

NE/E:FMDickman 3/28/63

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: March 27, 1963

SUBJECT: Task Force Meeting No. 1 - Arms Control of the Near East

PARTICIPANTS: NEA - James P. Grant
INR - Robert B. Elwood
S/P - William Polk
NE - Robert C. Strong
NE/E - Francois M. Dickman

Declassified Case: NW#
57160 Date: 09-18-2023

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Mr. Grant said he had called the meeting to establish a small task force on arms control in the Near East, in part for the purpose of implementing the National Security Action Memorandum No. 231, March 26, 1963. Mr. Grant noted that the memorandum on arms control in the Near East could be broken down into three parts: 1) to undertake every feasible measure to improve



With respect to the first action, Mr. Elwood said CIA has the primary responsibility. The key office would be the Office of Scientific Intelligence in the Agency which sits in on several highly technical committees created for the purpose of gathering this type of information. Mr. Elwood believed that CIA may already have started working on this problem. He proposed to talk to CIA and suggested that INR act as liaison. Mr. Strong noted that there remained a number of intelligence gaps on the and these should be identified as soon as possible. Mr. Polk observed that it had been his experience that there were a number of highly specialized committees within our intelligence community each dealing with special bits of information. Often, this information was not accessible without special security clearance. Someone in the task force would have to collect and collate all these different pieces. Mr. Polk agreed to prepare a memorandum identifying different intelligence gathering committees, the type of clearance required, and the administrative arrangements necessary to gain access to the material prepared by these committees.

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With regard to the second action (arrangements for inspection), Mr. Grant said this responsibility was clearly with the Department. Mr. Strong noted that NEA, with the assistance of the Science Advisor's office, had handled all previous arrangements for the informal inspections of [redacted]. In fact, arrangements for the next informal inspection were virtually completed.

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As to action on the third part, Mr. Grant said he believed that Mr. Polk's study "The Palestine Problem: The Next Phase" was a good start for developing a rationale as to the desirability of proceeding with an arms limitation and control arrangement in the Near East. Mr. Grant noted that NEA had made a number of suggested changes to Mr. Polk's paper and hoped this could become the initial working paper for the Task Force. Mr. Grant then asked Mr. Polk to summarize the highlights of his recent visit to the UAR and Israel.

Mr. Polk said that when he was in Cairo, he spoke to President Nasser for over two hours during which there was a general review of security interests in the Middle East. Nasser agreed that U.S. estimates on arms costs were generally accurate and that it was consuming an increasing proportion of the UAR's Gross National Product. Payments to the bloc for arms were beginning to bite into cotton exports which might otherwise be sold in hard currency markets. Nasser also seemed to understand that our decision to sell Hawk missiles to Israel meant that we would not let him gain a clear superiority in weaponry vis a vis Israel. Nasser was also very much aware of deficiencies in the UAR's own defense citing Israeli overflights of Cairo. He had complained about the poor Soviet radar equipment the UAR had received and he was worried about his defensive capabilities. Nasser had indicated his hope of developing alternative sources of sophisticated weapons by building them at home and had referred to the construction of the ME-300 fighter plane. Nasser had said that he did not have ready access to Soviet arms and had had to write to Khrushchev personally for the MIG-19 and MIG-21. He was now contemplating buying the MIG-23, although he appreciated the fact that many of these weapons were becoming obsolescent very rapidly. While agreeing with the thesis that the UAR was spending a great deal on arms which it could ill-afford, Nasser had emphasized that it was only for defense.

