



S/S 2787

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

FEB 23 1970

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PAF  
(info item)

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. HENRY A. KISSINGER  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Possible Consequences in North Africa  
of U.S. Response to Israeli Arms  
Request

Enclosed for your information is a copy of a  
memorandum prepared for the Acting Secretary by the  
Acting Assistant Secretary for African Affairs.

*Theodore L. Eliot Jr.*

Theodore L. Eliot, Jr.  
Executive Secretary

Enclosure:  
Copy of February 14  
Memorandum to Acting  
Secretary

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SUBJECT: Possible Consequences in North Africa of U.S.  
Response to Israeli Arms Request - INFORMATION  
MEMORANDUM

The Problem

The President's announcement on January 30 that the decision on the Israeli arms request will be made within the next thirty days, and the Secretary's presence in Morocco and Tunisia have focused North African attention on the U.S. response in an ominous way. It is clear that the North Africans expect the decision to be favorable to the Israelis and that all of the governments in the area, including the moderates, would be subjected to substantial pressure by local public opinion, as well as by the radical Arabs, to retaliate against the United States. We believe Morocco and Tunisia would endeavor to resist these pressures. However, they would have to yield to them at least to some degree in view of the recent evidence of the growth of public support in both countries for the Palestine cause.

Discussion

It goes without saying that a decision to postpone action on the Israeli request would have a positive effect on our relations with all four North African states, although not in any dramatic manner.

To the extent that we agree to provide further advanced aircraft, however, we risk severe damage to U.S. interests in the area.

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Downgraded at 12-year intervals,  
not automatically declassified.

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### Libya

Our most exposed position is in Libya because of our important oil interests, the size of our American colony and the fact that we are still liquidating Wheelus. Libya's recent contract with France for the purchase by the end of 1974 of "some 100" advanced aircraft has of course given added momentum to the Israeli arms request. In a sense, the Libyans "created" the present problem of dealing with the Israelis because of their purchase of Mirages. This fact is, however, unlikely to influence the Libyan reaction in view of the current superiority of the Israeli Air Force and the minimum 3 to 5 year interval before the French aircraft are likely to be operational.

The Libyan reaction could, at worst, mean the rupture of diplomatic relations, which we doubt, or, perhaps, a request that we close our Embassy office in Benghazi or our cultural centers. Pressures against the American-controlled oil industry would certainly be increased, and efforts to improve our bilateral relations and to expand our dialogue with the regime would be severely set back. A physical attack on our installations--permitted by the LARG--is also conceivable.

### Tunisia and Morocco

In Tunisia and Morocco, the governments would not wish to take any direct actions against U.S. interests. Popular, and particularly student, discontent with the U.S. decision could, however, result in demonstrations against U.S. installations: the Embassies, the USIS centers, and possibly against Kenitra (U.S. Navy communications facility in Morocco). In the longer run, these same pressures might force Morocco and Tunisia to diverge increasingly from their close relationship with the U.S. The Tunisian government's desire to avoid a confrontation with the students during the Secretary's visit and Prime Minister Ladgham's statement to the Secretary that the U.S. must assume a prime share of the responsibility for Israel's aggressive attitude are two signs of the erosion of the U.S. position. In both countries opposition elements are seizing this issue and the regimes' ties to the U.S. to undermine internal stability.

### Algeria

In Algeria the recent improvement in relations would suffer a setback. We believe any possibility of an early resumption of relations would be nullified by a decision favoring the Israelis. In view of Algeria's longer term importance in North Africa, we believe it would be most unfortunate if our relative isolation from the regime should be prolonged.

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In our view we should exhaust all non-military alternatives as answers to any Israeli security problem, before again moving against North African sentiments; the most provocative signal to the North Africans, of course, would be to furnish additional Phantom jets.

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