

CHAPTER 9

Arms to Israel and Shuttle Diplomacy

The October War dramatically transformed U.S. national security policy in the Middle East. The war shattered the myth of Israeli invincibility or the thought that Israeli military predominance alone could deter war. Before the war the Israelis concluded that Arab states would not attack because of Israeli military superiority, but if they did, Israel's superior intelligence capabilities, air force, and army would allow them to quickly overcome any combination of Arab forces. After the war Kissinger sought to use the influence of the United States to create a gradual movement toward peace by convincing all the belligerents that through cooperation with the United States, they could advance their interests without resorting to the use of force. Although Schlesinger questioned Kissinger's methods, he supported the secretary of state's overall diplomatic objectives. The defense secretary told reporters at the Pentagon in late October: "I think that it is evident that in order to have a long-term settlement, that the relationship between Israel and her neighbors must be based on something far broader than a military preponderance by the state of Israel."¹

Schlesinger, however, did not want Kissinger to view U.S. war materiel as a bottomless stack of chips to draw from in support of negotiations, especially as he sought to rebuild the post-Vietnam military in a time of budget austerity. Too much aid to Israel, he feared, could derail his campaign to bolster NATO's conventional deterrent and refocus defense policy on the cold war competition with the Soviets. Schlesinger's focus remained the military balance with the Soviet Union, especially in Europe. As secretary of defense, he had far more direct control over U.S. military readiness than he did Middle East diplomacy—a realm Kissinger controlled. Schlesinger

also refused to act as Kissinger's foil. He later recalled that he had not understood during the October War that Kissinger had played a "game ... saying that he was doing his best for Israel but could not persuade the DoD to be cooperative." He had naively assumed Kissinger and he "were operating on more or less the same wavelength."² After the cease-fire, Schlesinger rightly suspected Kissinger of continuing to blame him in background briefings to the press for preventing aid from reaching Israel faster during the war. The defense secretary did not want to again be accused of blocking Kissinger's diplomatic efforts and sought to appear amenable to Israeli requests.³

When the cease-fire took hold on October 25, the Israeli Defense Forces held a bridgehead of 1,600 square kilometers west of the Suez Canal and controlled most of the Golan Heights, with Israeli forces positioned well inside Syria. The Egyptians held 1,200 square kilometers in Sinai, but Israeli forces had encircled the Egyptian Third Army. The early success of Arab forces, however, had shattered the myth of Israel's invulnerability established by its stunning victory in the 1967 war and demonstrated that while Israel had military strength, it alone was not enough to keep war at bay. Israel's vaunted intelligence agencies had failed to give sufficient warning to allow the country to fully mobilize the military before the Egyptian and Syrians attacked. The IDF's early setbacks and high casualties at the hands of the Egyptian and Syrian forces had punctured its prewar aura of invincibility. The Israelis prevailed but only after receiving massive U.S. assistance, making Israel heavily dependent on American military assistance in appearance and reality. During the war Washington kept to its promise to replace Israeli equipment losses, transfer combat aircraft, and undertake a massive airlift of weapons and munitions that had all contributed heavily to Israel's ultimate battlefield success. The flow of U.S. arms continued and gradually shifted from an emergency airlift into a sustained seallift.⁴

Despite its success on the battlefield, Israel found itself diplomatically isolated and financially weakened after the conflict. Aside from Portugal allowing the use of the Azores for the U.S. airlift, America's NATO allies had refused to support Washington's backing of Israel and reeled from the calamitous economic effects wrought by the Arab oil embargo. The United States stood alone as Israel's strong ally, resisting global pressure for imposing a settlement on the Israelis that would force them to withdraw from territory occupied since the 1967 war in hopes of ending the oil embargo. The war had cost Israel the equivalent of an entire year of its gross national product and caused its foreign indebtedness to skyrocket, forcing Tel Aviv to rely on vast amounts of American financial and military aid. Aware of the Israeli dependency on Washington, Kissinger would use the supply of war materiel, economic aid, security guarantees, and U.S. mediation with Egypt and Syria as leverage to convince the Israelis that their safety would be better assured by ceding occupied territory than maintaining it. With the Egyptians and Syrians, Kissinger would use Israeli's U.S. dependency to show them that while Moscow could give arms, only Washington had the necessary influence to persuade Israel to relinquish territory. To ensure the Egyptians would not turn to Moscow again for war materiel, Kissinger used the promise of military assistance to support the negotiations, albeit at a far lower level than the vast assistance given to Israel. Any temporary military shortages from using such largesse as leverage, he reasoned, would be well worth the cost if the prize was the elimination of Soviet influence in the Middle East.⁵

The Cost of Disengagement

After the cease-fire, Tel Aviv worked determinedly to replace Israeli materiel losses but also to obtain a far larger stockpile of American military supplies than it had before the conflict. By securing military commitments beyond what was necessary to replace combat losses, the Israelis

sought to avoid finding themselves dependent on Washington for survival in war again. The losses from the fighting inflicted lasting trauma upon Israeli society. The Israelis had suffered 2,656 deaths, approximately three times more soldiers per capita in 19 days as the Americans had lost during the entire Vietnam War.⁶ Although Washington had intervened massively a week into the conflict when Israel's situation appeared grim, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir feared needed aid might come too late in a future war. After the battlefield situation had reversed in Israel's favor, moreover, Israeli leaders had found Kissinger's diplomatic approach overly restraining, preventing them from dealing the Syrians and Egyptians a humiliating military defeat. Such an outcome, Israeli leaders thought, might have quelled public anger that the nation had been caught by surprise and, by demonstrating to the Egyptians and Syrians the high cost of war, reestablish the prewar status quo.⁷ At a November 1, 1973, embassy dinner in Washington, with Kissinger in attendance, Meir outraged the secretary of state by remarking that Israel was a small country in a peculiar position where it could not afford to lose the war but was not allowed to win it, adding that sometimes, "Israel had more difficulty with her friends than she did with her enemies."⁸

When the WSAG met on November 2, the members were shocked that the Israelis berated Washington so soon after the American airlift had helped turn the conflict in their favor and while U.S. war materiel continued to pour into the country. Kissinger expressed outrage over Meir's comments, telling the group, "We did not go through four weeks of agony here to be hostage to a nation of two and a half million people." They would act in U.S. interests, he vowed, and would make the most of their strong diplomatic position in which "everyone is coming to us on their knees begging us for a settlement." He would seek to eliminate Soviet

influence, end the oil embargo, and ensure that the cease-fire endured until a gradual extrication of Arab and Israeli forces could be achieved.⁹

The most immediate concern for the group was the survival of the besieged Egyptian Third Army. Kissinger knew that any Israeli attempt to starve the army into submission threatened Soviet intervention and the renewal of bloodshed. Over the previous days, he had fended off recommendations from Schlesinger that Washington aid the trapped Egyptians by airlift.¹⁰ Kissinger would seek a diplomatic solution to the problem, persuading the Israelis to allow food and water to reach the besieged army under UN auspices. Yet Kissinger hoped to make use of Schlesinger's frustration with the Israelis. When Clements asked whether he and Schlesinger should go forward with their meeting that evening with Meir, Kissinger responded, "Yes, but be brutal." He wanted them to be tougher than him. "Then I can play the good guy." Clements, the Texas oil man who Kissinger and Schlesinger both suspected of favoring the Arabs, appeared to relish such an opportunity. "We can play that role," he said.¹¹

The defense secretary, however, refused to play along and instead was determined to give the Israelis no reason to view him as the main obstacle to aid. Israeli Ambassador Simcha Dinitz reported to Kissinger that the defense secretary's meeting with Meir had been "formal and cordial, nothing of substance." He had merely told the prime minister that Washington's ability to meet Israel's security requirements depended on "funding, availability, and national policy."¹² Schlesinger's military assistant recorded the secretary as telling Meir that resupply would depend on inventory and movement toward a settlement with the Arabs. Rather than act as the bad guy as Kissinger had wanted, Schlesinger redirected Israeli persuasion efforts back to the White House and State Department.¹³

Schlesinger, however, had been more explicit about the problems with resupplying Israel in a letter to Nixon the day before. He warned the effort had already depleted U.S. military stocks and weakened America's military capability relative to the Soviets, resulting in "the degradation of our conventional deterrent," which had been exacerbated by allies' refusal to assist with the airlift. The loss of critical materiel, he added, had aggravated existing shortages. Over \$825 million would be needed to replace the materiel delivered to Israel and more than \$2.2 billion to send what the Israelis had requested. Although he expected the Israelis would reimburse the cost of the weapons, the repayments would not cover the entire replacement costs and could leave Washington with a "significant financial debt" in the interim.¹⁴

Continuing large sales to Israel, Schlesinger warned, created graver problems, as the Pentagon would be forced to draw from active forces to meet Israel's resupply needs. The transfer of 34 F-4E aircraft had "brought Air Force assets to about six squadrons below authorized strength," he explained. The transfer of 172 M60 tanks from prepositioned stocks and war reserves in Europe reduced NATO's ability to mobilize against the Warsaw Pact by more than seven battalions. If Washington fulfilled the Israeli request for a thousand additional tanks, he cautioned, it could take 33 months to return the inventory to the October 6 level. The shipment of 105mm armor piercing tank gun ammunition lowered war reserves in Europe by 16 percent and the delivery of 81 TOW launchers reduced antitank combat capability depleting U.S. stocks by the equivalent of three battalions. The sale of 400 Maverick missiles cut the inventory by 49 percent and the transfer of eight CH-53 helicopters from the Marine Corps reduced the effectiveness of one of their six operational squadrons by half. The transfer of 46 A-4 aircraft cut the total naval inventory by 17 percent. Many of the transfers, he cautioned, were those "special items which we depend upon to give us the military edge over Soviet forces."¹⁵

To lessen the further depletion of U.S. stocks, Schlesinger dispatched military assessors to Israel to ensure an accurate accounting of Israeli losses, lest the Israelis exaggerate their needs. From October 28 to November 6, a Joint Chiefs of Staff evaluation team visited Israel and concluded that U.S. aid provided during the conflict had been essential to allowing the Israel Defense Forces to sustain a protracted war, which it defined as “more than 7–10 days.” The evaluators recommended providing Israel sufficient armor, artillery, and aircraft to deter potential adversaries for “the immediate time frame.” The team also advised additional M113 armored personnel carriers (APCs), assistance in establishing repair facilities for the M113s, military trucks to allow Israel to revert vehicles requisitioned during the war to civilian use, and larger stocks of mortar, as well as antitank and aerial munitions should be provided.¹⁶ On November 26, Schlesinger wrote to Representative Otto E. Passman (D-LA), chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Aid, describing the JCS team’s findings. He warned that because of heavy Soviet materiel shipments to Arabs, “it will probably be necessary to do more than simply replace Israel’s net losses (the \$1 billion in materiel already provided) in order to restore the military balance in the Middle East.” Although DoD continued to evaluate what would ultimately be needed to restore an arms balance to the region, he wrote, the department was “convinced” that all additional equipment could be provided within the \$2.2 billion emergency assistance legislation then requested by the president.¹⁷

Table 1. Major Materiel Items Provided to Israel as of 12 November 1973

	<u>Requests</u>	<u>Shipments</u>
F-4 Phantoms	80	40
A-4 Skyhawks	80	54
Tanks	1,000	200
M113 APCs	2,000	250
5-Ton Trucks	2,000	200
Sidewinder Air-to-Air Missiles	1,500	300
Chaparral Anti-Air Batteries	48	12
TOW Anti-Tank Launchers/Missiles	400/10,000	81/2,000

Source: Fact Sheet, “Major Materiel Items Provided to Israel as of 12 November 1973,” attached to ltr, SecDef to Rep. Otto Passman, 26 Nov 1973, folder Israel 091.3 (Nov) 1973, box 69, Acc 360-78-0001.

At the time Washington had fulfilled only a fraction of Israel’s sizable requests (see Table 1). Israeli leaders viewed the still largely unfulfilled weapon requests as merely immediate stopgap supplies and not the vast amount of new equipment they viewed as necessary for ensuring long-term Israeli security. On November 26, Ambassador Dinitz gave Maj. Gen. Gordon Sumner Jr., chair of OSD’s Middle East Task Group, a far more extensive list. This new request included advanced electronic warfare equipment for use against SAM sites, M113 APCs, M16 rifles, and ammunition for artillery, tanks, and small arms. The Israelis also requested the immediate fulfillment of Nixon’s promise to replace Israel’s wartime losses, which the JCS team visiting Israel had found to include 32 F-4s, 53 A-4s, and 369 tanks. With the additional requests, Israel’s total claimed needs amounted to \$2.75 billion by late November. At the time Washington had authorized just \$900 million.¹⁸

Schlesinger turned to the Middle East Task Force in the Office of International Strategic Affairs to make sense of Israel’s massive requests. The task force split equipment into four categories. Category I included those items that would give the Israelis “a significant escalatory capability,” that is, weapons using the latest U.S. technology and those still in the research and development stage, such as electronic countermeasures and air defense suppression. Washington

should refuse such requests, the group recommended, until intelligence justified their release. Category II included F-4s, A-4s, tanks, M113s, cluster bombs, Chaparral fire units, and M16 rifles. The group recommended retaining these Category II items, using them “as the major quid pro elements for negotiations with the Israelis.” Category III included items that could be delivered to the Israelis over time as part of an “anti-pressure package.” Category IV pertained to low-visibility items that, if furnished, would have little impact on U.S. forces and could be given to signal a continued interest to the Israeli Government and the Soviets. Schlesinger received these recommendations from ISA’s Middle East Task Force on November 28.¹⁹

