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MAY 1 1963

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NEA/NE

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. McGEORGE BUNDY
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Reply to Prime Minister Ben-Gurion

We enclose the proposed text of a reply by the President to Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's letter of April 26. The approved reply will be delivered to the Ambassador of Israel in the form of a note for transmission to the Prime Minister. We plan to telegraph the text to Ambassador Barbour for his information.

TAIPEI

William B. Connett, Jr.

William H. Brubeck
Executive Secretary

Enclosure:

Draft reply.

*copy to MDA/Herman
12/13/68
Mr SPW*

S/S - RO

MAY 1 1963

[Signature]
A true copy of signed original

*Reply
Drafted by
U = G. Ball*

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GROUP 3
Downgraded at 12 year
intervals; not
automatically declassified

NEA:NE:RCStrong:ni:
4/30/63

JFH/Israel

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OUTGOING TELEGRAM Department of State

EYES ONLY

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Origin
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ACTION: AmEmbassy TEL AVIV PRIORITY 780

Info: EYES ONLY FOR AMBASSADOR

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Following verbatim text letter from President to Prime Minister

Ben-Gurion. ~~XX~~

"I hasten to reply to your message of April 26. Let me assure you again of our own deep concern over the security and integrity of Israel. We are watching closely the current developments in the Arab world, and seeking to ensure that they do not take a form dangerous to the security of any nation in the area. We have Israel's defense problems very much in mind in this regard.

"I strongly agree with you that the preservation of peace in the Middle East is an interest which both our nations deeply share. I also agree with your view that in and of itself the aspiration toward unity among the Arabs is not something to which we should be opposed, if it results from free choice among the Arabs. At the same time, we have publicly stated and shown by action on many occasions that we support those Arab states which may prefer to remain independent and whose freedom of action may be jeopardized. We have recently reiterated our position on this point in the appropriate capitals, and I believe that our cautionary statements will not be ignored. Both our countries must continue to be alert to all the developing implications of the current movement for Arab unity; the

Drafted by: NEA:NE:RPD Davies:nrs:5-4-63

Telegraphic transmission and classification approved by: NEA - James P. Grant

Clearances:

NE - Mr. Strong
White House: Mr. Komer
White House: Mr. Bundy

S/S: Mr. Lubkeman
U: Mr. Hartman (informed)

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future of this movement and the rapidity of its development are not at all clear at present.

"I agree with your view that it would be irresponsible to make light of continued Arab threats to liberate "Palestine," and I fully understand the concern which you and your Government feel with respect to certain phrases in the document of April 17th signed by Egypt, Syria and Iraq. Any policies and purposes supported by such phrases will have the continued opposition of the United States, and our steadfast position on this point will not be modified by the reiteration of these long-standing Arab views in a new document. While I recognize fully the feelings in your own country at the new form in which these Arab policies are now expressed, I hope you will understand me if I add that in our judgment in Washington the practical significance of these declarations is not substantively different from that of the many earlier similar declarations put out in other forms and phrases. Certainly our own concern for the security of Israel and the peace of the area remains unaffected.

"Right now, of course, we are all particularly concerned about the possible effects of the current developments on Jordan. I understand clearly the importance you attach to Jordan, and we shall do our best to prevent a dangerous situation from arising, but our ability to help will depend not only upon us but upon you. In this situation, as in others which relate to Israel's security and the future of the area, it is most important for us to continue to be in closest touch. It is equally important that both our nations refrain from precipitous actions or reactions, which could well exacerbate rather than

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improve the situation, and also provide the Soviet Union with a further opportunity to extend its influence in the area.

"In this context I have real reservations -- as I think you foresaw that I might -- about the notion of a joint declaration by Chairman Khrushchev and myself. In the light of the many issues which divide the United States from the Soviet Government at this moment, it would be hard for me to make any move of this kind jointly with Chairman Khrushchev. But quite aside from this difficulty, I do not think that a joint declaration would be helpful in the Middle East, in view of the role which the Soviet Union has played in the supplying of munitions and in other trouble-making activities in the Arab world in recent years. I do not think anything they would accept would advance the purposes which you and I share. In these circumstances a joint declaration could only be regarded as a sign of increased Soviet prestige and influence, and a reinforcement to forces in the area which are not interested in stability or in the safety of Israel.

"Meanwhile let me repeat that I understand the gravity of your concern, although I do not fully understand your suggestion that if this particular proposal is not feasible, 'the situation in the Middle East assumes a gravity without parallel.' Fully recognizing the risks inherent in the situation in Jordan, we believe that in recent days the immediate danger there has been somewhat reduced, and we share your own estimate that against any early Arab attack, Israel is more than able to defend itself. Thus unless hasty and shortsighted action should upset the present situation, we believe that there

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is time to work for increased stability with a somewhat longer view of the problem.

"It is in fact the prospects of the longer view which seem most serious to us. The danger which we foresee is not so much that of an early Arab attack as that of a successful development of advanced offensive systems which, as you say, could not be dealt with by presently available means. I have expressed before my deep personal conviction that reciprocal and competitive development of such weapons would dangerously threaten the stability of the area. I believe that we should consider carefully together how such a trend can be forestalled.

"Both in this longer view and in the immediate context of possible disturbances in Jordan, I continue to believe deeply that the efforts of the United States to develop effective relations with the Arab states are in fact in the long-term interest of Israel at least as much as of the United States or the Arab countries themselves. These effective relations, in my judgment, have significantly increased our influence with Arab leaders, and this influence is always exercised in behalf of the peace of the area and with full regard for the security of Israel. Thus I really cannot agree with the suggestion that our limited economic assistance to the United Arab Republic can be considered as a force which serves 'to set the Russian arms in motion against Israel when the opportunity offers.' If this were our view, obviously, we would never have begun or continued such assistance. Our own belief is that in reality these economic relations reduce the dangerous influence of the Soviet Union and serve as a restraint on any Arab action which might be destructive to the peace of the area and the interests of the United States. And of course, as you know, we have

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never allowed Arab objections to affect our continuing policy of warm support for and assistance to Israel -- as demonstrated most recently in our agreement to make Hawk missiles available and, before that, in our agreement to help in the matter of water from Lake Tiberias.

"It is most generous of you to offer to come quickly and privately to Washington, leaving behind even for a brief period your own pressing responsibilities. If such a meeting could really remain private, I think it might be most useful, but experience tells me that at a time like this, when public attention is focused on your part of the world and the role of the United States in it, there is no reasonable prospect that you and I could meet without publicity. I fear that a public meeting would have the effect of increasing the level of tension in the area and of promoting speculation which could only be dangerous to our common purpose of maintaining stability and peace. When circumstances change, or if the urgencies should increase, I shall certainly bear in mind your generous suggestion.

"In conclusion, let me assure you again, in this time of dramatic events in the Middle East, that your views and your proposals will always be most carefully considered here. This nation's actions will fully sustain its long and particular friendship for Israel and its attachment to the security and well-being of your country. On this we stand firm, as I was glad to be able to reaffirm to Mrs. Meir during our talk last December. And as I also said to Mrs. Meir, we count deeply on your Government for understanding and recognition of the purposes and responsibilities which inescapably fall to us in the effort to prevent aggression and sustain the peace of the Middle East.

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