

UNITED STATES SECURITY ASSISTANCE

TO ISRAEL 1967-1979

THESIS

Lance J. Newbold, B.A.  
Captain, USA

AFIT/GLM/LAL/95S-13

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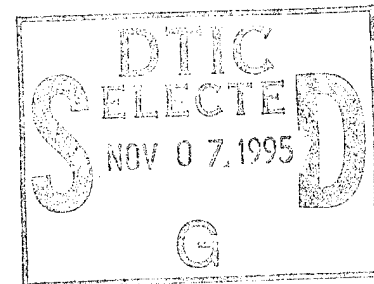
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Air University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Science in Logistics Management

Lance J. Newbold, B.A.

Captain, USA

September 1995

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**Abstract**

U.S.-Israeli relations are unique and unmatched by American relations with any other foreign country. This relationship has been especially important in the area of security assistance, however, it was not until after the Six Day War in 1967, that the United States became the main supplier of arms to Israel. The examination of U.S. foreign policy and its security assistance implications towards Israel from the Six Day War in 1967 through the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1979 are the focus of this study.

As a historical study, this research relies on the review of substantial amounts of literature, both primary and secondary sources. Finding multiple sources of information, comparing and contrasting the information, and noting themes is the primary method of analysis.

Results of this study produced three factors that shaped U.S. foreign policy and security assistance towards Israel during the period. The first was the strategic factor of countering the influence of the Soviet Union in the region. The second factor was the desire of the United States to seek peace in the Middle East. The final factor was American involvement in Vietnam and scars of that involvement that influenced American policy after the war.

## *UNITED STATES SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL 1967-1979*

### **I. Introduction**

#### **Background**

Throughout the history of the United States, many alliances have been formed, some of long duration reflecting shared values and commitments, such as the U.S. relationship with Great Britain, while many more have been of convenient short-term duration reflecting the temporary need of one or more parties, such as the World War II alliance with the Soviet Union. However, nowhere in the 218-year history of the United States has there been a relationship between this country and another like the relationship between the U.S. and Israel. This unique relationship “has come to be one of the strongest, if strangest, in history” (Melman and Raviv, 1993: xiv). In fact, no nation exerts more influence on Israel and has been more historically linked with that country than the United States. As one Middle East expert wrote on the importance of America to Israel:

One important aspect of the friendship cannot be ignored: The United States has many allies, and Israel has only one. Israel is quite important to a few Americans, but of only occasional interest to most. To all Israelis on the other hand, the United States is extremely important. (Melman and Raviv, 1993: xv)

The forming of this relationship began with a “yes” vote on November 29, 1947, by the U.S. delegation to the United Nations on the proposal to divide Palestine into Arab and Jewish sectors. Although Palestine was not to divide in the peaceful manner that the United Nations and the U.S. had hoped, it did divide when the Jewish leadership in Palestine announced the creation of the independent state of Israel. The United States

became the first nation to officially recognize the new government of Israel 11 minutes after midnight on May 15, 1948--the first day of the Jewish state, thus taking the first step in cementing the relationship (Melman and Raviv, 1993: 32).

The newly formed nation, surrounded by hostile neighbors and accepting a flood of Jewish immigrants from around the world, depended on its allies to provide assistance; the United States was there to ensure the survival of the nation. At first this assistance was economic. The United States imposed an arms embargo in the Middle East in an attempt to avoid bloodshed between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This economic assistance included \$333.9 billion in loans and \$1012.5 billion in grants (1982 U.S. dollars) from 1951 through 1958 and ensured the economic survival of Israel so the nation could commit its resources to defending its borders (Organski, 1990: 142).

The vast majority of military assistance to Israel throughout the 1950s was provided by France. The Israelis desperately sought American arms and the American protection they believed came with the arms. However, outside of small quantities of defensive weapons sold, the large arms deals with the U.S. financed loans were not to come until 1959. Through the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, the spigot of U.S. arms opened further for the Israelis with the sales of tanks, HAWK air defense missile systems, and attack aircraft. By the conclusion of the Six Day War in June 1967, the United States had become the primary supplier of both economic and security assistance aid, a position it would maintain until present time. It is this assumption of the role as the leading provider of Israeli arms and security assistance following the Six Day War in 1967 through the American role in securing peace with Egypt in 1979 that this research paper will examine and analyze.