The same day, however, the Israelis delivered yet another list that even further expanded their requests. They doubled their requests for 5-ton trucks and M113s, each from 2,000 to 4,000. Deputy Assistant Secretary (ISA) James Noyes wrote to Schlesinger’s military assistant, “The ante goes up so fast my head spins!” He asked, “Is it ‘on to the oil fields!’?”²⁰ Clements shared Noyes’s concern. That day he provided Kissinger with what he called “a starting point for thought and discussion.” Washington’s deliveries of aircraft had offset Israeli losses and resulted in qualitative improvements, as American Phantoms and Skyhawks replaced aging French Mysteres and Mirages. A combination of U.S. deliveries and captured Arab tanks, moreover, had allowed the Israelis to restore much of their armored force. The Israelis’ extensive requests, Clements wrote, suggested the Israelis planned to increase their fighter-bomber strength by one-third, tank force by 50 percent, armored personnel carriers by more than 60 percent, and self-propelled guns by more than 100 percent. Washington could support such goals, Clements advised, but only “if Israel makes significant withdrawals from the occupied territories” and if evidence suggested the Arabs were also increasing their own arms inventories. They must, he

wrote, be careful to give the Israelis enough to defend themselves without giving so much that they would have “an attractive offensive option.”²¹

The Israelis sought to calm defense officials by assuring them their weapons requests were purely for defense and deterrence. Before meeting with Clements on December 7 at the Pentagon (at the time, Schlesinger was meeting with his NATO counterparts in Brussels), Defense Minister Moshe Dayan complained to Kissinger that “we don’t get answers from the Pentagon. We put in orders, and they say that decision must be made on the political level.” Seeking to cast the Defense Department as out of sync with national policy, Kissinger assured Dayan, “You know our view as to the political necessity. We are not using the re-equipment of Israel to put pressure on you. You must have security as you move into negotiations. I will have to look into it.” With such assurances from Kissinger, Dayan pressed Clements to provide more weapons, telling the deputy secretary that his government had become alarmed by the quantity and excellent quality of Soviet equipment that remained in Arab hands. Like Schlesinger, Clements refused to allow the Defense Department to take the blame for not fulfilling Israeli requests. The deputy secretary agreed that Israel would need some new weapon systems. The “operative factors,” he said, would be political considerations tied to peace negotiations, and the president would decide the level of supplies provided. Ambassador Dinitz asked whether DoD could “make positive recommendations to the President.” Clements refused. Zvi Zur, Israeli assistant defense minister, then presented Clements with a list of Israel’s defense priorities: first, anti-SAM capabilities, stand-off munitions, and electronic countermeasures; second, APCs and helicopters to improve troop movements; and third, another 200 tanks delivered immediately plus authority to order 500 more from production. The deputy again stood firm, intimating that the White House rather than the Pentagon directed the resupply and stressed that such decisions

were “linked to the evolution of a positive political climate” in the Israeli-Egyptian disengagement talks and the impending peace conference at Geneva. Zur responded that “he was not happy in what he had heard.”²²

After the meeting Dayan and Dinitz reported to Kissinger that Clements had told him that the Defense Department was not holding up aid but that it was a political decision. “This is not a political decision,” Kissinger claimed. He then theatrically picked up the phone and told Scowcroft to “keep Clements out of the political area.” The Israelis could only make diplomatic progress, Kissinger said, by “increase[ing] our shipments to ensure their security.” He ordered Scowcroft “to get to Schlesinger to straighten things out.” Hanging up, he promised the Israelis, “We will get it done.” As Kissinger pressed the Israelis into territorial concessions, he used Clements as the bogeyman, warning that unless Israel ceded territory, he might not be able to fend off domestic and international pressure for siding with the Arabs to end the oil embargo. “You must understand,” he said, “it doesn’t take much here to put the forces headed by Clements in the driver’s seat. I’m playing for time. We’ve got to get this hysteria under control.” Clements, however, had forced Kissinger to make the decision on weapons. When the two spoke, Kissinger asked what Defense could do for the Israelis. Clements told him that DoD could offer the Israelis around 200 more tanks.²³

When Schlesinger met with Dayan after returning from Europe, he assured Dayan that Clements and Kissinger had agreed to, and went further than his deputy, in assuring the Israelis that the Pentagon would do whatever was necessary to support Israel. As many as 200 tanks would soon be delivered along with trucks and rifles, he said. Electronic countermeasures and laser-guided bombs would not, because such weapons either lacked the capabilities required by the Israelis or were in short supply. Responding to Israeli concerns about the vast resupply of

tanks and aircraft provided by the Soviet Union and its allies to Egypt and Syria since October 6, Schlesinger told Dayan that if the quantity of Soviet aid to Arab countries reached levels that threatened to destroy the strategic balance provided by the Israeli military's qualitative superiority, Washington would change its policy.²⁴

Schlesinger privately fumed about having to support Kissinger's diplomacy, but he did not want to be blamed for sabotaging it. After his meeting with Dayan, Schlesinger told Clements and ISA officials that Israel had suffered a significant strategic defeat in the October War, as the Arabs had proved capable of operating advanced ground equipment and fighting effectively. Venting his frustration with Kissinger's control over resupply, he said the policy was "too damned whimsical." He admitted, "I'm not sure I understand our resupply policy." He explained his thinking on being more amenable to giving materiel to Israel, saying that the DoD would not "withhold for rational reasons while [Kissinger] is giving it away for irrational reasons." Defense must give enough, he said, "so it's clear we won't screw them for petty reasons—only fuck them for major reasons."²⁵

The next day Schlesinger again expressed his frustration about calibrating aid to Israel according to Kissinger's whims, but he did not want to again give Kissinger the opportunity to tell the Israelis, or journalists, that the Pentagon was causing problems. Clements said that supplies should move only in direct relation to movement by Israel at the disengagement talks and Geneva. "We can't be naked about using leverage," Schlesinger said. Clements responded, "The president twice talked to me about this personally." Irritated, Schlesinger said that Nixon sometimes overstated his position and later softened it. The Israelis, he added, were "totally dependent on us, so we really don't need to hold back too much!" With the Watergate investigation increasingly consuming Nixon's attention, he could not count on the president

providing consistent guidance or overruling Kissinger. The next day Clements directed the shipment of 55 self-propelled howitzers, 40,000 M16s, and 500 5-ton trucks. An additional 1,100 5-ton trucks and 600 Sidewinder missiles would also be delivered after they had been overhauled.²⁶

Schlesinger's belief that Nixon would soften toward Israel proved correct. On December 24 the president instructed him to give the Israelis a "sweetener" before their election. Nixon thought Meir's Labor Party would be more flexible in negotiations than a right-wing government because it wanted to improve its electoral prospects. Later that afternoon Kissinger asked the defense secretary "to be able to hold up on deliveries in case they become difficult ... [and] just make it look like we're being forthcoming." Immediately afterward, Schlesinger informed Ambassador Dinitz that 200 tanks and 100 M113 APCs would be drawn from U.S. stocks and shipped to Israel. More items—TOWs, Chaparrals, Hawks, M16s—would come from future production. Dinitz said the APCs were what "we really need." Agreeing, Schlesinger said the production line must be restarted.²⁷

Dayan returned to Washington in early January 1974, seeking to set up a long-term supply arrangement, which, Kissinger told Schlesinger on January 4, the president also wanted. Kissinger explained that it would be helpful for his diplomacy, and he thought "we will have less trouble from the Arabs if we do it clearly related to getting them to make concessions." Schlesinger agreed but said there were "certain advanced items we just don't have in our inventory." When he met with Dayan, the Israeli defense minister pled for expedited arms deliveries. The United States, Schlesinger responded, lacked reserve supplies for foreign countries. The U.S. military had even depleted some of its own inventories to provide emergency aid. Unmoved, Dayan replied that the United States "could perhaps take a certain risk at present

that Israel could not afford and,” and asked that DoD provide “one more gesture” in support of Israel. Schlesinger responded that the Israelis must work with DoD representatives to ensure their needs were met by the remaining \$200 million of the emergency assistance already authorized by Congress and on a second package of \$700 million that was part of a \$2.2 billion appropriation the administration would submit to Congress when it reconvened. Turning to Israel’s specific requests, the defense secretary said providing A-4s and helicopters posed no problem in principle, though the United States would need helicopters to help Egypt clear mines from the Suez Canal after the Israelis withdrew from the east bank. Supplying additional F-4s, however, “needed to be handled with some delicacy because of its symbolism to the Arabs.” The F-4 was then the most advanced fighter-bomber in service in the Israeli Air Force, and Washington’s willingness to continue providing it assured the IAF’s sustained supremacy. He said, however, it might be possible to increase the monthly purchase of F-4s from one to two. Schlesinger cautioned that delivering more M16s by air might also rankle the American public, which he told Dayan had become sensitive about fuel consumption by the oil embargo. While the United States would hold in abeyance the Israeli agreement in principle to repay the United States for the fuel, Washington would have to declare an Israeli intention to repay if the fuel issue came under public scrutiny.²⁸

Dayan had brought with him to Washington a proposal, preapproved by the Israeli cabinet, for separating Egyptian and Israeli forces by creating a 10-kilometer demilitarized zone manned by a UN force, flanked by limited-force zones on both sides. In exchange for the Israelis agreeing to withdraw their forces to 30 miles east of the Suez Canal, the Israelis would require an Egyptian commitment to non-belligerency and a long-term arms supply understanding with Washington. Viewing the Israeli proposal as a diplomatic opening, Kissinger began a series of

back-and-forth flights between Israel and Egypt, in what became known as shuttle diplomacy.²⁹ During these trips he frequently held out the carrot of military aid packages, which proved extraordinarily successful in motivating the Israelis and Egyptians to sign a disengagement agreement in January, with Kissinger acting as mediator.³⁰

As Kissinger's international and domestic standing reached new heights, Schlesinger maintained his approach of not appearing to be an obstacle to aid to Israel, even as the Israelis began presenting U.S. officials with massive longer-term requests. On March 8 Schlesinger met with Maj. Gen. Binyamin Peled, commander of the Israeli Air Force. Stressing the need for better battlefield surveillance, Peled said he wanted a system capable of supplying near "real time" intelligence." He told Schlesinger that by 1982, he wanted a force of 160 A-4s, 110 F-4s, one or two squadrons of F-14 or F-15 air superiority fighters, and 50 to 80 lightweight fighters (ultimately, F-16s). Agreeing, Schlesinger said, "I don't see any inherent problems in what you're talking about."³¹

Schlesinger, however, walked a fine line of appearing forthcoming in talks with the Israelis without promising weapons that might threaten the strategic balance in the Middle East or deplete U.S. inventories. On April 1, he met with Dayan, who described the Syrian front as "unstable" and pled for another 200 tanks and 500 APCs. Dayan had met with Kissinger two days before. Even though Schlesinger had carefully coordinated his responses to Israel's arms requests with the secretary of state, Kissinger pointed to Defense as being obstructionist, preventing the Israelis from getting the tanks and APCs they needed. While Dayan was in the room, Kissinger called Haig, theatrically telling him to put pressure on Defense to give Dayan something to take back to Israel "because that will help us with subsequent talks." He also spoke with Schlesinger, who was vacationing in Bermuda, by phone while Dayan remained in the

room, telling the defense secretary that when he met with the Israeli defense minister the following Monday, he wanted him to give Dayan something to take with him back to Israel. “We are counting very much on Dayan’s support.... The more he can be strengthened, the better it will be.” Schlesinger responded, “OK, we shall attempt to strengthen him.” After getting off the phone, Kissinger warned Dayan and Dinitz, “Don’t be fooled by what these guys (defense officials) say.” By again casting Schlesinger as his obstructionist foil, Kissinger attempted to establish a quid pro quo with Dayan in which he would pressure the Pentagon to move in exchange for Israeli territorial concessions on the Golan Heights.³²

When they met on April 1, Schlesinger responded to Dayan’s request by saying that while the United States “wanted to be forthcoming” in responding to Israel’s requests, shortfalls in U.S. stocks and procurement programs posed problems. American prepositioned assets in Germany, he continued, had already been depleted by prior transfers. Frustrated and emboldened by his earlier conversation with Kissinger, Dayan responded that “the Syrians won’t wait.” Israel would strike preemptively, he warned, if Washington refused to give more armor. “If you can’t give us the 200 tanks now, it will give us problems; we will solve them but the solution may not be to either of our liking.” Schlesinger responded calmly to the threat, saying that the Pentagon would “do its best to meet IDF requirements,” and asked Dayan to “take note of DoD’s intentions and good will in this matter.” Ambassador Dinitz quoted Kissinger as saying that there was no longer any political hindrance to furnishing laser-guided bombs. Major General Wickham, Schlesinger’s military assistant, responded that he and Kissinger’s deputy, Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, had mentioned them only as a possibility. Such weapons, Deputy ASD(ISA) Vice Adm. Raymond Peet added, were not in stock and could not be provided before 1975 or 1976. Expecting to acquire F-15s, the Israelis wanted to open talks with the Air Force and U.S.

aerospace manufacturer McDonnell Douglas Corporation. Clements approved approaching the former but not the latter because pricing negotiations were about to begin. The Israelis also asked for a loan of two Cobra helicopter gunships, then the premier U.S. attack helicopter. Noting that the Jordanians had also requested Cobras, Schlesinger warned about “opening Pandora’s box” by introducing them into the region. The Israelis, Dayan mused, might not want the Cobras after trying them out and would then recommend the Jordanians get them. Schlesinger promised to look closely at what might be taken out of West Germany to meet Israel’s needs.³³

That evening Clements conferred with Army Chief of Staff General Creighton Abrams about the new Israeli requests. Taking 200 tanks and 500 APCs from Europe, Abrams warned, would lower the tank reserve to 40 percent of the authorized level and APCs to 50 percent. Authorized to stock 1,460 tanks, U.S. Army Europe was already short by 638 tanks. To cope with such a depletion, he recommended accelerating tank production to 83 per month and expanding APC manufacturing to a two-shift production schedule. Promising to press manufacturers to accelerate production, Clements approved the shipment of the tanks and APCs from Europe to Israel in hopes of deterring a major Syrian attack.³⁴

By spring 1974 Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy achieved several critical breakthroughs that significantly reduced Arab-Israeli tensions. After turning away from Moscow, Sadat sought and received Western assistance for clearing the Suez Canal of mines. Task Force 65, comprising American, French, Canadian, and Egyptian forces under an American commander, began helicopter minesweeping and ordnance disposal. Seeking to separate Israeli and Syrian forces on the Golan Heights, Kissinger shuttled between Israel and Syria for 34 days. On May 31 the two countries agreed to a narrow area of separation on the Golan, flanked by areas of restricted forces. Several days later Yitzhak Rabin succeeded Golda Meir as prime minister, largely

because of public anger over the government's failure to anticipate and adequately prepare for the Egyptian and Syrian attacks on Yom Kippur. Shimon Peres succeeded Moshe Dayan as defense minister. The new Israeli leaders would cause Kissinger considerable consternation in the months ahead.³⁵

