

INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

116  
BUNDY-SMITH  
ALEXANDER  
BELK

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Action  
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Info

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PP RUEHCR  
DE RUQVVL 545 15/2110Z  
P 152100Z ZEA  
FM AMEMBASSY TELAVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC  
STATE GRNC  
BT

*James ...*

GRASE  
DINGEMAN  
DUNGAN  
FORRESTA  
JOHNSON  
KLEIN  
KOMER

~~SECRET~~ PRIORITY 1054

1964 APR 16 AM 9 59  
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APRIL 15 11 P M

SMITH, WM. Y

LINDIS

SAW PRIMIN ESHKOL TODAY AT HIS REQUEST FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE DAY RECEPTION JERUSALEM, AT WHICH TIME HE HANDED ME RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S LETTER OF MARCH 19. TEXT FOLLOWS:

"DEAR MR. PRESIDENT

I HAVE GIVEN CAREFUL THOUGHT TO YOUR MESSAGE ON THE DIMONA MATTER, TRANSMITTED TO ME BY AMBASSADOR BARBOUR ON MARCH 23.  
CFN 1054 15 19 23

PAGE 2 RUQVVL 545 ~~SECRET~~

IT IS WITH MUCH REGRET THAT I HAVE TO INFORM YOU THAT MY DEEPENING CONCERN FOR ISRAEL'S SECURITY DOES NOT PERMIT ME TO DEPART FROM THE POSITION I CONVEYED TO YOU THROUGH AMBASSADOR BARBOUR ON MARCH 3. ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN,

THE COURSE YOU SUGGEST DERIVES, AS I UNDERSTAND, FROM THE CONSIDERATION THAT PRESIDENT NASSER'S FEAR MAY DRIVE HIM TO A CHOICE BETWEEN ACCELERATING THE UAR MILITARY BUILD-UP OR A DESPERATE PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK. WE ARE, HOWEVER, CONVINCED THAT THE RATE AND SCOPE OF THE EXPANSION OF THE EGYPTIAN WAR MACHINE IS DETERMINED BY THE DEVELOPING POTENTIAL OF EGYPT AND THE AVAILABILITY OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE, MILITARY AND ECONOMIC. MOREOVER, IT WOULD APPEAR TO US TO BE BEYOND DOUBT THAT IS PRESIDENT NASSER CONSIDER THAT ISRAEL'S MILITARY CAPACITY HAD DETERIORATED BEYOND THE MARGIN OF SAFETY, HE WOULD NOT HESITATE TO UTILIZE WHAT WOULD APPEAR TO HIM TO BE A SUITABLE OPPORTUNITY FOR LAUNCHING SUDDEN ATTACK. THIS IS INDEED THE THESIS WHICH, IN FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF THE U.N. CHARTER, HE CONSISTENTLY PROPAGATES TO HIS OWN PEOPLE AND TO THE OTHER ARAB PEOPLES OF THE MIDDLE EAST.

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E.O. 13292, Sec. 3.5

NLJ 03-192

By *iw*, NARA, Date 12-15-03

~~SECRET~~

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~~SECRET~~

-2- 1054, APRIL 15, 11 PM, FROM TEL AVIV

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THESE PROCLAMATION ARE ACCOMPANIED BY EXTENSIVE WAR PREPARATIONS. IS IT THEN NOT SAFER TO ASSUME THAT THE PROSPECT OF WAR WILL RECEDE IN THE MEASURE THAT HIS APPREHENSIONS WILL INCREASE AND, CONVERSELY, THAT THE DANGER OF WAR WILL GROW MORE ACUTE IF HIS APPREHENSIONS REGARDING ISRAEL'S DETERRENT CAPACITY ARE ALLAYED?

ON THE FURTHER QUESTION OF THE POSSIBLE EXPLOITATION BY PRESIDENT NASSER OF THE PROPOSED REASSURANCE, IT IS OUR VIEW THAT PRESIDENT NASSER MIGHT UTILIZE IT IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN HIS APPEAL TO THE OTHER ARAB STATES FOR CONCERTED AGGRESSION AGAINST ISRAEL. THERE IS THE FURTHER CONSIDERATION THAT HAVING REGARD TO THE OSCILLATING PATTERN OF PRESIDENT NASSER'S FOREIGN POLICY, HE MIGHT FIND IT OPPORTUNE IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES TO REVEAL AND EXPLOIT THE EXISTENCE OF A SPECIAL U.S. - ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP. THE RECORD OF THE MIDDLE EAST OVER THE PAST DECADE IS REplete WITH EVIDENCE OF PRESIDENT NASSER'S UNRELIABILITY. THE FACT THAT ON A PREVIOUS OCCASION HE REFRAINED FROM ABUSING CONFIDENCE ON THIS PARTICULAR MATTER CANNOT, IN OUR VIEW, GUARANTEE THE EXERCISE OF RESTRAINT ON HIS PART IN THE FUTURE.

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LET ME ASSURE YOU, MR. PRESIDENT, THAT I HAVE WEIGHED UP THIS MATTER MOST CAREFULLY FROM EVERY ANGLE, AND DO NOT LIGHTLY REITERATE MY RESERVATIONS. IN THE EVOLVING SITUATION IN THE AREA, THE ASSESSMENTS AND CALCULATIONS IN THE MIND OF THE MAN WHO UNREMITTINGLY PROPAGATES A DOCTRINE OF WAR AGAINST ISRAEL, ARE HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT. NO GOVERNMENT IN CIRCUMSTANCES SIMILAR TO THOSE IN WHICH WE FIND OURSELVES, COULD PERMIT ITSELF TO FOREGO EVEN A PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE. IF WE HAD CONCRETE EVIDENCE THAT PRESIDENT NASSER WAS ABANDONING HIS DECLARED POLICY OF AGGRESSION, WE COULD OF COURSE RECONSIDER OUR POSITION. AT THIS STAGE, UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS NO SIGN OF ANY SUCH DEVELOPMENT.

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-3- 1054, APRIL 15, 11 PM, FROM TEL AVIV

IN THE LIGHT OF YOUR INTEREST IN ISRAEL'S SECURITY AND WELL-BEING, I AM SURE YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THE MOTIVES FOR THE POSITION I FEEL OBLIGED TO TAKE.

LEVI ESHKOL\*  
CONVERSATION LASTING APPROX FORTY-FIVE MINUTES FOLLOWED DURING WHICH PREVIOUS GROUND GONE OVER IN SOME DETAIL. HOWEVER, IN RESPONSE MY QUESTION AS TO WHETHER HE CONSIDERED DECISION IRREVOCABLE, PRIMIN STATED MIND NOT NECESSARILY MADE UP FOR ALL TIME.

GP-3

BARBOUR  
BT

~~SECRET~~

U.S. Ambassador Walworth Barbour provides Secretary of State Dean Rusk with text of Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol's message to President Lyndon B. Johnson in which Eshkol expresses concern over the scope and capability of Egypt's military might. Department Of State, 16 Apr. 1964. U.S. Declassified Documents Online, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349615337/USDD?u=wash74137&sid=USDD&xid=0150d2f0>. Accessed 30 July 2020.