Before analyzing the security assistance provided to Israel it is important to briefly define some of the aspects of U.S. security assistance policy. The Management of Security Assistance published by The Defense Institute of Security Assistance

Management of the United States government defines security assistance as an umbrella term covering many different components. The book continues that from a legislative perspective that security assistance includes military assistance, economic support fund, military education and training, peacekeeping operations, anti-terrorism assistance sales of defense articles or services, or any license in effect to export defense articles (DISAM, 1990: 2-1--2-2).

In order to narrow down the subject for better analysis, this paper will limit its study of security assistance to only a few aspects of the term. These subjects include arms transfers, including sales, grants, and loans pertaining to arms transfers, logistical support of systems including delivery of the systems, and U.S. policy decisions affecting Israeli security.

### **Problem Statement**

From 1967 through 1979, the United States expended tremendous resources providing for the security assistance of Israel. Despite U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia and the Arab oil embargo, the United States became the staunchest supporter of Israel in the world. Identifying the factors that shaped U.S. foreign policy, and its security assistance implications, to Israel from 1967 until 1979 is the fundamental purpose of this research.

### **Objectives**

The overall question this paper will attempt to answer is as follows: What factors shaped U.S. foreign policy and security assistance towards Israel during 1967-1979? This research will address this question by emphasizing three related, but subordinate questions:

1. What were the threats, real and perceived, to Israel's survival?

2. What were the threats, real and perceived, to U.S. interests in the Middle East?
3. What was U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East, in general, and Israel in particular?
4. How did U.S. foreign policy shape security assistance to Israel?

## **Summary**

This research focuses on the period of 1967-1979. This period is important because it covers the major change in American security assistance to Israel from that of a relatively small role to the role as the leading supplier of security assistance to Israel. The format of this thesis is in a five chapter layout. The next chapter will explain the methodology and data collection used in researching this paper. Chapter 3 will present a historical overview of the history of Israel and its relationship with the U.S. from the British mandate in Palestine, through the recognition of the new state by President Truman, until the eve of the Six Day War in 1967. Chapter 4 will provide an in-depth analysis of U.S. security assistance and foreign policy from the Six Day War until the signing of the peace accords with Egypt in 1979. Finally, Chapter 5 will summarize the findings and present a conclusion to the research problem of identifying the factors that shaped U.S. foreign policy and security assistance to Israel from 1967-1979.

## **II. Methodology**

### **Chapter Overview**

This chapter discusses the methodology used in conducting this research. The first step explains the plan for collecting the data and includes a description of the primary research instrument used. The second and final part of this chapter illustrates the methods of analyzing and verifying the data to ensure proper conclusions are drawn.

### **Data Collection Plan**

The factors that shaped United States security assistance to Israel during 1967-1979 are best examined from a historical perspective. Given the historical nature of this research objective, the most appropriate method for addressing it involved a thorough analysis of previously conducted research and original historical documents on the subject.

The first step in this research was to examine previously conducted research. The benefit of previously conducted research is that it provides a good initial step in exploring the subject. Previous research can eliminate many erroneous avenues of research as well as inform the researcher of conclusions, thoughts, and attitudes of others on the subject. Care must be taken when using secondary research as interpretation of foreign policy decisions and actions can vary greatly between different researchers.

Specifically, for this research, the first step in data collection involved reading previous research on the subject. A Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC) search and a search of previous theses in the AFIT library, uncovered previous research on the subject. This provided background on the subject matter as well as a bibliographies in which to start further research.

A second collection of previous conducted research was the vast number of books written on Israel, the Middle East, and American relations with Israel and her Arab

neighbors. These books provided a general background on Israel, the history of the Middle East, U.S. security assistance, and U.S. foreign policy. Many of the books contained original conclusions and ideas that provided new insights on the subject. The majority of the books had extensive notes and bibliographies which proved to be extremely helpful in leading to more information on the subject as well as locating the original source of the information.