The relationship between Kissinger and Schlesinger, never warm, soured considerably in June 1974. The secretary of state then faced public accusations of lying under oath about his role in wiretapping his aides.³⁶ At a June 5 House hearing on foreign assistance for FY 1975, Schlesinger was asked whether he had been consulted about a promise Kissinger had reportedly made to Meir that Washington would provide Israel with "consistent aid ... for the future." Schlesinger implied that he had been left in the dark about such promises, saying he had "no knowledge of what the precise program is that Dr. Kissinger may have discussed with the Israelis." He attempted to backpedal, saying that he had "no knowledge that such assurances were given" but was "sure no firm commitments would be entered into without consultation with this committee and the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate."³⁷ Enraged, Kissinger called Schlesinger at home, telling him that he was "reading the ticker tape all about how you were not consulted on commitments made to Golda Meir." Kissinger said he did not want to talk about the "substance" but rather the "ethics" of the situation. Schlesinger fired back: "Henry, I doubt you are able to instruct anyone on ethics" and hung up. Schlesinger's frustration with acting as Kissinger's arms dealer had begun to boil over, especially as it was difficult to follow the often-subtle twists and sometimes duplicitous maneuverings of the secretary of state. He told his staff the next morning, "on occasion Kissinger just lies. His technique is to deceive each group in a different way." He added that there were "three different levels of secret commitments in all these negotiations." Two weeks later at breakfast, Kissinger said that the two must agree on

principles, as the government, then besieged by Watergate, could not stand constant fights between State and Defense. Schlesinger, however, remained frustrated that Kissinger continued to use critical war materiel as diplomatic leverage.³⁸

Nixon, however, had no desire to restrain Kissinger, whose diplomatic success in the Middle East had been the one bright spot for the administration in an otherwise bleak period. Nixon visited Middle Eastern capitals in June to reap the political benefits of that success in a futile attempt to divert domestic attention away from Watergate and toward his administration's achievement in reaching two major Arab-Israeli agreements. Nixon became the first sitting U.S. president to visit Israel. While meeting with Rabin, the president said that though Washington would continue to provide Israel with economic and military aid, he expected Israeli flexibility in negotiations. Rabin presented Nixon with a massive 10-year plan for rebuilding the Israeli military, referred to as "Matmon-B" (*matmon* is Hebrew for "treasure"). A separate "Urgent List" itemized the equipment Israel wanted by 1975. After Rabin made these requests, the Pentagon's incentive for shaping the administration's policy toward Israel grew dramatically because the United States' response would impact U.S. defense policy and production for the following decade.³⁹ Washington estimated that Matmon-B would cost Israel \$2.5 billion and the United States \$1.5 billion, annually. The extensive Matmon-B requests included: 50 F-14s or F-15s by 1979, 250 lightweight fighters (F-16s or F-17s) from 1979 to 1983, 1,000 M60A3 tanks (the latest model) by 1979, and an additional 1,200 from 1979 to 1983, 3,000 M113 APCs by 1979, 2,000 mechanized infantry combat vehicles from 1979 to 1983, and four Lance missile battalions with an additional two from 1979 to 1983.⁴⁰

Schlesinger's and Clements' immediate reaction was to push back against Israeli aid requests when they reviewed Matmon-B with Defense Minister Peres and Ambassador Dinitz on

June 25. Clements observed that \$1.5 billion in yearly grant aid equated to \$600 given by each American to each Israeli, “while the Defense requirement for our own country is only \$400 per capita.” Peres countered by pointing out the size of Israel’s enemies, who in the next five or ten years could have 1.8 million men under arms with 3,500 aircraft and 10,000 tanks. Cobra helicopters with forward-looking infrared radar (FLIR), Peres said, would prove effective against terrorist infiltration. Schlesinger responded that the Israelis were now presenting “a different rationale than we heard before” for the Cobras, which was previously discussed in the context of the regional strategic balance. These helicopters, he warned, would be “destabilizing in the area.” The Redeye missiles were also sensitive, he said, “not necessarily because of Israel,” but because Washington had been urging the Soviets to “behave responsibly” in distributing similar systems. Schlesinger’s overriding concern with providing these advanced weapons was that they were protected from foreign espionage. Peres promised that the Israelis would use every precaution to protect the systems from compromise. For long-term support the Israelis sought a one to three ratio of weapons against Arab states. From the U.S. standpoint, Schlesinger said, availability presented the main short-term problem while funding would be the most challenging long-range challenge. The defense secretary and his deputy had concluded that the Israelis were presenting worst-case scenarios as a negotiation tactic. As the meeting ended, Clements said he did not think another war was as likely as the Israelis predicted.⁴¹

Schlesinger then turned to ISA for analysis of Matmon-B. Assistant Secretary (ISA) Robert Ellsworth responded on July 10, writing that the request was “nothing short of staggering.” He acknowledged that approval of Matmon-B would result in a rational procurement schedule, greater Israeli self-sufficiency, and an increased degree of technology transfer, each of which had advantages. Yet by providing the Israelis such self-sufficiency,

Washington would lose influence rather than gain it. “Surely it is illusory,” he wrote, “to imagine that the Executive Branch, by tying Israel to a multitude of DoD-related contracts and commitments, would have achieved greater leverage in a situation where we had a public falling out with the Government of Israel over a policy crunch.” Rather, by agreeing to such a plan, Washington would give Israel greater leverage, as “when, in addition to its traditional supporters, a multitude of industrial interest would have been joined to the outcry about ‘pressure’ and the ‘sanctity of contracts’ vis-à-vis Israel.” Schlesinger endorsed Ellsworth’s recommendation to subject long-term assistance to full-scale interdepartmental review.⁴²

Before any review of Matmon-B was able to start, however, the Israelis presented another request. At the Pentagon on July 23, 1974, Ambassador Dinitz and Assistant Defense Minister Maj. Gen. Mordechai Hod, presented Schlesinger with a revised urgent list, which included items from Matmon-B they now wanted by April 1, 1975. The list included 34 F-4Es, 100 M60s, 603 M113s, 25 Cobra gunships, one Lance battalion, and 2,000 Redeyes, valuing approximately \$950 million with nearly half already under contract. In justifying the request, Dinitz forecast that Syria would demand further Israeli withdrawals from the Golan Heights in spring 1975, thus increasing the chances of conflict. How, Schlesinger asked, could the Syrians risk war without Soviet backing? “The Soviets want to recoup their place in the Middle East,” Dinitz replied, “and do not want to make the same mistake in Syria that they did in Egypt.” If major conflict with Syria broke out again, “it would be difficult for Jordan and Egypt to stand by idly.” Unconvinced and frustrated that the Israelis were asking for resources from U.S. forces, Schlesinger asked why the Soviets would “push all their chips in the center of the table? Why would next Spring so particularly suit Soviet timing?” He then offered two possible models of Soviet conduct for consideration. First, he said, the Soviets value détente and though they “are willing to temporize

with détente,” as they had during the October War, they were “probably not willing to severely jeopardize it.” Second, the Soviets’ power position had “improved so greatly that they can afford to play cat and mouse.” If the latter theory guided Soviet policy, he did not see why Moscow would select only the Middle East.⁴³

When Schlesinger conferred with Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon on July 31, the Israelis had placed tanks and air munitions at the top of their Urgent List. The secretary suggested that rather than the M60 tanks, the Israelis might instead accept older M48s upgraded with diesel engines and 105mm guns. Major General Sumner, ISA director of the Near East and South Asia Region, explained that providing the M60s might divert production intended to replenish U.S. Army stocks. Allon responded that Americans “should look upon Israel as an ally even if we have no formal treaty.” The Americans, Allon was implying, should view materiel sent to Israel as bolstering U.S. conventional deterrence rather than diminishing it. “The Arabs have thousands of tanks,” he added, “and there seems to be no problem with Soviet tank production.” When Allon brought up the request for Cobra gunships, the secretary promised to revisit it “most sympathetically,” which Allon said he took to mean “a diplomatic yes.” Afterward, Schlesinger directed that 200 M48s be drawn from whatever source appeared most appropriate and that “consideration be given” to making Cobras and Redeyes available. Schlesinger, however, first needed Nixon’s approval.⁴⁴

In what would be the final week of Nixon’s presidency, Kissinger and Schlesinger would seek to placate the Israelis without dramatically altering the regional strategic balance. They both understood that Nixon was far too distracted by Watergate to focus much attention to the problem. Kissinger called White House Chief of Staff Al Haig, then seeking to keep the crumbling administration together, and told him, “There is a huge shopping list here. I would like

Allon to go back with just enough, so he got something, but not enough to make any difference.” Kissinger asked if he should get Nixon’s approval. Haig said he would talk with the president “and see if he can focus on a report from you.” When Kissinger spoke with Nixon, the president reluctantly gave his general approval: “I think we should keep a tight string on them but if you think this is right, OK.” The president, however, appeared to lack general awareness of the scope of the Israeli request. Nixon’s efforts to save his doomed presidency came to an end on August 9, 1974.⁴⁵

Ford’s ascension to the presidency initially offered the defense secretary hope that DoD’s concerns about aid to Israel would be taken seriously by the White House. At Ford’s first National Security Council meeting the day after Nixon’s resignation, Schlesinger urged the new president to focus on armament policy toward Israel, telling the president he might soon have to decide how to respond to Matmon-B. “The pressure on Defense is extremely great,” he said, “and they will be putting great pressure on Congress as well.” The Israelis, Schlesinger added, were concerned war might break out soon and were making urgent requests for the immediate delivery of weapons that would need to be taken from U.S. forces, which would degrade their readiness. Ford asked if the Israelis understood that the United States would have to weaken its own forces to support Israel. “Yes,” the defense secretary responded, “but they consider their needs take priority.” “That certainly is an unselfish attitude,” Ford said. Through National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 207, issued that day, Ford directed an ad hoc NSC group to review and assess Matmon-B. A representative of the defense secretary would chair an interagency group that would assess the Israeli aid requests and their implications for the peace process, U.S. foreign policy, defense production, and U.S. military readiness.⁴⁶

With the NSC assessment underway, Schlesinger sought to appear accommodating without actually giving much when discussing Matmon-B and the Urgent List with Ambassador Dinitz and General Hod on August 14. Beforehand, Assistant Secretary Ellsworth advised Schlesinger that Israel, having already received a massive number of supplies, was gaining greater political maneuverability, “having obtained the quid without conceding a discernable quo.” He observed that while Israel’s appetite for military supplies appeared to be “insatiable,” all grants and credits had been committed.⁴⁷ When Dinitz asked that Washington expedite its reply to Matmon-B and have answers ready by the end of the year, Schlesinger responded that the requests were “understandable” and “we would undertake to accomplish them.” The administration had agreed to provide older M48A1s with gasoline engines. Dinitz asked for diesel M48A3s instead. Schlesinger proposed refitting M48A1s with diesels. Such a process, Hod noted, would take 18 months. Schlesinger refused to budge, saying that while he understood it would be a long lead time, he hoped it would cause the Israelis to better understand America’s own lead time challenges with production. He promised six Cobras initially with more to follow. He sought to head off more Israeli requests for Redeyes, saying that the missiles already provided had drawn down the U.S. inventory. Undeterred, Hod asked about ordering more from production, perhaps in a modified export version. Schlesinger agreed that “this was a good suggestion.” When Dinitz asked about the Cluster Bomb Unit (CBU-) 72 fuel-air explosive munition, General Sumner warned, “this weapon was problematic and its release involved significant political overtones.” The Israelis had requested the weapon for clearing minefields, but the weapon had been condemned internationally as being cruel and inhumane when used against personnel.⁴⁸

Schlesinger's reluctance to fulfill the Israelis' extensive requests was shared by the NSC group's response to NSSM 207. The group's draft report, circulated on August 27, argued the U.S. response to Matmon-B and the Urgent List should relate to the peace process and significantly influence Israel's willingness to return to the Geneva peace talks and the positions it would take there. To fulfill Matmon-B entirely would substantially impact defense planning, including consuming a significant portion of U.S. defense production capacity through 1977 but, as the report acknowledged, would also decrease U.S. unit costs and keep certain production bases warm. The group calculated that Matmon-B would entail a five-fold increase in military assistance funding over recent levels, not including the \$2.2 billion emergency appropriation linked to the October War. Israel, the report stated, was presenting the worst-case scenario to justify its requirements in a quest for an unreasonable and unobtainable level of security. The group recommended Washington instead offer the Israelis more limited military support that would meet its essential needs.⁴⁹

Defense officials had become alarmed by the detrimental effects the aid had on U.S. readiness. At an August 30 NSC Senior Review Group meeting on NSSM 207, Clements and Ellsworth stressed their concerns about the size of the Israeli request and demanded clarity from Kissinger on what he hoped to achieve. Ellsworth exclaimed that the resupply "program represents 40% of their GNP!" Kissinger said he did not want "endless nit-picking on the request." He wanted to provide the president with a clear presentation of the implications of Matmon-B and the Urgent List to allow him to make the decision. Clements told Kissinger that Defense needed "to know what you want to do. We need some guidance from you on this thing. If you'll tell us what you want to do, then we can go from there. We intend to back you to the hilt." Kissinger explained that he needed to know what of the Urgent List could be delivered to

the Israelis. Clements responded that it would be “impossible to get it to them by April as they have asked. It’s just impossible.” “You can if you want to take it away from our own forces,” Kissinger responded, seemingly indifferent to the impact on defense readiness. “No, you can’t,” Clements said, “because some of it doesn’t even exist.”⁵⁰

