



February 27, 1969

**Memorandum from Ralph Earle, Office of
International Security Affairs to Secretary of
Defense Laird, 'Stopping the Introduction of Nuclear
Weapons Into the Middle East'**

Citation:

"Memorandum from Ralph Earle, Office of International Security Affairs to Secretary of Defense Laird, 'Stopping the Introduction of Nuclear Weapons Into the Middle East'", February 27, 1969, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Mandatory declassification review request. Originally published in Avner Cohen and William Burr, eds., National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book #485 (September 12, 2014).
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Summary:

Ralph Earle, a senior official at the Pentagon's Office of International Security Affairs [DOD/ISA] who had worked closely with Warnke, sent Laird a memorandum, requesting a meeting with Rogers, Kissinger, and Helms on the Israeli nuclear problem. The paper further restated the recommendation to keep the issue out of the National Security Council process.

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

23 FEB 1969

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INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Stopping the Introduction of Nuclear Weapons Into the Middle East

The question of Israel's introduction of nuclear weapons into the Middle East is being proposed for NSC consideration in two different contexts: first, as part of an overall review and up-dating of the National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) series of the last Administration; and second, as part of a response to NSAM 13 concerning ways to obtain signatures on the NPT from various governments.

As you know from your conversations with Paul Warnke and from his memorandum to you on this subject of 15 February, our view is that this issue is too sensitive and too difficult to handle through the large machinery of the NSC. Paul Warnke reported to you in that memorandum his belief, which we share

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Stopping this can only come about by direct intercession at the highest levels with the Government of Israel.

We recommend two things:

1. That Defense take the position that the issue of Israeli acquisition of nuclear weapons not be addressed through the NSC machinery.

APPROVE *[Signature]* FEB 27 1969

DISAPPROVE _____

2. That you suggest an early meeting on this subject with Secretary Rogers, Mr. Kissinger, and Mr. Helms. A memorandum to this effect is attached for your consideration and signature.

APPROVE *[Signature]* FEB 27 1969

DISAPPROVE _____

EXEMPT FROM EO 12958, Sec 1.4 (a) (1)
EO 1.4 (a) (2)
Date 29 July 2002
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downgrading and
declassification
Date 13 May 2004
By [Signature]

Enclosure a/s

1010

See Def Cont Nr. I-

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

27 FEB 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS
DIRECTOR, CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

SUBJECT: Stopping the Introduction of Nuclear Weapons Into the Middle East

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From all of the available intelligence and from the intensive conver-
sations here in Defense with Ambassador Rabin in the fall of 1968, [redacted]

[redacted] I do not believe this coincides with the interests of the United States, and, in fact, constitutes the single most dangerous phenomenon in an area dangerous enough without nuclear weapons.

The problem is how to stop this development. If the Israelis complete the development of a nuclear weapon within the next three to six months -- which is quite possible -- we will be powerless to do more than invoke sanctions, i.e., cease delivery of F-4s after the "introduction" of nuclear weapons into the area. Such a negative course would not take us very far. The Israelis would be unable and unwilling to reverse their course. Moreover, their requirement for conventional strength would be greater, not less, and the likelihood of our actually invoking the sanctions would not be great in such circumstances. Furthermore, at any time prior to such events, or certainly not long thereafter, we may well be faced with public knowledge of the essential facts. So far these facts have remained in the category of vague, unsubstantiated, and not fully accepted rumors; but we are depending primarily on luck. Once the public is made aware of the situation the Administration's delicate task will become even more difficult.

I believe we should meet very soon to consider how to proceed on this, followed by an early meeting with the President. Because of the sensitivity and complexity of this issue, I suggest this not be dealt with through the regular NSC machinery.



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