

May 22, 1979

**Memorandum for Margaret Thatcher in Response to
a Letter from Menachem Begin**

Citation:

"Memorandum for Margaret Thatcher in Response to a Letter from Menachem Begin", May 22, 1979, Wilson Center Digital Archive, FCO93/2105, Israel: nuclear matters (Kew: National Archives 8 January 2010). Obtained for NPIHP for Or Rabinowitz.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/120208>

Summary:

Memorandum with a briefing on both the Pakistani and Israeli nuclear positions and suggestions for a response to the letter from Menachem Begin.

Credits:

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Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

Problems

1. To advise the Prime Minister on a response to Mr Begin's message about Pakistan's nuclear programme and to brief her on this point for her meeting with Mr Begin on 23 May.

Background and Argument

2. Mr Cartledge's letter of 21 May encloses the text of a message for Mr Begin expressing concern about Pakistan's nuclear intentions and the alleged cooperation between Pakistan and certain Arab States in the nuclear field. In an accompanying memorandum attention is drawn to the supply of inverters by Emersons (UK) to Pakistan.
3. The Israelis are well informed about the Pakistani programme and about Libyan contacts with Pakistan. Our evidence appears not dissimilar to theirs. Unlike them we have concluded that it does not for the moment substantiate suggestions about an Arab bomb. The allegations in paragraph 8 of the Israeli memorandum about the supply of inverters from Britain to Pakistan gives a distorted impression though some of the information is basically correct.
4. The Israeli decision to raise this matter with us presents an opportunity to underline to the Israelis (who, like the Pakistanis, are not signatories of the NPT) that they also have a part to play in ensuring that nuclear weapons are not introduced in to the Middle East.
5. Successive Israeli Governments since 1966 have said that Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons in the Middle East. We have no doubt that the Israelis have the technical ability to design and develop nuclear explosives and they should have enough plutonium for a small stockpile of nuclear weapons. We believe the

/Israelis

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Israelis could quickly assemble about a dozen low yield weapons without testing for delivery, probably by aircraft.

Recommendation

6. I recommend that a letter be sent to No 10 on the lines of the attached draft enclosing an interim reply to Mr Begin, and a brief for use by the Prime Minister for her meeting with Mr Begin on 23 May.

7. MENAD and SAD have been consulted.



R J Alston
Joint Nuclear Unit

22 May 1979

cc: PS/Mr Eard

PS/Mr Blaker

PS PPS

Mr Parsons

Mr Cortazzi

Mr Roberly

Mr Murray

Mr Peave

Mr White

Mr. [unclear]

Mr. [unclear]