Clements shared with the group DoD’s assessment that the Israelis wanted a large weapons stockpile to ensure they did not face supply crisis and had to depend on Washington if war broke out again. “Well, if this is true,” Kissinger said, “it has profound political implications.” The deputy defense secretary warned that fulfilling the Israelis requests would erode his diplomatic leverage in any future conflict. Kissinger agreed but said they must assess whether the Israelis faced a genuine threat of war or were simply stockpiling. “You need to tell us,” Ellsworth said. “How do you perceive the threat?” Kissinger thought there would not be war in 1974 but “I think there is a 50-50 chance of renewed hostilities in 1975. I think there is a high potential for Syrian action by the middle of 1975.” He thought they should tie the \$1 billion package for responding to the Urgent List to the negotiations. “Absolutely!” Clements exclaimed. After it had become clear the group unanimously rejected fulfilling Matmon-B fully, Kissinger said that the president needed to know whether Washington should fulfill any part of the large request. “Henry, I think all of us here favor implementation of the plan in one form or another to help you in your diplomatic efforts,” Clements said, but “we ... want to do the most we can for the Israelis without putting our own forces in jeopardy.” The president would not abandon Israel, Kissinger replied, and was committed to its security. Kissinger had tired of the deputy defense secretary’s attempt to limit his leverage. Turning to Clements, Kissinger said that if in the President’s judgment the Israelis need the equipment, “you’ll break your back to see that they get it.” “Absolutely,” Clements said.⁵¹

Schlesinger had fully endorsed ISA recommendations against fulfilling Matmon-B. The Israelis, he believed, could already defeat the Arabs decisively. By providing the Israelis with everything asked for in Matmon-B and the Urgent List, Washington would provide them with the capacity to attack Arab forces preemptively and achieve a decisive victory like the one attained in the 1967 war. The Israelis would be free to block progress on peace talks. Despite Israel's massive requests, the Israelis had refused further withdrawals on the Golan Heights, as Washington wanted. In such circumstances, Schlesinger concluded, further large arms commitments only damaged Washington's position as mediator and increased the chances for war. Thus, he endorsed Ellsworth's recommendation to seek postponement of discussions over Matmon-B and for fulfillment of the Urgent List to be confined to \$164 million worth of items that included 55 M60 tanks, 100 M113 APCs, 200 Redeyes, and 80,000 M16 rifles.⁵²

Ford's growing frustration with the Israelis strengthened the Defense Department's position against fulfilling Matmon-B. On September 10 the president met with Rabin for the first time, a meeting Kissinger described "as close to a disaster as the realities of domestic politics in either country would permit." After the president had promised to meet the Urgent List's priorities to cover the next two years, the Israeli prime minister asked, according to Kissinger, "How many times are we supposed to express appreciation for the same thing."⁵³ Rabin vented his frustration with the defense secretary, who had gone to great lengths to redirect the Israelis back to the president and Kissinger to resolve major weapons questions. "The trouble with Schlesinger," Rabin said, "is he always has to get a new instruction before he can move. We haven't even asked for anything new. I wouldn't deny we are disappointed with him." Ford responded by saying that everyone in the administration was "committed to the survival and security of Israel."⁵⁴ Kissinger spoke with Schlesinger the next day and told him that Rabin had

been “nasty.” The president, he said, would fully support Schlesinger resisting Rabin’s requests.⁵⁵

Later that day at the Pentagon, Rabin complained to Schlesinger that, except for two items, Israel had received no answer to its requests. Because he saw no indication that the Arabs were prepared to make peace with Israel, the prime minister said Israel must be strong enough to offset Soviet arms shipments to Syria before it could enter negotiations. The president, Schlesinger replied, had already approved a long-term commitment “in basic principle.” Ford had specifically agreed to supply 200 diesel M48A3 tanks instead of gasoline M48A1s. Schlesinger confirmed the president’s decision to provide Lance missiles but he held back on laser-guided bombs and cluster bomb units.⁵⁶

The decision regarding the Lance system had been controversial within the Pentagon. Donald R. Cotter, the assistant to the secretary of defense (atomic energy), objected, writing to Schlesinger in mid-August that the system was too costly, alternatives were available, and “Lance is characterized as being a nuclear delivery vehicle.”⁵⁷ Cotter acknowledged, however, that the Soviets had provided short-range artillery rocket systems (FROGs) and tactical ballistic missile systems (SCUDs) to the Arab nations, which could also be armed with nuclear warheads. Ellsworth viewed Cotter’s recommendation for an alternative system “as food for thought” but believed the Israelis would still want the Lance, because its 44-mile range (when armed with a nonnuclear warhead) provided a better deterrent against SCUDs and FROGs than the shorter-range (nearly 14 miles) laser-guided “smart surface-to-surface rocket” that Cotter proposed as an alternative. He warned Schlesinger that a nonnuclear warhead for Lance would not be available until the following year [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Nevertheless, Ford

decided to provide the Israelis with the weapon to counter the Soviet-supplied SCUDs and FROGs, and on August 20 Clements approved transferring one Lance missile battalion (108 missiles) to the Israelis by July 1975 with three more to follow from normal production.⁵⁸

Ford went beyond Schlesinger's recommendations in Israeli aid. The Defense Department put together seven options for responding to Israel's Urgent List, with projected costs ranging from \$62 million to \$950 million. On September 24 Ford agreed to provide items worth \$207 million, including 100 M60s, 300 M113s, 1,082 Redeyes, and 80,000 M16s by April 1, 1975, with credit guarantees supplying the necessary funding. Ford also approved on principle the provision of a limited number of laser-guided bombs along with designators that would illuminate targets.⁵⁹

As Kissinger began another round of shuttle diplomacy in early October, he hoped to manipulate weapon deliveries to gain leverage with the Israelis, preclude Israeli weapons stockpiling, and prevent Tel Aviv from considering a preemptive war. According to Ellsworth, Kissinger asked DoD to identify "those items the delivery of which may be manipulated as a means of influencing GOI (the Government of Israel) actions and attitudes in the Middle East negotiating process." Kissinger wanted to "be able to delay or stretch out deliveries." Ellsworth saw several difficulties with this approach. He advised Clements, in a memo that Schlesinger would also read, that the Israelis had already replaced materiel losses and had increased their weapon stockpiles beyond what they had at the outset of the October War. At the beginning of the war, the Israelis had 1,990 tanks compared with 2,530 by October 1974, 381 attack aircraft compared with 408, and 785 artillery pieces compared with 1,045. Israel was thus "undoubtedly already capable of a successful preemptive strike." Manipulation would only forestall preemptive war if the Israelis became concerned that Washington's delays increased the likelihood of higher

battlefield casualties. Ellsworth also warned Clements that the logistics involved in arms shipments would render large shipment modifications difficult and precise adjustment impossible. Relying on Ellsworth's recommendations, Clements warned Ford and Kissinger at an October 18 NSC meeting, "There is no question but that the capability of the Israelis to preempt already exists. We cannot squeeze them to their limit."⁶⁰

Kissinger, however, believed the months from November to January would be critical for persuading the Israelis to make territorial concessions, and Ellsworth believed the delivery of the Lance system could be delayed in support of Kissinger's diplomacy. Because Washington had not yet given the Israelis a firm commitment, the Lance delivery could be manipulated "by delaying reply as to availability date (whole planning to meet earliest possible schedule) or deliberately choosing later date less disruptive to DoD planning, deployment schedules and production." On October 29, the White House decided to postpone action on Lance, and, Scowcroft told defense officials, to tell the Israelis there were "technical production problems."⁶¹

Stalemate and Reassessment

The prospects for lasting peace declined after Arab heads of state declared on October 28 the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." A West Bank settlement would now have to be negotiated with the PLO rather than Jordan, and the Israelis refused to deal with a group they considered terrorists. With diplomacy faltering, JCS Chairman Brown worried that renewed fighting would soon begin. In a November 5 letter to Schlesinger, he identified the continued flow of Arab oil and the preservation of Israel as America's two vital interests. He recommended that Washington inform the Soviets that the United States would act to defend these interests in another war but that U.S. support would be

limited to enabling Israel to survive without humiliating the Arabs. Clements discussed this with Brown in detail. Schlesinger directed the Defense Department to give “priority attention” to the Middle East.⁶²

Schlesinger continued to obfuscate when meeting with the Israelis, seeking to abide by the administration’s approach without making himself a target of Israeli frustration. On October 31, and again on November 15, Ambassador Dinitz pressed Schlesinger for action on the Urgent List. The secretary said that DoD was exploring ways to meet Israel’s Lance requirement. According to his military assistant’s notes, he discussed laser-guided bombs “in a rather vague manner.” When Dinitz asked about pricing and the availability of F-14s and F-15s, Schlesinger promised rough estimates as soon as possible. Following the meeting, Kissinger instructed for deliveries to arrive after February 1 to avoid them appearing as “receipts for negotiations.”⁶³

The Israelis kept the pressure on the Pentagon by attempting to convince defense officials that they were simply asking for what Kissinger had already promised them. On January 6, 1975, the Israeli defense attaché told Major General Sumner that Matmon-B had been provided “as the result of a political understanding with the U.S.” Sumner responded that he knew of no such understanding and thought Matmon-B had been “volunteered” by Israel. At the Pentagon the next day, Dinitz pressed Schlesinger for action. The defense secretary assured him that all items on the Urgent List would be furnished by April 1, but he had not, he explained, received direction from the White House about how to proceed on Matmon-B. Dinitz said he would raise the matter with Kissinger and Ford. After the formal meeting, Dinitz expressed his “exasperation” privately with Schlesinger over the absence of a firm delivery schedule of 20 designators for laser-guided bombs. White House sources, Dinitz claimed, had assured him that

these would be delivered. Schlesinger, however, later discovered that no such assurances had been given.⁶⁴

A diplomatic impasse postponed any further action. Ford and Kissinger were eager to accomplish "Sinai II," the next phase of Egyptian-Israeli disengagement. Before his March trip to the region to mediate movement toward this next step, Kissinger revealed to Schlesinger his pessimism about the Israeli Government's willingness to compromise, saying that Rabin's strategy was to trade a willingness to talk for military equipment, then after receiving the equipment, stall the talks.⁶⁵ The Israelis required a formal statement of non-belligerency from Egypt in exchange for withdrawing from the Giddi and Mitla passes, the strategically vital gateways through Sinai, as well as the Abu Rudeis oil field, which provided Israel with 60 percent of its oil but was nearing depletion in 1973.⁶⁶ Sadat insisted, however, that the Israelis evacuate all Egyptian territory. Kissinger's March 7 to 22 shuttle diplomacy failed to achieve a compromise. Sadat was willing to renounce the use of force, but Israeli negotiators haggled over the exact points of demarcation in both passes before finally offering an ill-defined "middle."⁶⁷ Ford blamed the Israelis for the impasse and conveyed his deep disappointment to Rabin in a March 21, 1975, confidential letter informing Rabin, somewhat ominously, that he would reassess U.S. policy toward the Middle East, including toward Israel. The warning failed to sway the Israeli Government. Furious with Rabin's obstinacy and dejected that the Israelis might reverse progress toward peace, Kissinger gave emotional final remarks on the tarmac of Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv. After declaring his trip a failure, he said, "We have no other goal except to enable the young people in this area to grow up without the fear of war."⁶⁸

Ford's letter to Rabin leaked as Kissinger flew back to Washington, infuriating Ford, who concluded the Israelis were trying to put domestic political pressure on him. Refusing to yield, he

continued to speak of a reassessment when briefing congressional leadership on March 24 and March 26, 1975. Ford followed through on his threat by ordering an interagency study of U.S. interests, objectives, strategy, and policy in the Middle East considering recent developments and another to study to review bilateral relations with the region's principal countries. Later recalling his frustration with the Israelis in his memoir, Ford wrote, "Their tactics frustrated the Egyptians and made me mad as hell."⁶⁹

At a March 28 NSC meeting, Ford discussed with his national security team the administration's approach to the reassessment. "The time has come for a hard look," he said. "We could have been together but now I do not know." Kissinger said the main issue was whether Washington could satisfy moderate Arabs by delivering another agreement, and so keep the Soviets "completely out of the game." Another war would be a catastrophe, he warned, resulting in far greater Israeli casualties than the October War, the involvement of more Arab countries, and a greater risk of direct Soviet intervention. The reassessment would allow Washington to avoid such an outcome, keeping "the immediate situation under control and then recapture control of the long-term situation." Schlesinger, who surprised Kissinger by endorsing his approach, suggested that the U.S. attitude toward Israel "be one of dignified aloofness." Unable to resist throwing a thinly veiled barb at Kissinger, the defense secretary added, "There should not be full policy coordination with Israel as in the past." He continued, "We cannot let them conclude they can upset the U.S. applecart, but the administration can do nothing about it."⁷⁰ Washington, he said, had badly overestimated the extent of Soviet arms supplies for Egypt, "so the balance for Israel is reasonably favorable and we need not be concerned over our aloofness."⁷¹

Ford liked Schlesinger's idea. He told Schlesinger that the Pentagon should delay movement on the F-15 by "hold[ing] up the visit by the Israeli team which was coming to make an assessment." He recommended the departments attempt to prevent Israeli representatives from operating freely in the executive departments. Schlesinger warned, "We have both overt and covert Israeli representatives. It is very difficult to handle." The departments should do what they could to "channelize the relationships with Israeli representatives," Ford said.⁷²

Ford then turned to Israel's expansive materiel requests, asking Schlesinger, "What did we do about that Israeli shopping list last fall?" Kissinger interjected, saying that Israel had already received far more than the NSC staff recommended. Ford agreed, saying that he had agreed to Lance and the laser-guided bombs "because I thought they needed it" but admitted that, in hindsight, he had been too generous. He told Schlesinger to hold back, if possible, deliveries of high-end items. When Schlesinger warned that they had a commitment on Lance, Vice President Nelson Rockefeller snapped, "I thought they had a commitment, too, on negotiations." Clements recommended prolonging Lance training to delay transfer. "Stay within the guidelines," Ford advised. "How you implement it is your business." To head off charges that he was abandoning Israel, Ford asked DoD to provide him information on all the military supplies given to Israel since the October War had started and since he had been president to show Congress. Chairman Brown recommended they demonstrate how aid to Israel had caused U.S. stockpile shortages. "That would be useful," Ford agreed. "If challenged, I want the record."⁷³

