Johnston to Escol

November 1968

Dear Prime Minister,

I have been delayed in writing back to you, partly because of the flow of other work, partly because of the uncertainty whether you might actually visit us, and partly because of the growing importance of the subject of mutual security.

I have already assured the previous Prime Minister, in the letter of November 11, 1968, that I would write to you again this month, and as a consequence, I am now writing to you again.

I have conveyed to you the agreement reached with my predecessor that this subject is of such increasing importance, and that we would like to discuss it with you in the course of your visit.

I am also writing to you to say that I consider the United States' efforts to control the spread of nuclear weapons to be of such importance that they should be placed on a higher priority.

I am sure that you will agree that the United States should take a special responsibility in this matter.

I am deeply concerned about this subject, and I have already brought it to your attention in my letter of June 1968. Since that time, the pace of arms limitation has continued, and the arms race has begun to accelerate.

We have carefully studied the documents that you have sent to the Embassy, and we have welcomed your reaffirmation of your intention to prevent the introduction of nuclear weapons into your region. But we are confident that after the nuclear non-proliferation agreement is signed, the United States will support the agreement.

I am sure that the United States will support your efforts to prevent the introduction of nuclear weapons into your region.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]
ولذلك فإني أرحب بالبيان الوارد في ورقة حكومتك، بأنها تعود حاليا على دراسة مكثفة
للالتزامات والمبادئ الناتجة عن توقيع الاتفاقية. إن أمل الشديد والجاد هو أن تؤدي هذه الدراسة
إلى صدور قرار بتوقيع إسرائيل للاتفاقية في وقت مبكر. إن فشل إسرائيل في توقيع معاهدة منع
انتشار، سوف يوجه ضربة قاصمة إلى الجهود الدولية التي تبذلها حكومتي من أجل وقف
انتشار الأسلحة النووية. من ناحية أخرى، فإن الولايات المتحدة سوف تصاب بقلق عميق لو
ظهرت الصواريخ الاستراتيجية العملية في الشرق الأدنى.
إنه أمل منك أن تقدم لي إجابة مشجعة حول كل هذه الأمور عندما نلتقى ونتحدث في
وقت متأخر من هذا الشهر.
إنه يطيب لي أن أراك هنا ومرحبا بك ليس فقط كزميّ مميز ومحتزم، ولكن أيضا
كصديق شخصى مقرب.

المخلص،
ليندون ب. جونسون
316. Telegram From the Department of Stateto the Embassy in Israel

Washington, November 11, 1968, 1857Z.

269999. 1. You should deliver this as a personal message from the President to Prime Minister Eshkol:

2. Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I am writing to you, first, to welcome the prospect of your visit here later this month, and secondly, to raise with you again a subject that has become of increasing importance to me as I enter the closing days of my Administration.

As I look back over my five years in office, I find that one endeavor overshadows all those that have called upon my time and energy. This has been the search for peace. Central to it has been our effort to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. The United States has assumed a special responsibility for this endeavor. It is at the heart not only of my own nation's security interests but also of the security of every nation in the world. As you know I am personally deeply committed to this task.

My deep concern on this subject was expressed to you personally as long ago as June 1964. Since then there has been no slackening of the arms race in the Near East, and the weapons introduced into the area have grown increasingly sophisticated. It would be a tragedy—an irreversible tragedy—if this arms race extended into the field of nuclear weapons or nuclear weapons delivery systems.

Secretary Rusk emphasized these points last month to Foreign Minister Eban when he stressed the United States' concern that Israel's continued delay in signing the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will have the effect of increasing, rather than reducing, pressures for other area states to develop or acquire nuclear weapons.

We have carefully studied your Government's paper handed to AmbassadorBarbour on October 28. We welcome the reaffirmation of your Government's assurances that Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the area. It is our strong conviction, however, that with a Non-Proliferation Treaty now in existence, only Israel's adherence to that Treaty can give the world confidence that Israel does not intend to develop nuclear weapons.

I therefore welcome the statement in your Government's paper that you are engaged in intensive study of the implications of signing the Treaty. It is my earnest hope that this study will result in a decision to sign the Treaty at an early date. Israel's failure to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty would be a severe blow to my Government's global efforts to halt the spread of nuclear weapons. The United States would also be deeply troubled if operational strategic missiles were to appear in the Near East. I hope you can give me an encouraging response on these matters when we talk later this month.

It will be good to see you here. You are welcome not only as a distinguished and esteemed colleague but as a close personal friend.

Sincerely,

Lyndon B. Johnson
Rusk