had put up, and which he thought had a fair chance of being accepted, was that the United States should agree to supply modern anti-aircraft guns and radar, and perhaps also offer to sell naval equipment. With French Mysteres and our Meteors, this anti-aircraft equipment, and Israeli efficiency, Israel would then have something to frighten the Egyptians with.

3. I also asked Bergus what they knew about the idea being mooted in Israel of trying to buy Soviet arms. He said that although there was much talk of it in some sections of the Israeli press, they thought it unlikely that the Russians would do any such thing: the same view was expressed to Ronald Bailey by Rountree, the Deputy Assistant Under Secretary, who said he wished the Russians would!

4. Bergus said the subject had been mentioned by the Israel Ambassador during a visit to George Allen on March 22 to make yet another final appeal for United States arms. Mr. Eban had said that two marked pressures were developing within Israel: one in favour of buying Communist arms and another in favour of an early attack on the Arabs. Both were minority groups at present, but between them they might bring down the present Government - unless, of course, the United States Government gave it the material to show that wise and moderate policies paid.

5. Bergus also mentioned that the Greeks had refused permission for the French Mysteres to stage through Greece en route for Israel. He said they did not intend to get mixed up in this: it was a purely French-Israeli transaction.

6. I am sending copies of this letter to Beith in Paris, Ross, in Rome, Westlake in Tel Aviv, and to Garvey in Cairo.

Yours ever,
W. Morris.

W. Morris.

R.M. Hadow, Esq.,
Levant Department,
Foreign Office,
London, S.W.1.

Henderson

V
1192/348

Parliamentary Question

37. Mr. Arthur Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, how far, as a result of the recent consultation between Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, the United States Government, and the French Government, applications from the Government of Israel for modern aircraft and tanks will be met in accordance with the provisions of the Tripartite Declaration.

7 MAR 1956

LA Rowley Regis
28 MAR 1956
REPLY ATTACHED.

It is contrary to our normal practice to disclose details of either our consultations with the co-signatories of the Tripartite Declaration or of the arms which we supply to Middle Eastern countries as a result of such consultations.

2. In answering Mr. Henderson, therefore, we can only say that while all requests for arms are considered in the light of the Tripartite Declaration we are not prepared to disclose what we decide to supply.

3. A draft reply is submitted.

E. M. Rose
(E. M. Rose)
March 26, 1956.

**MIDDLE EAST
Arms Supplies**

37. Mr. A. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs how far, as a result of the recent consultation

between Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, the United States Government, and the French Government, applications from the Government of Israel for modern aircraft and tanks will be met in accordance with the provisions of the Tripartite Declaration.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Mr. Selwyn Lloyd): All requests by Middle Eastern countries to Her Majesty's Government for arms are considered in the light of the principles laid down in the Tripartite Declaration of May, 1950. As I have repeatedly stated, it would be contrary to Her Majesty's Government's normal practice to disclose what arms are supplied in response to such requests.

Mr. Henderson: Is not the danger of war in the Middle East considerably increased by the fact that substantial numbers of modern aircraft and tanks are being supplied to Egypt and are being denied to Israel? What policy reason is there which the Foreign Secretary can adduce which would justify the prevention of a reasonable supply of comparable types of aircraft and tanks being made to Israel, so as to avoid any suggestion of an arms race?

Mr. Lloyd: The question of arms deliveries to individual countries is a very sensitive matter. Generally speaking, I think it is accepted that over the past five years we have managed to keep a fair balance. We shall continue to try to do that.

2153/4
27 MAR 1956

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~~E 1223/13 INDEXED~~

J

SECRET

1192/388

FROM ATHENS TO FOREIGN OFFICE

Cypher/OTP

DEPARTMENTAL DISTRIBUTION

Sir C. Peake

No. 247
March 28, 1956.

D. 2.55 p.m. March 28, 1956.
R. 3.47 p.m. March 28, 1956.

SECRET

Addressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 247 of March 28.
Repeated for information to: Tel Aviv Cairo
and Saving to: Paris Prague
Rome Washington.

My telegram No. 13 Saving not to all: Mystère Aircraft.

United States Counsellor told member of my staff yesterday that Greek Government had consulted the Embassy about two requests to overfly, one involving Mystères and the other twenty fighters being delivered to the Egyptian Government from Czechoslovakia.

2. United States Embassy had referred to State Department who, however, did not give any clear guidance which could be passed to the Greeks.
3. United States Embassy had just learnt from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Greek Government had decided to grant both requests. Greeks found it difficult to refuse French fighters as the French Government had made them available and the Italians had agreed to their overflying Italy. If two other members of NATO were taking this line it was difficult for Greeks to take the opposite course and, having agreed to this, they did not quite see how they could discriminate between it and the other request.
4. We have learned independently that decision was influenced by an exceptionally curt personal message from Nasser to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Foreign Office please pass to Tel Aviv and Cairo and Saving to Paris, Prague, Rome and Washington as my telegrams Nos. 2, 8, 4, 1, 5 and 55 respectively.

[Repeated to Tel Aviv, Cairo and Saving to Paris, Prague, Rome and Washington.]

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Levant Department Western Organisations Department

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SECRET

FROM FOREIGN OFFICE TO CAIRO

Cypher/OTP
and By Bag

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No. 1020
April 5, 1956

D: 7.45 p.m. April 5, 1956

IMMEDIATE
SECRET

Addressed to Cairo telegram No. 1020 of April 5.
Repeated for information to Tel Aviv
and Saving to Washington No. 1622
Paris No. 1272

Your telegram No. 631 [of April 5]: [Arms for Israel.]