If the pressure failed to break the diplomatic impasse, Ford feared major conflict would likely again breakout in the region. The intelligence available to him indicated such a scenario was probable. Summarizing the findings of a recent Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE), CIA Director William Colby warned that unless negotiations showed progress by early

summer, Egypt and Syria would probably launch a joint attack on Israel or, even more probable, Israel would strike preemptively. Israel, the SNIE predicted, would likely defeat Egypt and Syria in seven to ten days. Kissinger agreed with Colby about the likelihood of war: “If there is no progress by summer, there will be war within one year or maybe this year. We have six months to produce something.” To force movement from the Israelis, Schlesinger recommended an even sterner, more direct approach toward Israel: “Maybe the word aloof is not a good one,” he said. “We can say to the Israelis that our well is temporarily dry. Whether it will be temporary or permanent depends on you.” Ford agreed to suspend new commitments or agreements during the reassessment.⁷⁴

On April 2, Schlesinger responded to Ford’s request for a study on U.S. aid to Israel with a paper that indicated aid to Israel had severely depleted U.S. stockpiles and questioned whether more aid was militarily justifiable. By that time over \$700 million in hardware, much of it involving items from the Urgent List, had been approved for purchase. The Israelis had presented a follow-on list for initial Matmon-B deliveries, including 25 F-15s, 180 tanks, and 1,000 APCs. Even a “moderately forthcoming response,” Schlesinger warned, would further strain U.S. inventories. Israel had grown “significantly stronger” than before the October War in the quality and quantity of its arms. Even without additional arms, Israel could fight for three or four weeks without resupply.⁷⁵

Spring 1975, however, was a particularly unfavorable period for Washington to exert the necessary pressure to get Israel to agree to withdraw from occupied territory, as the administration grappled with the fall of South Vietnam in April and the Cambodian Khmer Rouge’s seizure of the *Mayaguez* in May. Security assistance for Israel that had already been approved went forward, as did letters of offer regarding spare parts and ammunition. The

Defense Security Assistance Agency, however, would not provide the Israelis letters for end items. The Defense Department also suspended sales negotiations over the F-15s, Lance missiles, and laser-guided bombs; State Department denied Munitions Control export licenses for all cases worth over \$5.1 million.⁷⁶

With Ford openly backing a tougher stance toward Israel, Schlesinger felt freer to be more combative with the Israelis. In late April he had a bitter exchange with Ambassador Dinitz. The secretary told the ambassador that Ford felt misled and ill-used. Ford's feelings about Israeli methods, Schlesinger said, were more important than the substantive issues that existed between the two countries. Egypt, Dinitz responded, was aware of the global challenges currently facing the United States and had concluded that Washington needed an agreement at any price. Israel must restore the president's trust, Schlesinger said, before they could address specific details.⁷⁷

As he grappled with the fallout from the collapse of South Vietnam, Ford faced mounting political pressure from supporters of Israel in the United States as the reassessment dragged on but was determined to press forward. At a May 15 NSC meeting, he said that "professional members of the American Jewish community" were painting the reassessment as a "change of heart toward Israel." Earlier in the month Ford had made what Kissinger described as an "off-the-cuff" comment that the United States supported Israel's "survival" rather than "security"—the latter term which was customarily used by U.S. officials to indicate robust support for Israel. The Israeli Government protested Ford's change of term, which only further incensed the president. Schlesinger argued for continuing to use "security," saying "it is a codeword of significance. After October 1973, we took a position maintaining the security of Israel.... It means their undiminished survival." He added, in the pedantic manner Ford so detested, "This is a sensitive period and it is not advisable to get drawn into semantic disputes." Ford erupted. "I

have used survival, and security interchangeably, synonymously. But they have now chose to make a distinction, not I.” He would thus continue to say “survival” and, he warned, “I do not want anyone to paraphrase or explain away what I say.” Kissinger then entered the argument, siding with Ford, though he knew Schlesinger was correct. “They have said they need the word ‘security’ because it means expanded frontiers. They want us to endorse that position.”

Schlesinger asked pointedly, “Have they said so?” Kissinger answered, “They have said it in the press and have accused us of trying to get away from supporting their territorial claims.”

Refusing to back down, Schlesinger said, “In the past we have used the word “security.” Ford then settled the matter: “But they have made it an issue and we will not back down.” Ford agreed to expand slightly the characterization of U.S. policy toward Israel to supporting the “survival as a free and independent state.”⁷⁸

Ford’s plans to press forward with a less accommodating stance toward Israel, however, met with overwhelming opposition from Congress. On May 21, 50 Democrat and 25 Republican senators wrote him, stating that “[w]ithholding military equipment would be dangerous, discouraging accommodation by Israel’s neighbors and encouraging a resort to force.” The senators urged Ford to “make it clear ... that the United States stands firmly with Israel ... and that this premise is the basis of our current reassessment of U.S. policy in the Middle East.”⁷⁹ The letter infuriated Ford. “There was no doubt in my mind that it was inspired by Israel,” he wrote in his memoir.⁸⁰ With political pressure mounting, Ford and Kissinger decided that they must end the reassessment and resume step-by-step diplomacy.⁸¹

In June, Ford met separately with Sadat and Rabin, hoping his direct participation in diplomacy might push the two leaders toward compromise. In Salzburg on June 1, Sadat suggested to Ford that to assuage Israeli security concerns, Egypt would accept a buffer zone at

the Gidi and Mitla passes monitored by U.S. civilians.⁸² Ford then passed the idea to Rabin when the two met in Washington. On June 12, Schlesinger spoke with Rabin at Blair House about Israel's hope that a formalized long-term supply relationship would eventually be established. Schlesinger responded that "long-term planning will reflect grand political strategy and is basically a political question." The defense secretary then [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED].⁸³

Progress toward a second Sinai agreement resumed, with Kissinger seeking to use the promise of military and economic assistance along with diplomatic reassurances to press the Israeli Government to agree to withdrawals from territory it held in the Sinai. Throughout much of the summer, Kissinger engaged in painstaking negotiations over where to draw separation lines between Egyptian and Israeli forces. On September 1, Israeli and Egyptian representatives initialed Sinai II agreement with Egypt, which returned the Abu Rudeis oil field to Egypt as well as established new separation lines and areas where only limited forces and armaments were permitted. The document was formally signed by both nations at Geneva on September 4. To achieve Israeli acceptance of the agreement, the United States signed a 16-point memorandum of agreement, in which Washington promised to be responsive "on an on-going and long-term basis to Israel's military equipment and other defense requirements, to its energy requirements and to its economic needs." As the Israelis insisted, American civilian technicians would man monitoring stations in the passes. The two countries also signed a memorandum of agreement for the Geneva Peace Conference, in which Washington promised to work in concert with Israel and not negotiate with the PLO if it continued to refuse recognizing Israel's right to exist.⁸⁴

In response to the signing of Sinai II, Ford directed the creation of a Sinai Support Mission to expand the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) already there. Ford also promised not to deal with the PLO until it recognized Israel's right to exist and indicated to Rabin that he gave "great weight" to Israel's view that security considerations would not allow a withdrawal from the Golan Heights. The Defense Department, however, adamantly opposed assuming any financial obligations for assisting the UNEF, as the State Department wished. According to Comptroller McClary, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees would support no supplemental requests—\$10 million in this case—except for pay increases mandated by law. Clements kept insisting upon full repayment, and State ultimately agreed to bear all non-reimbursable costs.⁸⁵

Establishing a Long-Term Relationship

In mid-August, even before Sinai II had been signed, the Israelis presented U.S. officials with six draft agreements. These specified \$1.8 billion in annual aid, a binding five-year commitment to provide particular systems, total access to U.S. research and development, licenses to produce a wide range of U.S. weapons and equipment, joint planning for emergency resupply, and \$150 million to help build a new Sinai defense line. On September 2, Schlesinger warned the president that a "full and forthcoming" response was beyond DoD's capacities, without substantial diversions from inventories and production schedules. He also warned that agreeing to such extensive long-term assistance would "exacerbate Arab perceptions of Israel as a kind of Western spearhead and would be seen as giving Israel a kind of lien on our own Middle East policy." Existing research, development, and production agreements were sufficient for Israel's current needs, Schlesinger wrote. He recommended meeting FY 1975 requests from future production to avoid disrupting deliveries to U.S. units. For the longer term, he suggested drafting

an agreement that would remove the supply relationship “insofar as possible from the political process” while satisfying Israel’s “practical and psychological need for a guaranteed and secure source of military support.” He recommended a joint mechanism to develop a three-year programming and budgeting cycle along with a five-year planning cycle. The offer, he wrote, could be made as “an incentive to, and as an integral part of, a larger settlement.” Schlesinger, however, wanted to be cautious about technology transfers, limiting them to whatever was “absolutely required for Israel’s security.” He recommended linking the amounts of assistance to on-going reviews of the politico-military situation, establishing levels of stockage that would minimize a need for emergency resupply, and providing future items from production without disrupting deliveries to U.S. forces.⁸⁶

On September 9, in preparation for visits by Israeli Prime Minister Rabin and Defense Minister Peres, Ambassador Dinitz presented Kissinger with requests that included 25 F-15s, 250 F-16s, 13 advanced attack helicopters (AAHs, ultimately Apache), one Lance battalion, and one Pershing battalion (4 launchers and 50 surface-to-surface missiles with much longer range than Lance). ISA split this new list into several categories: items for which delivery would have no adverse impact on U.S. forces (F-15 and the Lance battalion); requests requiring further study (F-16, for which a production schedule had yet to be fixed); and items that should not be released (AAH and the Pershing battalion). Supplying Israel with Pershing, ISA warned, would have “very serious political implications,” [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. After reviewing the list, Schlesinger warned Ford that while most items could be supplied from future production, the long lead-times for their delivery would prove “less than acceptable” to Israel. They could not substantially speed delivery, however, without giving Israel priority over U.S. forces or other friendly nations. If the administration held the line

against supplying high-technology or politically sensitive systems, Schlesinger predicted “strong private and public statements” by Israel, accusing Washington of “not living up to the spirit of the Sinai negotiations.”⁸⁷

Schlesinger’s arguments persuaded Ford. At a September 17 NSC meeting, Ford said about the new Israeli request, or “shopping list,” “I would say it’s not minimal! I just think we can’t, at this stage, agree to any deterioration of our own defense capability.” He instructed Kissinger and Schlesinger not to give them an answer: “We should make no commitments and be very general.” Schlesinger promised that he would inform Peres, who he would meet the next day, that Washington would sell from its production lines but would not reduce its own inventories to aid the Israelis. Kissinger warned him to be careful. “They will go to the factories. When I was [in Israel], they had better information on our production than I did.” He instead encouraged Schlesinger to obfuscate by saying that the response also depended on the “strategic equation and the overall situation.” Concerned that Kissinger might again blame Defense for holding up aid, Clements asked, “Henry, isn’t that something you have to address with them?” Kissinger responded that the administration needed to take a unified position with the Israelis. “If defense takes the position that they can deliver everything except for the President and myself, every Jewish leader in town will be all over us.” Agreeing, Ford insisted, “We should be very imprecise.” The Israelis, Schlesinger observed, wanted to acquire high-technology items “so they can compete with us on sales abroad.” When he mentioned the political ramifications of fulfilling the Pershing request, Kissinger interrupted: “They know very well we haven’t agreed to Pershing.” The defense secretary recommended taking “the middle road, not giving them either the high technology or the inventories but selling to them out of production.” Turning to Ford,

Kissinger said, “Jim doesn’t have to blame it on you or I but can say the whole thing is being put in the NSC.” Ford agreed.⁸⁸

The next day at the Pentagon, Assistant Secretary Ellsworth told Peres that until a new NSC review was completed, the only releasable items were those held back during the earlier “reassessment,” such as Lance and laser-guided bombs. Ellsworth agreed to Peres’s proposal that technical discussions about an F-16 sale go forward on all aspects except coproduction. Ellsworth then described the status of each releasable weapon system. On Lance, for example, letters of acceptance were ready, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED].⁸⁹

Pershing missiles, which were not on the releasable list, made the news three days later when Schlesinger appeared on *Face the Nation*. A correspondent asked him whether he had been informed of a “secret addendum” promising to consider a “positive response” about Israel’s request for Pershings. Schlesinger’s answer invited more questions: “I was, I believe, informed in due course. The whole question of the policy considerations ... rests under the purview of the Secretary of State.... If commitments had been made, I am sure that there would have been extensive discussions throughout the government in advance.” The correspondent then asked, does that mean “Kissinger kept you in the dark about this?” Schlesinger denied being kept in the dark or that any promises had been made. Yet he had raised doubts—to Kissinger and Ford’s fury.⁹⁰

Although incensed by Schlesinger’s remarks, Ford agreed with the defense secretary about the need to limit the amount of long-term aid. On October 7, Ford through NSSM 231 ordered a study of Israel’s arms requests “within the broad context of United States strategic, diplomatic, and military interests.” The study would consider whether the provision of

equipment sought by Israel might accelerate a regional arms race and reduce the incentives to negotiate a settlement. Based on these assessments, the study would recommend a long-term program to provide “an adequate but not destabilizing Israeli force level,” including at least two alternatives to Israel’s list of requests.”⁹¹

In mid-October, Deputy Assistant Secretary (ISA) Noyes met with Maj. Gen. Avraham Adan, who implied that the provision of the FY 1976 portion of Matmon-B was Israel’s “reward” for signing Sinai II. When Noyes responded that such a decision depended on the NSC review, Adan was “clearly surprised, if not shocked.” He said Ambassador Dinitz would raise this matter “at a very high level” in the U.S. Government. Several days later Dinitz told Scowcroft that Israel had been informally advised that F-15 deliveries would start in mid-1976 and that Schlesinger had approved providing F-16s. Neither statement was accurate.⁹²

On November 10 an ad hoc NSC group circulated a response to NSSM 231 that largely confirmed what Schlesinger (whom Ford had fired the previous week) had been arguing for months. The group found no military rationale for providing more arms, concluding that the delivery of those weapon systems already approved and scheduled would satisfy Israel’s needs through 1980. By shaping its requests around a “worst case” scenario, Israel had asked for weapons that, if delivered, would only exacerbate the dangers Israel had hoped to forestall. Rather than agree to a multiyear commitment to fulfill Matmon-B, the group proposed basing sales agreements on joint annual reviews.⁹³

In mid-December, as newly confirmed Donald Rumsfeld prepared to meet Defense Minister Peres, Assistant Secretary Ellsworth recommended a change of approach. Until October 1973, he wrote, secretaries of defense had avoided being drawn into the details of military supply. Peres’s visit, Ellsworth wrote, would be “the appropriate time to revert to the old system.