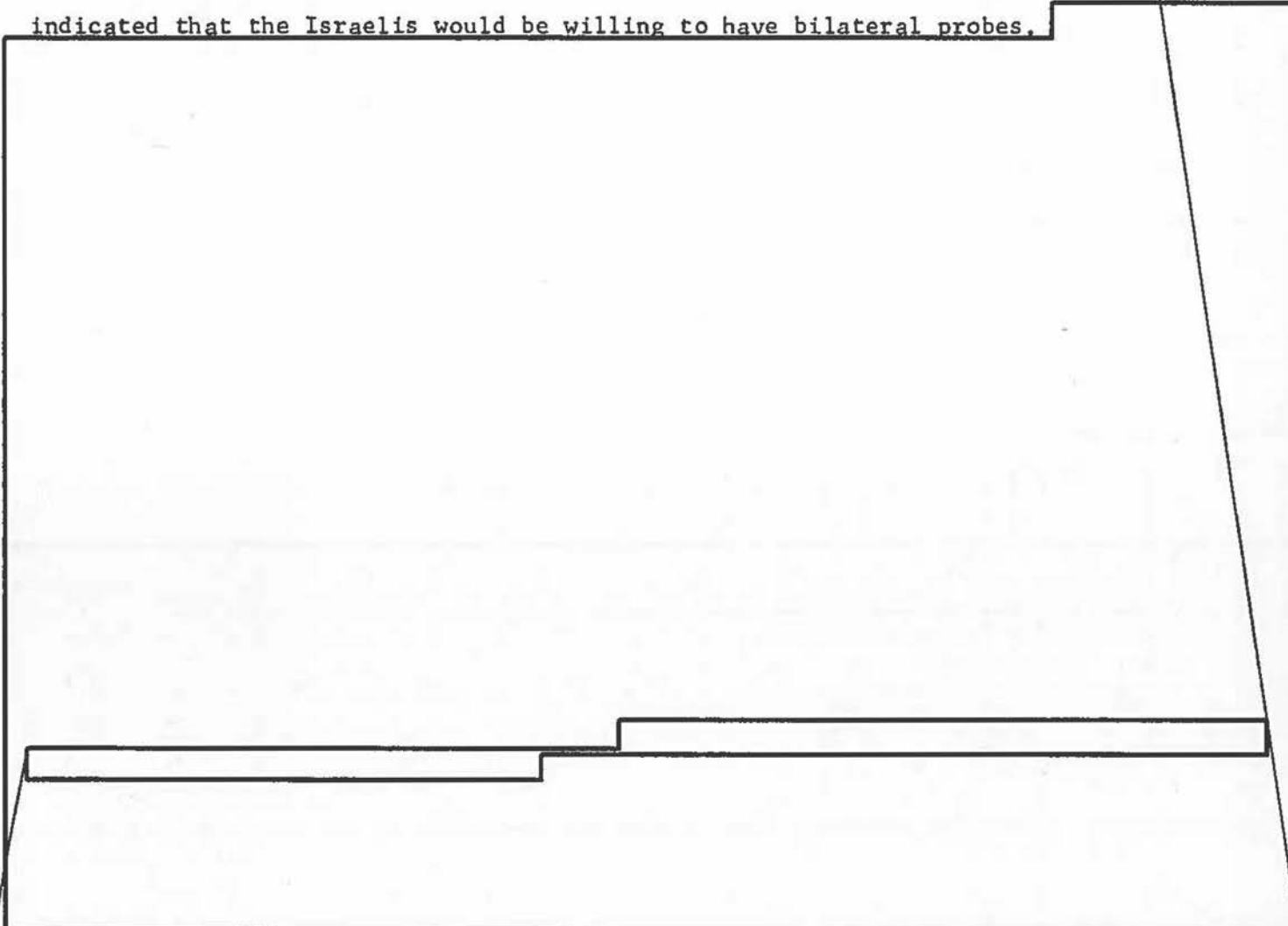
When Mr. Polk had touched on the need to find ways to contain this arms race, Nasser had recalled the 1956 Anderson Mission. While the idea of direct confrontation with Ben Gurion remained out of the question; (the principal cause for the failure of the mission), Mr. Polk was left with the impression that Nasser would be willing to discuss control measures for highly sophisticated weapons, Nasser had seemed to be very interested in learning more about the surveillance techniques we had developed during the Cuban crisis.

In Israel, Mr. Polk had spoken to Gideon Raphael, Director General of the Foreign Ministry. The Israelis had also referred to the Anderson Mission. Agreeing that the idea of a direct Nasser-Ben Gurion confrontation was out of the question, Raphael had

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indicated that the Israelis would be willing to have bilateral probes.



Before the meeting closed, attention was directed to the following topics which will be the subject of further discussion:

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- 1) The need to divide proposals on arms control into at least two stages:
 - a) stopping further escalation of sophisticated armaments, and
 - b) disarmament of weapons currently on hand. If the first objective could be gained, we would be left with a more manageable situation.

2) How to approach the UAR. It was recognized that U.S. leverage with the UAR is limited, that Nasser will not denude himself militarily, and that the UAR's desire to increase its military capability encompasses much more than the Israeli problem.

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3) The need for studies of the latest techniques and methods of surveillance. The best method would be the one with the minimum impingement on the sovereignty of the parties concerned and one which could be kept secret at least in the initial stages.

4) The degree of secrecy if an agreement is negotiated. It was agreed that tight secrecy would have to be maintained throughout the negotiating period but thereafter, parts of the agreement would likely become public knowledge.

5) Encouraging Nasser to take the lead in calling for nuclear-free and germ warfare free zones in the Near East and Africa.

6) Personnel who should be added to the Task Force. It was agreed that the number should remain very small. Nasser would not be able to cooperate if the action program became public knowledge.

7) Developing a work list of subjects with which the Task Force must be familiar in order to develop its approach.

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