I suggest you ask Nasser what he said to the journalist. If he admits that the statement was made by him I would like you to say that I consider the part about the meteors an abuse of my confidence and, that about the tanks a wholly unwarranted fabrication.

2. If you are tackled by the Press you should say that it is our established policy not to disclose details of arms deliveries. We do not intend to be jockeyed out of this policy by tendentious reports. You could refer to recent statements in Parliament that it is not Her Majesty's Government's intention to balance Soviet deliveries of arms to Egypt by massive deliveries of arms to Israel.

3. I realise that this may be a move to blacken us in Arab eyes, since our refusal to comment may be treated by the Egyptian Press as an admission of the truth of the report. But we can not change our policy on this account.

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V1192/390

SECRET

FROM CAIRO TO FOREIGN OFFICE

Cypher/OTP

DEPARTMENTAL
DISTRIBUTION

Sir. H. Trevelyan

No. 631

April 5, 1956

D. 9.18 a.m. April 5, 1956

R. 9.50 a.m. April 5, 1956

IMMEDIATE

SECRET

Arms for Israel.

Nasser has told an Australian journalist that we are sending six meteors and eighty tanks to Israel.

2. Shall I deny the tanks, when I see him?

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African Department
Economic Relations Department

ADVANCE COPIES

Private Secretary
Sir. H. Caccia
Mr. Shuckburgh
Head of Levant Department

vvv

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Reply has gone advising Sir H. Trevelyan to ask Nasser what he said: if he confirms this report he should be told that as far as the aircraft it is a breach of confidence and as regards the tanks a fabrication.

To the Press, Cairo should refuse to be drawn in details of arms supplied to one side or the other, by tendentious reports JAWG

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FROM EXTERNAL OTTAWA APRIL 3/56.

SECRET

TO EMBASSY WASHINGTON E601 IMMEDIATE.

HIGH COMMISSIONER LONDON E501 IMMEDIATE.

(RCVD. 0920/04Z)

EMBASSY PARIS E327 IMMEDIATE.

INFO NATO DELEGATION PARIS.

EXPORT OF ARMS TO THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Comay, the Israeli Ambassador, called on me this morning on instructions from his Government to make a formal request for permission to export from Canada one squadron of 24 F-86 aircraft. He referred to earlier enquiries which had been made a year or so ago regarding the possible export of such aircraft and indicated that in the view of his Government it was most desirable that a complete squadron should be secured. Any smaller number would complicate the operations and maintenance problems. He added that an attempt would be made to get the number of Mysteres from France raised in order that they would have a full squadron of that type of aircraft as well.

2. Mr. Comay appreciated certain difficulties which this request might present but his Government hoped that the Canadian authorities would consider it most seriously and urgently and favourably.

3. Mr. Comay felt that there had recently been some disillusionment in both Washington and London concerning the situation in the Middle East. He reported that Mr. Dulles had told Mr. Eban that the U.S.A. Government was now prepared to recognize the existing imbalance in arms as increasing the threat of war. Mr. Dulles had intimated that it was in the interests of the West to supply some arms to Israel although it would be difficult for the United States to do so itself,

/except

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except for small quantities of defensive weapons, at the present stage.

4. According to Mr. Comay, Mr. Sharett was of the view that the recent turn of events had made the position of the Canadian Government crucial in the Middle Eastern situation. Canada had the type of aircraft which was most needed and Canada might have less difficulty than the United States in allowing them to be made available immediately. These aircraft were absolutely essential as a deterrent to aggression and to give the Israeli people some confidence in their ability to defend themselves. Their fears and their sense of isolation and weakness were a great danger.

5. Mr. Comay put forward the following reasons in support of his request:-

- (a) The Egyptians had, or would soon have, a bombing fleet within six or ten minutes of the main centres in Israel with 50 to 60 Ilyushin bombers and 200 MIG fighters. The Egyptians could operate with relative freedom from airfields in the Canal Zone, in the Sinai Region and in the Gaza Strip.
- (b) The threat now was not merely or even primarily to the Israeli Army but to the civilian population. No anti-aircraft defences existed which would be capable of protecting Tel Aviv, Jerusalem or the other main centres of population. The least that could be expected, therefore, in the event of operations by the Egyptians would be the death of thousands of civilians. The national survival of Israel was also involved. While the country might not be completely destroyed it would be crippled and the possibility of any reconciliation with the Arab States would be put off for generations.

/(c)

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- (c) With two or three squadrons of jet interceptors the Israeli authorities would hope that they might be able to deter such an attack. While, in relation to the force which would be launched by the other side, this number would represent far less than was required for defence, the Israeli Government would be prepared to take its chances if it had this quantity of effective aircraft.
- (d) The nature of the request (confined as it is to short range interceptors) would rule out the possibility of use for offensive purposes. In fact, and in contrast to Egypt, the Israelis had no modern bombers that could be effective against MIG's.

6. Mr. Comay did not know whether in the event of such action by Canada the United States would also act. He mentioned that in a recent interview Mr. Allen had spoken of the possibility of anti-tank weapons being released, although he had not made a definite offer. In view of the usefulness of these weapons in warding off an attack by land, the Israeli authorities would undoubtedly welcome these weapons (with a priority somewhat lower than that attached to jet fighters) if the United States were to decide to make them available.

7. Would you please inform the State Department (and London the Foreign Office and Paris the Quai D'Orsay) fully on this approach and report immediately any views which you may receive. I would hope that this matter can be considered by Cabinet at its next meeting which will probably be within a week or ten days.

Pearson.

GH.