By doing so you would (1) reduce Israeli capacity to play State, Defense, and the NSC off against each other and (2) reduce the confusion entailed by having the Israelis misconstrue oral pronouncements.”⁹⁴

Rumsfeld followed Ellsworth’s advice. He met with Peres on December 16 and, in stark contrast to Schlesinger, said very little, allowing the Israeli defense minister to talk while only occasionally asking questions that revealed little of the defense secretary’s own stance besides conveying his skepticism. Peres began with a long explanation of how after Sinai II, the Israelis now viewed a potential Syrian-led coalition, consisting of Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and the Palestinians, as posing their greatest security threat. “If they can achieve such a coalition,” Peres said, “they will attack Israel.” Schlesinger likely would have engaged Peres in an intellectual debate over the merits of Israeli concerns and how they might be addressed. Rumsfeld did not. He responded with a single question: “Would such a coalition be sufficient militarily?” Peres responded with another detailed disquisition, explaining how such a coalition would marshal 14 armored divisions and make use of new Soviet-provided MiG-23s. Rumsfeld did not respond.⁹⁵

Peres turned to the Palestinian issue, insisting the Soviets were exploiting Palestinian grievances to salvage their Middle East policy after losing Egypt to the West. He warned that if the PLO were to establish itself on the West Bank, Israel and the United States would face “the nightmare of having Soviets 10 miles from the Israeli parliament. With the PLO in command, the six factions aided by the Soviets would conduct terrorism next to the very heart of Israel.” With Rumsfeld still silent, Peres continued, saying that Israel wanted to grant the Palestinians self-determination, but “the problem ... must be solved gradually, without shock to Israeli public opinion.” He said Israel was then seeking to increase Arab self-government in the West Bank and Gaza by turning over key administrative positions to Arabs. Rumsfeld finally asked, “What

time scale do you have in mind?” Peres insisted, “We could be ready in a week, but are restrained by Arab caution. The Israeli defense minister then turned to Israeli defense needs, acknowledging the high cost but saying “we do not want U.S. troops to have to fight for us.” He acknowledged that Israel’s large demands after the war had created resentment in the DoD. Rumsfeld responded that there was also lingering resentment on Capitol Hill about taking items from U.S. inventories instead of future production. Peres then turned to specific arms requests for advanced technology (FLIR, CBU) and accelerated deliveries, claiming that State had promised the first F-15 production aircraft in mid-1976. Not engaging on the specifics, Rumsfeld simply countered, “Does State ever promise weapons?” Peres clarified, saying that “State told us Israel would not suffer because of the reassessment.”⁹⁶ Rumsfeld allowed his subordinates to respond to the Israelis’ specific weapon requests. Clements and Ellsworth warned that projecting arms request five years in advance had led members of Congress to confuse replacement and modernization with increasing force levels.⁹⁷

On January 27, 1976, Ford gave Rabin a list of items approved for purchase, including 25 F-15s, 126 medium tanks, and 735 M113 APCs. Ford formalized the decision four days later through National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM) 315 but ruled against providing FLIRs, Pershings, and CBU fuel-air explosive cluster bombs. The value of Israeli orders was not to exceed \$2 billion. NSDM 315 specified annual or more frequent NSC review if necessary. In response, a new interagency Middle East Arms Transfer Panel was created, chaired by Deputy Assistant Secretary (ISA) Noyes with members drawn from State, Defense, CIA, and the NSC staff.⁹⁸

At Blair House the next day, Rabin met with Rumsfeld along with senior Defense and State officials about his concern that deliveries might be spread over three years rather than one.

When Ambassador Dinitz added that Ford and Kissinger had given the impression that everything would be delivered within one year, Under Secretary of State Joseph Sisco, who had attended Rabin's meeting with Ford and Kissinger, said that it had been "clear" that the president had approved a one-year package in principle only without promising delivery. Lt. Gen. Howard M. Fish, director of the Defense Security Assistance Agency, pointed out that it would be "physically impossible" to deliver some items, like tanks, in one year. The president, Rabin said, had told him the list would include advanced technology, but he found none in it. Rumsfeld responded he was "certain that, in the President's mind, the list included advanced technology." Defense officials then cited items like laser-guided bombs, advanced air-to-air missiles, and the F-15. Unsatisfied, Rabin repeated his frustration with the prolonged delivery schedules.⁹⁹

Top defense officials were frustrated by Israeli pressure to expedite deliveries, as such action would again threaten service inventories. On January 31 Rumsfeld asked Scowcroft to remind Ford and Kissinger that deliveries must come from production. One week later, Rumsfeld's military assistant emphasized to Scowcroft's deputy that "a full review ... upheld the position that all deliveries would be from normal non-interference, non-priority production.... We strongly urge that ... no promises, hints, or other words be passed to the Government of Israel which would signal change.... A unified approach by all [U.S. government] elements to this issue is vital."¹⁰⁰

In March 1976 Acting Assistant Secretary (ISA) Amos Jordan visited Israel, touring facilities and hearing briefings from high officials. After his return he reported "that a siege mentality and sense of military vulnerability have become widespread in Israel since the October War," and the Israeli Government seemed to have concluded that "the only way out of their dilemma is to become even stronger militarily and to avoid letting the Arabs get the jump on

them again.” The Israelis continually stressed Saudi Arabia’s capabilities, Jordan argued, perhaps because a lessening of the Egyptian threat and the absence of a dramatic increase in Soviet arms shipments to Syria forced them to look elsewhere to justify its large security assistance requests. Israel’s leaders, Jordan concluded, had “essentially decided to bypass the Administration and concentrate instead on U.S. public and Congressional opinion. What appears ludicrous (e.g., the Saudi threat) in professional military terms can be used in a simplistic way to mesh nicely with the growing sentiment against U.S. arms sales in general and to the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf area in particular.” Since aid for Israel was bound to be generous, Jordan saw a chance of linking it “directly and openly” with progress toward peace agreements—a situation Israel might prefer instead of “the uncertainty and anxiety which it now clearly suffers.”¹⁰¹

On March 25 Israel asked permission to buy 126 M60A1 tanks, beyond the 126 listed in NSDM 315, with deliveries starting in May 1978. Department of Defense strenuously objected, noting that NSDM 315 had cut Israel’s earlier request for 180 back to 126 on grounds that tanks already on hand and on order would preserve a clear superiority through 1980.¹⁰² The Israelis, however, had gone beyond the list approved under NSDM 315 and clearly expected the United States to fund all their orders with new sales credits. The Middle East Transfer Panel recommended limiting total orders to \$2.2 billion. That way, unfunded liabilities would be held at \$2.7 billion and Israel could order all the major items on its list.¹⁰³

In fall 1976, as Ford was locked in a tight electoral contest with Democratic governor turned presidential contender Jimmy Carter, Washington agreed to further expand the quantity of weapons as well as the technologies offered to Israel. In early September, the annual review of Israel’s needs had progressed far enough to demonstrate that there was no military requirement to sell additional equipment during FYs 1977–1978. Fiscal realities dictated a scaled-down

procurement program. Ambassador Dinitz, however, worked the issue with Kissinger and Scowcroft. On October 8, the NSC staff informed the Pentagon that Ford had approved providing 126 M60A1 tanks, 90 M109 155mm self-propelled howitzers, 75 sets of FLIR equipment, and 250 CBU-72 cluster bombs, all costing around \$200 million. By releasing the long-denied FLIRs and CBUs, Washington signaled a willingness to make some of the latest technology available. The Office of International Strategic Affairs and the JCS both objected to the release of FLIR, an advanced radar technology that would give U.S. forces an advantage over the Warsaw Pact by allowing American aircraft to operate effectively at night and in poor weather conditions. The Defense Department, according to an ISA information paper, was also deeply concerned about releasing the controversial CBU-72. Neither system had been provided to NATO allies.¹⁰⁴

In October 1976 Ford sought to deflect charges from Carter that his administration was not doing enough to support Israel. In Ford's second debate with Carter on October 6, the Georgia governor had charged the Ford administration with a "deviation from a commitment to our major ally in the Middle East, which is Israel," in an effort to improve relations with oil producing Arab states.¹⁰⁵ In the same debate, Ford had damaged his campaign by stating that he did not believe Eastern Europeans did not "consider themselves dominated by the Soviet Union." On October 11 administration officials revealed to the press that Ford had agreed to lift the ban on previously restricted weapons. Ford's press secretary, Ron Nessen, bristled at reporter's question about whether the change of policy had been meant to gain Jewish votes in the upcoming election, saying "it was unworthy of an answer." Reporters remained unconvinced. Although the White House refused to divulge which systems had been released, administration officials anonymously revealed the Israelis would receive sophisticated sensor technology and

weaponry. One source, reported the *Chicago Tribune*, revealed, “This is spooky stuff, some of it is so new it’s still on the drawing board.”¹⁰⁶ By releasing the long-denied FLIR and CBUs, Ford gave Israel access to the latest U.S. technology, ending the administration’s previous restrictions. The president, however, would later endorse DoD’s recommendations to not provide Israeli with the most advanced FLIR technology.¹⁰⁷

In the weeks preceding the election, Rumsfeld sought to prevent the Pentagon’s reservations toward providing Israel with additional military aid from becoming a campaign issue. On October 22, the Middle East transfer panel concluded that Israel had military superiority over its Arab foes and U.S. materiel already in the pipeline was sufficient for Israel’s defense needs. Rumsfeld delayed the report’s release until the end of his tenure, because he disagreed with the panel’s conclusions and understood it would have severe political repercussions in the final days of Ford’s reelection campaign. After Ford’s election defeat, the Israelis presented a large list of FY 1977 requests in December. With the Carter administration poised to take office, Ford and Rumsfeld left the response to their successors.¹⁰⁸

After the October War of 1973, Washington gained considerable leverage with both the Israelis and Arabs. Kissinger led U.S. efforts to achieve a durable peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors through a step-by-step process to separate Israeli and Arab forces while diminishing Soviet regional influence. Much to Schlesinger’s frustration, the secretary of state liberally promised military grants and sales to support his diplomatic goals. The secretary of defense, however, could only protest Kissinger’s approach from the sideline, as the secretary of state shuttled among Middle Eastern capitals and effectively wielded the power of the presidency in foreign policy matters as Nixon’s Watergate calamity reached its climax.¹⁰⁹

Except for briefly during the spring 1975 reassessment, the Pentagon's efforts to limit and rationalize military aid to Israel, linking it to clear progress toward a peace settlement, had failed as had attempts to rigorously analyze the Israelis' needs and the impact aid had on U.S. forces. Although appraisals of the military balance had always been highly favorable to Israel, these proved irrelevant to presidential decisions. Despite Schlesinger's efforts to limit assistance to Israel and subject it to annual review, long-term, large-scale aid to Israel had become firmly established by the end of the Ford administration. In the weeks leading up to the 1976 presidential election, Rumsfeld diminished the importance of the annual review when he delayed its release after disagreeing with its conclusions that contradicted administration policy and public statements on aid to Israel.

The October War marked a turning point in U.S. foreign assistance to Israel. Before the conflict, Washington supplied Israel with military materiel to deter Arab states supplied by the Soviet Union. During and after the war, however, U.S. aid to Israel skyrocketed. In fiscal year 1972 the United States provided \$480.9 million in military assistance. Aid ballooned to \$2.6 billion in FY 1974 as the United States provided Israel with emergency assistance in response to the October War. Israel remained the top recipient of U.S. foreign aid for subsequent decades. As military assistance rose, Washington would waive most of the loans granted to Israel.¹¹⁰

Endnotes

1. Gilbert, *Israel: A History*, 460–461; Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 562–569; Jim Hoagland, “Israelis Mean to Cheat Us,” 28 Oct 1973, *Washington Post*, A18 (quote).
2. Schlesinger interview, 1 Aug 1991, OSD/HO, 20.
3. Martin Indyk, *Master of the Game: Henry Kissinger and the Art of Middle East Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2022), 218; Gilbert, *Israel*, 460; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 707–709.
4. Gilbert, *Israel*, 460; Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 533.
5. Indyk, *Master of the Game*, 557–562.
6. Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War*, 554–556
7. Ibid., 541–543.
8. Gilbert, *Israel*, 459; Harry Trimborn, “Israel Unsettled at Shattering of Old Uncertainties,” *Los Angeles Times*, 4 Nov 1973, 1; Indyk, *Master of the Game*, 219–220.
9. WSAG, meeting minutes, 2 Nov 1973, 10:27–11:35 a.m., *FRUS 1969–1976*, 25:841 (doc 308).
10. Telcon, Schlesinger and Kissinger, 27 Oct 1973, 1:00 p.m., printed in Henry Kissinger, *Crisis: The Anatomy of Two Major Foreign Policy Crises* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 409–411; telcon, Kissinger and Haig, 27 Oct 1973, 12:28 p.m., *FRUS 1969–1976*, 25:778 (doc. 293); Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 623.
11. WSAG, meeting minutes, 2 Nov 1973, 10:27–11:35 a.m., *FRUS 1969–1976*, 25:842 (doc 308); Schlesinger interview, 1 Aug 1991, OSD/HO, 18.
12. Telcon, Dinitz and Kissinger, 2 Nov 1973 (quotes), 7:00 p.m., DNSA; Indyk, *Master of the Game*, 220.
13. Telcon, Dinitz and Kissinger, 2 Nov 1973 (quotes), 7:00 p.m., DNSA; MG Wickham Notebooks, entry for 2 Nov 1973, box T-5, Schlesinger Papers, Library of Congress.
14. Memo, Schlesinger for Nixon, “Impact of the Mideast War,” 1 Nov 1973, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 25:804 (doc 304).
15. Ibid.
16. Memo, (quotes) Director, Joint Staff, Lt. Gen. George Seignious II for Schlesinger, “US Military Equipment Validation Team, Israel (USMEVTI) Visit to Israel, JCSM-470-73, 26 Oct 1973, attached to Acting Assistant Secretary (ISA) Vice Adm. Ray Peet for Schlesinger, folder Israel 091.3 1973, box 6, Acc 330-78-0002, OSD Records, WNRC.
17. Kissinger told White House Chief of Staff Alexander Haig that he had asked Schlesinger not to send the team to Israel. “Schlesinger,” he said, “wants to check on whether the Israelis are lying.” Telcon, Kissinger and Haig, 27 Oct 1973, 12:28 p.m., *FRUS 1969–1976* 25:778 (doc 293); ltr, Schlesinger to Passman, 26 Nov 1973, folder Israel 09.3 (Nov) 1973, box 69, Acc 330-78-0001.

