

relative to its own. In re-establishing diplomatic relations with the USSR on 20 July 1953, Israel promised not to join any "aggressive alliance directed against the USSR." This undertaking is in line with Israeli policy of not aligning itself with either the West or the USSR until forced to do so. It would not, however, be regarded by the Israelis as inhibiting their participation in defense arrangements for the Middle East if it seemed advantageous.

US Security Interests in the Middle East

52. The Arab-Israeli dispute has seriously damaged the US security position in the Middle East by increasing area instability, by adding to the difficulty of organizing area defense, and by posing a continuing threat of armed conflict. The Arab belief that the US favors Israeli interests over their own has been chiefly responsible for the decline of US prestige and influence in the Arab world.

53. Because of Israel's strategic position and communication facilities, wartime access to Israeli territory is highly desirable for the defense of the Middle East by the Western Powers. However, in the present state of Arab-Israeli relations, peacetime arrangements for the use by the West of Israel's position and facilities would almost certainly provoke bitter Arab ill-will and jeopardize Western use of facilities in Arab countries. Moreover, Israel would demand an exorbitant price for any such peacetime arrangements, and has already indicated firm opposition to the stationing of foreign troops in its territory prior to the outbreak of war. Even in the event of hostilities, Israeli troops could probably not be used in combined operations with Arab forces, and Israel would be unlikely to send its own troops outside the country for fear of Arab attack. Israel would, however, fight tenaciously in defense of its own territory.

No. 650

684A.86/8-1752 Telegram

*The Acting Secretary of State to the Embassy in Israel*¹

SECRET PRIORITY

WASHINGTON, August 22, 1953.

154. Tel Aviv tel 215, Jerusalem tel 25,² Amman tel 82.³

¹ Repeated to Amman priority as telegram 81 and to Jerusalem priority, London, and Paris; sent by air pouch to Beirut, Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, and Jidda.

² Neither printed.

³ Telegram 82 from Amman, Aug. 17, reported in part that the Arab Legion was strengthening in the Mount Scopus area out of alarm at the Israeli build-up in the Jerusalem area. Considerable augmentation and reinforcement of defensive positions was noted by the Army Attaché. (684A.86/8-1753)