

vened with participation of all parties, including the Palestinians. The big powers should participate in the peace conference as well.

304. Memorandum From Secretary of Defense Schlesinger to President Nixon¹

Washington, November 1, 1973.

SUBJECT

Impact of the Mideast War

(TS) This memorandum provides my initial reaction to the recent Mideast crisis and to the transfer of military equipment to Israel. I take great pride in your satisfaction with the Defense Department's performance during this crisis. I am concerned, however, by the degradation of our conventional deterrent due to the loss of critical materiel (which aggravated existing shortages), the wear on our supply system and the reluctance of our allies to minimize the cost of our airlift. It is extremely important, in my view, that the critical items sent to Israel from our assets be replaced as rapidly as possible and that the readiness of our general purpose forces be improved beyond that extant on October 6.

(TS) A wide range of military equipment, in addition to that programmed prior to the outbreak of hostilities, has now been approved for delivery. Our cost estimates are admittedly rough and still being refined, but it is clear that it will cost us over \$825 million to replace all the materiel sent to date, and over \$2.2 billion if we send everything the Israelis have requested. We anticipate being reimbursed for these deliveries in some form. But reimbursements will not cover the full replacement costs, and in the interim we face a significant financial deficit.

(TS) Of more importance, however, is the burden these transfers place upon the readiness margin on which the credibility of our conventional deterrent rests. In several cases the requirement to resupply Israel necessitated drawing assets from our active forces and reduced our own military readiness to a significant degree. Among the transfers having the greatest impact on our readiness have been:

—The transfer of 34 F4E aircraft. This brought Air Force assets to about six squadrons below authorized strength. Twenty of the F4Es

¹ Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, James Schlesinger Papers, Box 14, Middle East. Top Secret.

provided were the latest series, the only type capable of delivering the Maverick missile. Their transfer reduced our total inventory of this type aircraft to 48.

—The transfer of 172 M60 tanks. The drawdown from our war reserve and prepositioned stocks in Europe, in conjunction with prior shortages, reduces our ability to mobilize by over 7 armored battalions. If we transfer the 1000 tanks Israel has requested, it could take 33 months to restore our inventory of October 6.

—The transfer of 105mm armor piercing discarding sabot tank gun ammunition. This reduces our war reserve for Europe by 16% and cuts into our training capabilities. It will take approximately 10 months to replace these; about 30 months if the entire Israeli request is met.

—The transfer of 81 TOW launchers. This reduces our antitank combat capability in Europe by the equivalent of 3 battalions, depletes our stocks in the United States and reduces our training base by 44%. It could take about 5 months to restore our October 6 stockage. If the Israeli request of 320 launchers were met, it would take 7 months to restore our prewar inventory.

—The transfer of 400 Maverick missiles. This reduces our total inventory by 49%; they can be replaced in 3 months. Israeli requests for 800 missiles could be replaced in 6 months.

—The transfer of 8 CH53 helicopters from the Marine Corps. This reduces the effectiveness of one of their 6 operational squadrons by about half. Replacement will take 11 months. It would take 33 months to replace the complete Israeli requests of 25 helicopters.

—The transfer of 46 A4 aircraft. This reduced our naval inventory of this aircraft by 17% and will degrade our training. Replacement will take 30 months. The total Israeli request of 53 A4s could be replaced in approximately 48 months.

(TS) We have consciously and systematically sought to minimize the impact on our military posture. Actions are being taken to accelerate the production of selected items, such as the TOW, and to reopen closed production lines for critical items of equipment. And, as the attached table indicates,² we still possess a very potent overall military capability and much of our military inventory will remain intact.

(TS) Still, many of the transfers are significant in terms of those special items which we depend upon to give us the military edge over Soviet forces. This is particularly the case if all Israeli requests are met as well as those of our other allies—requests which may proliferate as a result of satisfying Israeli desires.

² Attached, but not printed.

(TS) Should our readiness be eroded further by the necessity to transfer additional materiel to Indochina because of a new military offensive by the North Vietnamese, coming as it may before the gaps caused by the Mideast crisis have been filled, our conventional deterrent could well be significantly degraded. Because of my concern that any decline in our military posture would be detrimental at this juncture—on the eve of our MBFR proposals and amid hints that another crisis may be brewing—I am preparing and will forward to you a detailed proposal for a supplemental appropriation to bring our military readiness to the necessary level as soon as possible.

(TS) The response of our European allies to our request for overflight and basing rights was a disappointment. This refusal to cooperate imposed limitations on our airlift which were manifested in reduced responsiveness and lift capability. This was particularly frustrating when compared with Soviet overflights in the region. We will have to review the adequacy of our strategic airlift posture in view of this lack of allied cooperation.

(TS) Finally, I believe the crisis has underlined the necessity for the United States to move with great dispatch toward the diminution of our dependency on oil from the Mideast. Events have made it clear that our ability to respond effectively to such crises is sensitive to temporary disruptions because of fuel shortages.

(U) These represent my initial reactions on this matter and I will report further as our view of the total impact improves.

J.R. Schlesinger