18. Ibid.; requests presented by Ambassador Dinitz, 26 Nov 1973, 2 p.m., attached to memo, OASD (ISA) to DepSecDef, 7 Dec 1973, subj: Call by Israeli Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan, folder Israel 091.112 1973, box 6, Acc 330-78-0002.

19. A fifth category included items that the group had not yet identified as belonging to one of the other four categories. Memo, Acting ASD(ISA) to SecDef, 28 Nov 1973, subj: Follow-on Support for Israel, folder Israel 091.3 (Nov) 1973, box 69, Acc-78-0001.

20. Ltr, Major General Gur to DASD(ISA) Noyes, 28 Nov 1973; memo, DASD(ISA) Noyes for Generals Jones and Wickham, n.d.: both in folder Israel 091.3 (Nov) 1973, box 69, Acc 330-78-0001.

21. Ltr, DepSecDef to SecState, 28 Nov 1973, folder Israel 091.3 (Nov) 1973, box 69, Acc-330-78-0001. In early December DIA concluded that while Israel already had regained its prewar capability, Egypt and Syria would need some months to do the same. Memo, Director DIA to SecDef, n.d. [3 Dec 1973], subj: The Military Balance Between Israel and Egypt/Syria, folder Middle East 1973, box 73, Acc 330-78-0001.

22. Memcon, Dayan and Kissinger, 7 Dec 1973, 12:00 n., KT00942, DNSA. Clements had approved of ISA's November 28 recommendations. He disapproved transferring most Category I items and retained those in Category II as quid pro quo elements; Category III items were to be released on a selective basis. The practical effect of Clements's action was limited, however, since decisions were usually rendered item by item, regardless of category. Memcon, 7 Dec 1973, subj: Meeting with Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan, folder Israel 091.112 (4 Jan 74), box 64, Acc 330-78-0011.

23. Memcon, Kissinger, Dayan, and Dinitz, 7 Dec 1973, 3:00–3:25 p.m, KT00943, DNSA; telcon, Clements and Kissinger, 7 Dec 1973, 7:32 p.m., KA11711, DNSA.

24. Memcon, 9 Dec 1973, subj: Meeting with Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan, folder Israel 091.112 (4 Jan 1974), box 64, Acc 330-78-0011.

25. BG Taylor Notebook, entry for 9 Dec 1973, folder 020 SD (31 Dec 73) 1973, box 7, Acc 330-78-0001. Schlesinger's talking points for a September 1974 NSC meeting stated that in the months after the October War, "the US further committed itself to supply substantial quantities of materiel, including many items of advanced weaponry in support of Dr. Kissinger's negotiations, often on short notice and with little time to assess the consequences to our own capabilities." "Talking Paper for SecDef and Chairman JCS for NSC Meeting, 6 September 1974," folder Israel 091.3 (X-2754) 6 Sep 1974, box 3, Acc 330-78-0010.

26. BG Taylor Notebook, entry for 10 Dec 1973, folder 020 SD (31 Dec 73) 1973, box 7, Acc 330-78-0001. Clements also tasked the services to place on procurement, but hold until after January 1, items including 36 Chaparral fire units, 3 Hawk batteries, 40,000 M-16s, and 239 TOW launchers with 8,000 missiles. Entry for December 10, 1973, MG Wickham Notebooks, entry for 10 Dec 1973, box T-5, Schlesinger Papers, Library of Congress; memo, Acting ASD(ISA) to DepSecDef, 11 Dec 1973, subj: Provision of Materiel for Israel, folder Israel 091.3 (Dec) 1973, box 69, Acc 330-78-0001.

27. BG Taylor Notebook, entry for 24 Dec 1973, folder 020 SD (31 Dec 1974), box 7, Acc 330-78-0011.

28. Telcon, Schlesinger and Kissinger, 4 Jan 1974, 2:50 p.m., folder 4, box 26, HAK Telcon Transcripts, NSC Files, Nixon Library; BG Taylor Notebook, entry for 4 Jan 1974 under a heading incorrectly dated “Dayan/JRS Mtg, 8/1/73,” folder 020 SD (31 Dec 74), box 7; memcon, 4 Jan 1974, 1530, subj: Meeting with Israeli Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan, folder Israel 091.112 (Jan-Jun) 1974: both in box 64, Acc 330-78-001.
29. Indyk, *Master of the Game*, 295–297.
30. Quandt, *Peace Process*, 138; telcon, Kissinger and Schlesinger, 4 Jan 1973, KA11788, KTC, DNSA. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 800–801, 809–818, 828–839; Dallek, *Nixon and Kissinger*, 539.
31. BG Taylor Notebook, entry for 8 Mar 1974.
32. Memcon, Dayan, Dinitz, Kissinger, and Scowcroft, 30 Mar 1974, 9:50–11:04 a.m.; telcon, Haig and Kissinger, 30 Mar 1974, 10:05 a.m.; telcon, Schlesinger and Kissinger, 30 Mar 1974, 10:42 a.m.: all in DNSA; Indyk, *Master of the Game*, 363–364.
33. Memcon, 1 Apr 1974, subj: Meeting with Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan, 1 Apr 74, folder Israel 091.112 (4 Jan 74), box 64, Acc 330-78-0011. Dayan presented a detailed list that largely recapitulated earlier requests in “The \$2.2 billion dollars aid to Israel,” 29 Mar 1974, w/attached memo, Major General Wickham to ASD(ISA), 1 Apr 1974, folder Israel 091.3 1974, box 3, Acc 330-78-0010.
34. “Summary of Meeting with the Deputy Secretary of Defense, 011815Z Apr 74”; memo, General Abrams for SecDef, 1 Apr 1974: both in folder Israel 1974, box 64, Acc 360-78-0011.
35. Indyk, *Master of the Game*, 364–365.
36. *Ibid.*, 413–414.
37. Meir announced Kissinger’s promise in a speech to the Israeli Knesset in late May. Testimony regarding FY 1975 MAP before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 5 Jun 1974, *Schlesinger Public Statements 1974*, 7:2224.
38. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 1113–1117. Schlesinger recounted his telephone conversation with Kissinger at his morning staff meeting. BG Taylor Notebook, entries for 5 and 6 Jun 1974; MG Wickham Notebooks, entry for 22 Jun 1974. A congressional investigation exonerated Kissinger of the wiretapping charges. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 1123.
39. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 1136.
40. To amplify the request for advancing delivery dates: 400 M-60s already had been delivered and 200 more would be drawn from stocks in Europe, leaving 400 to come from production between July 1975 and December 1977. For M-113s, 425 already had been delivered and 425 would be taken from stocks in Europe, leaving 3,150 to come from production through June 1976. IDF GHQ, “MATMON B, The Defense Requirements of the I.D.F. for the Next Ten Years, 1974-1983,” [Jun 74], Folder: “Israel 091.112 (4 Jun 74), box 64, 78-0011.
41. Memcon, 25 Jun 1974, subj: Meeting with Israeli Defense Minister Simon Peres, folder Israel 091.112 (4 Jan 74), box 64, Acc 330-78-0011.
42. Memo, ASD(ISA) for SecDef, 10 Jul 1974, subj: Israeli Defense Forces Paper, folder Israel 091.112 (Jul-Dec) 1974, box 64, Acc 330-78-0011.

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43. Memcon, 23 Jul 1974, subj: Call by Israeli Ambassador Simcha Dinitz, folder Israel 091.112 (Jul-Dec 1974), box 64, Acc 330-78-0011; list, "Urgent Defense Requirements," Jul 1974, folder Israel 091.3 1974, box 3, Acc 330-78-0010. As of July 3, the status of major requests stood as follows: 80 F-4s approved and 40 shipped; 80 A-4s approved and 54 shipped; 1,000 tanks and 4,000 M-113s approved with 400 tanks and 414 M-1132s shipped; 4,000 4-ton trucks approved and 910 shipped; 80,000 M-16s approved and 75,000 shipped. Fact Sheet, "Major Military Materiel Requested and Approved Since 6 October 1973," folder Israel 91.112 (4 Jan 74), box 64, Acc 330-78-0011.
44. Memcon, subj: Meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, folder Israel 091.112 (Jul-Dec) 1974, box 64, Acc 330-78-0011.
45. It was clear from the conversation that the distracted president did not know the details of the Israeli request. When Kissinger said that they would be providing 1/100 of the full package, Nixon responded, "100% you mean?" Kissinger explained that the Israelis had requested a huge package and they would be providing just a small fraction of it. Telcons, Haig and Kissinger, 9:55 a.m., 3 Aug 1974; Nixon and Kissinger, 11:15 a.m., 3 Aug 1974; Schlesinger and Kissinger, 1:05 p.m., 5 Aug 1974: all in folder 11, box 26, HAK Telcon Transcripts, NSC Files, Nixon Library. At their breakfast meeting on August 2, Kissinger related that Israelis claimed Schlesinger had promised to provide everything, subject to Kissinger's approval. "Wrong," Schlesinger replied. The Israelis, Kissinger said, "were trying to play between you and me," warning Schlesinger that if they did not receive equipment he would become "the fall guy." MG Wickham Notebooks, entry for 2 Aug 1974.
46. NSSM 207 to SecDef et al., 12 Aug 1974, subj: Israel's Future Military Requirements, *Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS], 1969–1976*, vol. 26, *Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974–1976*, ed. Adam M. Howard (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2011), 408–409 (doc 96).
47. Memo, Ellsworth for Schlesinger, 8 Aug 1974, subj: Israeli Urgent Requirements List, folder Israel 091.3 Jun-Sep 1974, box 65, Acc 330-78-00110.
48. NSSM 207 to SecDef, et al., 12 Aug 1974, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:408–409 (doc. 96); memo, OASD(ISA) to SecDef, subj: Israeli Urgent Requirements List, attached to memo, ASD(ISA) to SecDef, 22 Aug 1974, subj: Call by Israeli Ambassador, 14 Aug 1974, folder Israel 091.112 (Jul-Dec 1974), box 64, Acc 330-78-0011.
49. NSSM 207: Israeli Future Military Requirements, attached to memo, NSC to UnderSecTreas, DepSecDef, DepSecState, CJCS, DCIA, 27 Aug 1974, subj: Israeli Future Military Requirements, NSSM 207, folder Israel 091.3 X-2638 (27 Aug 74) box 3, Acc 330-78-0010.
50. Senior Review Group, meeting minutes, 30 Aug 1974, 9:41 a.m.–10:33 a.m., *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:413–414 (doc 98).
51. *Ibid.*, 415–416.
52. "Talking Paper for SecDef and CJCS for NSC Meeting, 6 September 1974," folder Israel 091.3 (X-2754) 6 Sep 74, box 3, Acc 330-78-0010.
53. Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 374–381.
54. Memcon, Ford, Kissinger, Rabin, and Dinitz, 10 Sep 1974, 3:40–4:08 p.m., National Security Advisers' Memoranda of Conversation, Digital Collection, Ford Library.

55. MG Wickham Notebooks, entry for 11 Sep 1974, box-T-5, Schlesinger Papers.
56. Memcon, 11 Sep 1974, subj: Meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin,” folder Israel 091.112 (Jul-Dec) 197, box 64, Acc 330-78-0011.
57. D. R. Cotter, ASD (Atomic Energy) to SecDef, 15 Aug 1974, folder Israel 471.94 1974, box 65, Acc 330-78-0011.
58. Clements signed his approval on August 20. Memo, Ellsworth for Wickham, 19 Aug 1974, subj: Lance for Israel; memo, Ellsworth for Schlesinger, 9 Aug 1974, subj: Lance for Israel: both in folder Israel 471.94 1974, box 65, Acc 330-78-0011. Ford discussed his decision to approve Lance at the March 28, 1975 NSC meeting, saying he had decided to provide the weapon “because I thought they needed it.” NSC, meeting minutes, 28 Mar 1975, 3:15–5:15 p.m., *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:586 (doc 166). In a letter to Senator Stuart Symington, Schlesinger justified the Lance deployment as a response to the Soviet shipment of FROGs and SCUDs to Egypt and Syria, though the reports of SCUDs delivered to Syria had not yet been confirmed. Ltr, Schlesinger to Senator Symington, 18 Jan 1975, folder Israel 471.6 Jan-1975, box 20, Acc 330-78-0038.
59. NSSM 207 with “Urgent List Options,” n.d. [rec’d 20 Sep 1974]; NSDM 270 to SecDef and DepSecState, 24 Sep 1974; memo, Kissinger for SecDef, 24 Sep 1974, subj: Israeli Military Assistance, folder Israel 091.3, 1974, box 3, Acc 330-78-0010; Poole, *JCS and National Policy, 1973–1976*, original draft, 339.
60. Memo, ASD(ISA) for SecDef, 10 Oct 1974, subj: Follow-on Support to NSC Staff...; memo, OASD(ISA) for SecDef, n.d. [read by Schlesinger, 17 Oct 1974], subj: Material Shipments to Israel 1974]: both in folder Israel 091.3 1974, box 3, Acc 330-78-0011; NSC, meeting minutes, 18 Oct 1974, 3:40–5:45 p.m., *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:447 (doc 111).
61. Memo, ASD(ISA) for SecDef, 10 Oct 1974, subj: Follow-on Support to NSC Staff...; memo, OASD(ISA) for SecDef, n.d. [read by Schlesinger], 17 Oct 1974, subj: Material Shipments to Israel; memo, DepSecDef for Kissinger, 30 Oct 1974, subj: Impact/Availability statements...”: all in folder Israel 091.3 1974, box 3, Acc 330-78-0010; memo, ASD(ISA) for SecDef, 9 Aug 1974, with approval by DepSecDef, 20 Aug 1974, subj: Lance for Israel; memo, ASD(ISA) for DepSecDef, 23 Oct 1974, subj: Lance for Israel, with note to BG Jones, 29 Oct 1974: both in folder Israel 091.112 (Jul-Dec) 1974, box 64, Acc 330-78-0011.
62. CM-126-74 to SecDef, 5 Nov 1974, with note by DepSecDef, folder Middle East 092 (5 Nov 74), box 3, Acc 330-78-0010; memo, DepSecDef for Secretaries of Military Depts. et al., 18 Nov 1974, subj: DoD Activities related to the Middle East, folder Middle East General and Strategy, box 1, Acc 330-78-0096.
63. Memon, 31 Oct 1974, subj: Meeting with Ambassador Dinitz; memcon, 15 Nov 1974, subj: Meeting with Ambassador Dinitz: both in folder Israel 091.112 (Jul-Dec) 1974, box 64, Acc 330-78-0011; MG Wickham Notebooks, entry for 7 Dec 1974, Schlesinger Papers.
64. Memo “Late Development—Israeli Military Requirement,” 7 Jan 1975, folder Israel 091.3 (Jan-May) 1975, box 67; memcon, 7 Jan 1975, subj: Meeting with Ambassador Dinitz; memo for record, 9 Jan 1975, subj: Selected Items of Private Meeting ... 7 January 1975, folder Israel 091.112 1976, box 66: all in Acc 330-78-0058; MG Wickham Notebooks, entry for 7 Jan 1975, Schlesinger Papers.

