

**June 27, 1969**  
**Memorandum from Harry Schwartz to Deputy  
Secretary of Defense**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Harry Schwartz's memo to the Deputy Secretary of Defense concerns the possible delay of delivery of F-45 to Israel. The draft "Scenario" is referenced and Schwartz hopes this issue will be covered more extensively within it.

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In reply refer to: 1-35535/69

27 June 1969

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

This is in response to your request, conveyed to me through Captain Wilson, for information on where the U.S. Government stands with respect to early delivery of F-4s to Israel.

In January 1968, President Johnson told Prime Minister Eshkol at the ranch that if the decision were made as late as December 1968 to sell F-4s to Israel, the U.S. Government would put itself in a position to be able to deliver, at the rate of four a month, starting in January 1970 (this would mean almost cutting in half the usual lead-time for F-4s). In December 1968 the decision was made to sell the F-4s, and the Israelis asked for an even earlier delivery. Although there were some objections to this -- particularly from the Air Force, who did not believe the Israelis would be ready to maintain the aircraft carrier -- the decision was made to start delivery, at the rate of four a month, in September 1969. There is attached an exchange of letters between Mr. Warnke and General Rabin to this effect. You will note that in Mr. Warnke's letter he makes two points in addition to the agreement on early delivery. The first point is: "Unforeseen developments could, of course, necessitate a change in this delivery schedule." Secondly, he said that the "U.S. Government is not recommending that Israel take delivery of any of the F-4s prior to the time such personnel are adequately trained to operate and maintain them."

On 18 June 1969, General Rabin, the Israeli Ambassador, wrote a letter (attached) to Secretary Laird, stating that McDonnell Douglas was able to deliver earlier than September and requesting that the planes be delivered to Israel "as they become available from the factory." We know from the factory that this means August. Less formally, the Israelis have told us that if we cannot agree to the delivery of four in August, that they would appreciate receiving eight in September. This request of General Rabin's has not been answered.

We understand from the Air Force that it may be technically possible to make the earlier deliveries the Israelis now request, but we also understand that the Israelis are behind schedule in their maintenance training. One of the things that we worried about last year with respect to such early delivery as September was that the Israelis would possess the planes but be unable to

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maintain them sufficiently to fight them and, in a crisis, ask us to send Air Force technicians to assist them at what would be the worst political time for us to do so.

Given this background, I believe that

1. We have the right to delay delivery through the promised September date, drawing on two arguments as necessary:

a. The "unforeseen developments" clause in Mr. Warnke's letter, and

b. The inadequacy of maintenance training.

If actual deliveries are delayed much beyond October, however, we will then begin to run the risk of public knowledge of this fact, due to press queries, etc.

Rodger Davies of the State Department is preparing a draft "scenario" at the request of you, Mr. Kissinger, and Mr. Richardson, for onward transmission to Mr. Laird, Mr. Rogers, and the President. Hopefully, this scenario will cover the subject much more comprehensively than this memorandum pretends to do. It should be in your hands, and Mr. Laird's, by the end of next week. As you have requested, I will continue to represent Defense in this endeavor.

Signed - ~~James H. Schwartz~~

3 Attachments

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