

Foreign Relations, 1961-1963, Volume XVIII, Near East,
1962-1963

Released by the Office of the Historian
Documents 176-208

206. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel (1)

Washington, April 4, 1963, 9:18 p.m.

674. During 75-minute courtesy call on Deputy Under Secretary Johnson April 2, Israel DepMinDef Peres (2) commented as follows:

1. There are major changes afoot which affect Near East area and Israel. Primary among these are recent setbacks to Soviets and corresponding improvement in US position in area; Arab unity moves which show Nasserism still popular but far from all-pervasive; breakup of simplified Monrovia-vs-Casablanca groupings in Africa with attendant emergence of conflicting Pan-African and Pan-Islamic tendencies which Nasser will try exploit; "augmentation of military hardware" in Near East where Nasser already has or is acquiring air-to-air, ship-to-shore, ground-to-air, and ground-to-ground missile capacities which add to his self-confidence and against which countermeasures lacking.
2. One change which not inimical Israel's interest is increased US influence and prestige.
3. Israel sees this as ideal time for USG to use this newly-increased influence to oppose "Arab belligerency", i.e., to make it clear that transgressions of the Arab-Israel territorial status quo would be directly countered by US military strength. Every effort should be made bring about direct Israel-UAR negotiations, which are prerequisite of any area peace. In such moves, USG would find Israel a "willing partner" as Israel has no ambitions running counter present territorial status quo. USG "too reluctant" in pushing Nasser in this direction. He needs US more than vice versa and US influence now at all-time high. Situation may not be so propitious five years hence.
4. In immediate terms, Israel would like see US efforts bent toward maintenance of status quo in Jordan and reforms within House of Saud. US aid should not be so focused on Nasser.
5. In long run, overthrow of Hussein and Saud-Faisal unavoidable. Former is courageous and generally acts wisely. However, he has too many senior officers plotting against him. Israel doing what it can prolong his tenure, with what it regards as useful effect on Nasser, by including overthrow in Jordan among three situations it has publicly proclaimed might be regarded as causes for unilateral Israel action (other two being interference re Aqaba transit and Jordan waters). USG can help by continuing assist Hussein identify his enemies and encourage his measures popularize himself. This regard, appointment of PriMin Samir Rifai has already improved Hussein's popular image somewhat.
6. GOI has "definite information" UAR used gas as weapon in Yemen.

In course of conversation Deputy Under Secretary Johnson:

1. Doubted UAR missile development will have much military significance for considerable time to come.
2. Said USG deeply opposed introduction of nuclear weapons capability in area.
3. Said USG considers it important work for strengthened UNTSO operation. (Peres replied Israel has almost built-in resistance to UNTSO operations and cannot agree there anything UNTSO does which US could not do better by direct exercise of "good offices".)

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(1)Source: Department of State, Central Files, POL ARAB-ISR. Confidential. Drafted by Crawford; cleared by Strong, Talbot, and Slater; and approved by Johnson. Repeated to Amman and Cairo and pouched to Beirut, Damascus, London, and Jidda.

(2) Deputy Defense Minister Shimon Peres visited Washington April 2-4 and, at the request of the Israeli Government, held discussions with State and Defense Department officials with respect to consummating the Hawk missile transaction. Documentation on the visit is *ibid.*, DEF 12 ISR. The memorandum of conversation between Johnson and Peres is *ibid.*, POL NR EAST.

207. Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between the Assistant Secretary State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Talbot) and the President's Deputy Special Counsel (Feldman) (1)

Washington, April 5, 1963.

TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH MR. FELDMAN OF THE WHITE HOUSE

Mr. Feldman telephoned today to say that when Deputy Defense Minister Peres of Israel had called on him in the White House they were walking along a corridor and "bumped into" the President who later said he would like to see Mr. Peres. At a subsequent meeting the President asked Peres what danger points he saw in the Near East. According to Feldman, Peres said that the major danger point could arise in Jordan, where officials are not loyal to the King who consequently could be upset. There were three possibilities. 1) If there should be outright intervention by the UAR, this would certainly call for a reaction by Israel. 2) If the King should be overthrown by internal subversion this would be very difficult for Israel which would have to watch the situation very carefully and take what measures would be necessary. 3) If the King were assassinated and succeeded by a purely Jordanian Government, Israel probably would take no action as it supports the idea that each Arab country should choose its own government.

In response to another question by the President, Peres according to Feldman, said that the UAR is the only Arab country that Israel really fears. He launched on a discussion of UAR rockets, etc. The President, Feldman said, took the opportunity to say that the United States is very very concerned about any proliferation of nuclear weapons and that he, the President, would strongly hope that Israel would not develop or obtain this kind of weaponry. In reply Feldman said that Peres had given an unequivocal assurance that Israel would not do anything in this field unless it finds that other countries in the area are involved in it.

(1) Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Countries Series, Israel, 11/7/63-11/17/63. Confidential. Drafted by Talbot.