65. MG Wickham Notebooks, entry for 22 Jan 1975, Schlesinger Papers.
66. Indyk, *Master of the Game*, 501; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 385–386.
67. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 397–421.
68. Indyk, *Master of the Game*, 478; ltr, Ford to Rabin, 21 Mar 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:553 (doc. 156); Quandt, *Peace Process*, 163.
69. NSSM 220, 26 Mar 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:574–575 (doc 163); Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 247; Quandt, *Peace Process*, 164.
70. Schlesinger wrote later being surprised that “Schlesinger, usually so ready to search for flaws in my conduct of diplomacy, supported Ford at the same NSC meeting.” Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 426.
71. NSC meeting minutes, 28 Mar 1975, 3:15–5:15 p.m., *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:585 (doc 166).
72. Ibid., 585–586.
73. Ibid., 586–587.
74. Ibid., 587–588.
75. Memo, SecDef for President, 2 Apr 1975, subj: Analysis of DoD Assistance to Israel, with Tab B-1, folder Israel 091.3 1975, box 3, Acc 330-78-0059. Subsequently, Clements advised Kissinger of an OSD study concluding that Israel had enough ordnance to fight at 1973 levels for at least one month. Since U.S. intelligence believed Israel would win another such war within two or three weeks, “there may be no overwhelming military requirement for U.S. resupply. Ltr, Clements to Kissinger, 15 May 1975, folder Israel 091.112 (Jan-May) 1975, box 67, Acc 330-78-0058.
76. Memo, ASD(ISA) for SecDef, 22 Apr 1975, subj: Visit of Israeli Ambassador, folder Israel 091.112 1975, box 66; memo, ASD(ISA) for SecDef, 14 May 1975, subj: Pending Israeli Requests, folder Israel 091.112 (Jan-May) 1975, box 67: both in Acc 330-78-0058.
77. MG Wickham Notebooks, entry for 22 Apr 1975, Schlesinger Papers.
78. NSC, meeting minutes, 15 May 1975, pt. 3, “Middle East,” Digital Collection, Ford Library.
79. Bernard Gwertzman, “75 Senators Back Israel’s Aid Bids,” *New York Times*, 22 May 1975, 1; ltr, Senators to President, 21 May 1975, folder Israel 091.112 (Jan-May) 1975, box 67, Acc 330-78-0058. Separately, Senator Charles Percy (R-IL) added a caveat about expressing “concern for the interests of only one party to the conflict.”
80. Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 287.
81. Quandt, *Peace Process*, 165.
82. Poole, *The Joint Chiefs and National Security Policy, 1973–1976*, original draft, 349.
83. For Ford’s conversations with Sadat in Salzburg, see memcon, 1 Jun 1975 (doc. 177) and memcon, 2 Jun 1975 (doc 178) in *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:650–664. For Ford and Kissinger’s conversation with Rabin, see 38emcon, 11 Jun 1975, 10 a.m.–noon, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:672–684 (doc 183); Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 435–443; memcon, 12 Jun 1975, subj: Meeting with Prime Minister of Israel, folder Israel 091.112 1975, box 66, Acc 330-78-0058.

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84. Egyptian-Israeli Disengagement Agreement, 1 Sep 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:825 (doc. 266); Quandt, *Peace Process*, 169.
85. Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 446, 451, 453–456; NSSM 230 for SecDef et al., 15 Sep 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:845–846 (doc 238); NSDM 313, 14 Nov 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:867–868 (doc. 248); memo, ASD(Comptroller) for ASD(ISA), 7 Nov 1975, subj: U.S. Support for the UNEF in the Sinai; ltr, DepSecDef to SecState, 13 Nov 1975; ltr, SecState to DepSecDef, 20 Nov 1975; ltr, DepSecState to DepSecDef, 28 Nov 1975; ltr, DepSecDef to SecState, 4 Dec 1975; memo, DepSecDef for SecArmy, 22 Dec 1975, subj: DoD Support to the UNEF in the Sinai, folder Middle East 092.2 (Nov-Dec) 1975: all in box 70, Acc 330-78-0058.
86. Memo, SecDef for President, 2 Sep 1975, subj: Military Co-operation with Israel, folder Israel 091.3 1975, box 3, Acc 330-78-0059.
87. Ltr, Ambassador Dinitz to SecState, 9 Sep 1975, attached to ltr, AsstSecState Sisco to ASD(ISA), 12 Sep 1975; memo, ASD(ISA) for SecDef, subj: Israeli Equipment and Military Co-operation Requests, 17 Sep 1975: all in Tab D to Meeting of Israel Defense Minister Peres with SecDef, 18 Sep 1975, folder Israel 091.112 1975, box 66, Acc 330-78-0058; memo, SecDef for President, 17 Sep 1975, subj: Ambassador Dinitz's List of Military Equipment for Israel (quotes), folder Israel 091.3 (Jun-3Dec) 1975, box 66, Acc 330-78-0058.
88. NSC, draft of meeting minutes, 17 Sep 1975, 31–32, Ford Library.
89. Memcon, 18 Sep 1975, subj: Meeting with Israeli Defense Minister, folder Israel 091.112 1975, box 66, Acc 330-78-0058.
90. *Schlesinger Public Statements 1975*, 6:1980–1981; memcon, 26 Nov 1975, 9:30 a.m., 1, Ford Library.
91. NSSM 231, 7 Oct 1975, *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:855–856 (doc 243).
- 92 Memo, ASD(ISA) for General Wickham, 17 Oct 1975, subj: Israeli Military Requests; memo, General Scowcroft to General Wickham, 23 Oct 1975: both in folder Israel 091.3 (Jun-Dec) 1975, box 66, Acc 330-78-0058.
- 93 “Executive Summary/NSSM 231: Israeli Military Requests,” *FRUS 1969–1976*, 26:857–859 (doc 243).
94. Memo, ASD(ISA) for SecDef, 13 Dec 1975, subj: Visit of Israeli Minister of Defense, folder Israel 091.112 1975, box 66, Acc 330-78-0058.
95. Memcon, 16 Dec 1975, subj: Meeting with Israeli Defense Minister, folder Israel 091.112 1975, box 66, Acc 330-78-0058.
96. Ibid.
97. OSD had recently proposed, and the White House approved, providing Israel with 10 modified test F-15s by August 1976. The Israeli Air Force, however, did not take delivery of the first three until December 10. Deliveries from new production were supposed to begin in August 1977. That way, the U.S. Air Force would continue receiving nine F-15s per month and would acquire about 200 before the Israelis received their first F-15 from the production run. Memo, Maj. Gen. Wickham to Lt. Gen. Scowcroft, 17 Nov 1975, subj: F-15 Availability for Israel; memo, DepSecDef to Lt. Gen. Scowcroft, 24 Nov 1975, subj: F-15 Availability for Israel; memo, Lt. Gen. Scowcroft to Maj. Gen. Wickham, 28 Nov 1975, subj: Delivery of Military

Equipment to Israel; memcon, 16 Dec 1975, subj: Meeting with Israeli Defense Minister: all in folder Israel 091.112 1975, box 66, Acc 330-78-0058; ltr, SecDef to Rep Clement Zablocki, 6 Jan 1976, folder Israel 1975, *ibid.*; msg, Tel Aviv 8359 to SecState and SecDef, 131410Z Dec 1976, folder Israel 1976, box 72, Acc 330-79-0049.

98. Memo, Scowcroft for SecDef, subj: List of Approved Military Items for Israel, 27 Jan 1976, folder Israel 091.3 (Jan-Sep) 1976, box 72, Acc 330-79-0049; NSDM 315, 31 Jan 1976, Ford Library. The total cost of items approved by NSDM exceeded \$2 billion. Memo, ASD(ISA) to SecDef, 12 Oct 1976, subj: Israeli Acquisitions of Military Materiel, 2, folder Israel 091.3 (Oct-Dec) 1976, box 72, Acc 330-79-0049.

99. Memcon, 28 Jan 1976, 1730–1850, subj: Meeting with Prime Minister of Israel, folder Israel 091.112 (Jan-Nov) 1976, box 72, Acc 330-79-0049. Prior to the meeting, Acting ASD(ISA) Amos Jordan had written to Rumsfeld that since the October War the Israelis had often asked the defense secretary why “DoD has not moved forward on an item when the Secretary of State or the White House had told them it had been approved,” when it had not been. Memo, ASD(ISA) Amos Jordan for Rumsfeld, 2 Jan 1976, folder Israel 091.112 Jan-Nov 1976, box 72, Acc 330-79-0049.

100. Memo, SecDef for Kissinger, 31 Jan 1976 “Availability Data, Israeli Arms Request,” 31 Jan, folder NSDM 315, box 1, Acc 330-79-0013; memo, MilAsst for SecDef to DepATP(NSA), 7 Feb 1976, subj: Expedited Deliveries to Israel, folder Israel 091.3 (Jan-Sep) 1976, box 72, Acc 330-79-0049.

101. Memo for record, undated, subj: Acting ASD/ISA Visit to Israel, 17–20 March 1975 [1976], folder Middle East 333 1976, box 75, Acc 330-79-0049.

102. Memo, MilAsst to SecDef for DepATP for NSA, 2 Apr 1976, subj: Medium Tanks for Israel, folder Israel 1976, box 72, Acc 330-79-0049.

103. Draft Memo, Chairman MEATP for ATP(NSA), 15 Apr 1976, subj: United States Military Assistance to Israel, 2–3, 6, folder Middle East 1976, box 74, Acc 330-79-0049; ltr, SecDef to Director OMB, 14 Mar 1976; “Executive Summary” of MEATP Report, attached to memo, Noyes for ATP(NSA), subj: United States Military Assistance to Israel (NSDM 315), 24 May 1976, folder Israel 091.3 (Jan-Sep) 1976, box 72, Acc 330-79-0049.

104. Memo, ASD(ISA) for SecDef, “Israeli Military Requirements,” 9 Sep 1976, folder Israel 091.3 (Jan-Sep) 1976; memo, ASD(ISA) for SecDef, “Israeli Acquisition of Military Materiel,” 12 Oct 1976, folder Israel 091.3 (Oct-Dec) 1976: both in box 72, Acc 330-79-0049. Ford’s decision was circulated formally on 20 October; General Adan received written notification on 30 December. Memo, Brent Scowcroft to SecState and SecDef, 20 Oct 1976, subj: Approval of Military Items for Israel; ltr, Rear Adm. Gerald Thomas to Maj. Gen. Adan, 30 Dec 1976: both in folder Israel 091.3 (Oct-Dec) 1976, box 72, Acc 330-79-0049.

105. “October 6, 1976 Debate Transcript: The Second Carter-Ford Presidential Debate,” The Commission on Presidential Debates, <https://www.debates.org/voter-education/debate-transcripts/october-6-1976-debate-transcript/>; Lee Lescaze, “New Arms Aid to Israel Set,” *Washington Post*, 12 Oct 1976, A1.

106. John Maclean, “\$1 Billion in Military Aid,” *Chicago Tribune*, 12 Oct 1976, 2.

107. Memo, Hyland for SecState and SecDef, “Approval of Military Arms for Israel,” 22 Dec 1976, folder Israel 091.3 (Oct-Dec) 1976, box 72, Acc 330-79-0049; memo, Rumsfeld for Scowcroft, 4 Dec 1976, subj: Approval of Military items for Israel, folder Israel 091.3 (Oct-Dec) 1976, box 72, Acc 330-79-0049.

108. Review of Israeli Military Requirements, Fiscal Year 1977–1978, Middle East Arms Transfer Panel, 22 Oct 1976, folder Israel 091.3 (Oct-Dec) 1976, box 72, Acc 330-79-0049. Rear Adm. Staser Holcomb, who had been Rumsfeld’s military assistant, wrote to Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter’s national security adviser, in February 1977, about the panel review, writing, “Obviously these conclusions deal with a sensitive and controversial subject. Indeed, the transmission of the paper was delayed prior to January 20 because Secretary Rumsfeld did not agree with its conclusions.” Memo, Holcomb for Brzezinski, 9 Feb 1977, folder 091.3 Israel (Jan-Apr) 1977, box 70, Acc 330-80-0017. Holcomb had composed a handwritten memo on January 7, 1976, to ASD(ISA) Amos Jordan, explaining that Rumsfeld found the panel review “a bad piece of work” and directed that “nothing further should be done with the subject. Please cease and desist.” Memo, Holcomb for ASD(ISA), 7 Jan 1977, folder Israel 091.3 (Oct-Dec) 1976, box 72, Acc 330-79-0049.

109. Quandt, *Peace Process*, 130–135; Indyk, *Master of the Game*, 220; Douglas Little, “The Cold War in the Middle East” in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 2, *Crisis and Détente*, Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., 318–322.

110. Clyde Mark, *Israel: U.S. Foreign Assistance*, CRS Issue Brief (1994), 1.