After gaining an initial understanding of the subject area from books and other types of previously conducted research, the data collection turned more specific through examination of primary sources of information concerning the subject. Schmitt and Klimoski call this method of collection an “archival” collection “based on the documents and records that are generated in the course of day-to-day organizational life” (Schmitt and Klimoski, 1991: 150). In this case, the day-to-day organizational life would be those documents generated during the time a particular foreign policy decision was made. Several sources of this type of primary data were examined in this research. The New York Times was particularly useful in capturing the action surrounding the Six Day War as well as, The Yom Kippur War in 1973. These articles provided a “as it happened” account of the fighting and the U.S. reaction to it including public statements from the State Department, Congress, and the White House. Periodical articles, speeches, government hearings, and papers or memoirs of individuals involved in the decision making also were utilized to capture the emotion of the time. Presidential memoirs were especially useful in providing insight into the decision making factors that were not available to individuals outside of the highest levels of government. Although they provide an outstanding first-person recounting of historical events, they must be examined carefully, especially if they were written very long after the event, as they can become prejudiced by the passage of time and the desire to put things in the best light. However, with even the best primary sources of information, the researcher must be careful of

reactivity bias which can occur when the speaker or writer knows that what is said or written will be for public consumption. This could lead the speaker or writer to publish what he or she wants the public to receive and not necessarily the truth (Schmitt and Klimoski, 1991: 150-151).

As the data for this research is published, in one form or another, it must be carefully analyzed for better understanding. This analysis was conducted with four objectives in mind. The first objective was familiarization with the topic of security assistance and Israel. The second objective was better understanding of the many current theories on factors influencing U.S. security and Israel. A third objective was to provide direction for this research, and the final objective was collecting as much data as possible. Specific effort and attention was devoted to collecting literature from a variety of sources in order to provide insights and opinions from American, Israeli, and Arab points of view.

### **Method of Analysis**

The first step to analyzing the data on this subject, is to note patterns or themes. As Miles and Huberman wrote, "Pattern finding can be very productive as an analysis strategy when the number of sites and/or data overload is severe" (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 216). The authors state that no advice needs to be given on how this should be accomplished because the mind is capable of finding patterns rapidly. However, they caution that the "patterns then need to be subjected to skepticism" to "ensure they represent useful knowledge" (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 216). This research lends itself to noting patterns or themes regarding U.S. policy towards Israel.

Another method of analysis that often follows patterns concerns plausibility. Plausibility relies on intuition and deciding if a particular conclusion makes sense. Although this method can be abused by researchers who do not attempt to verify their research by other means, it should not be discounted as a manner of analysis because "the



history of science is full of global, intuitive understandings that, after laborious verification, proved to be true” (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 217). In this case, by finding several different sources that provide the same conclusion, and that conclusion seems logical, then it can be assumed that it is true.

The final method of analysis involves building a logical chain of evidence. This entails the researcher verifying that claims are true and specifically addressing any evidence to the contrary (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 227). This method is particularly valuable in this case because it provides the researcher the opportunity to compare and contrast American, Israeli, and Arab views on the factors influencing U.S. security assistance to Israel. By comparing all the data available, the truth becomes more clear, than if the researcher ignores data that appears contrary.

The conclusion will be verified using several methods of validity checking. As written by Miles and Huberman validity checking may include checking for representativeness, checking against rival explanations, and addressing negative evidence (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 231-242). This verification provides one additional review that the conclusions drawn are supported by the data presented. The verification for this project was conducted in two specific manners. The first was to attempt to gather primary information to ensure that it logically supported any conclusions drawn by other researchers. The second validity check was to compare conclusions with conclusions drawn by those from an opponent standpoint. By comparing Israeli, American, and Arab views on the subject, all possible explanations are considered.

## **Summary**

The success of this historical study is based on two key factors. The first is the ability to accomplish a thorough collection of data from a variety of sources. The second is the scientific analysis of this data and the presentation of accurate and insightful

conclusions. Unlike quantitative data which has much clearer conventions for analysis, qualitative data is more easily influenced by the interpretations and ethics of the researcher (Schmitt and Klimoski, 1991: 152). By remaining faithful to the methodology described in this chapter, the goal of producing an accurate understanding of U.S. foreign policy and security assistance to Israel from 1967-1979 can be accomplished.

### **III. From Palestine To The Six Day War**

#### **Chapter Overview**

In order to better understand the relationship between the United States and Israel during 1967-1976, it is required to briefly examine the creation of the Jewish state and the relations between the two countries prior to the Six Day War in 1967. It is impossible to attempt to understand present decisions or anticipate future ones without realizing that they are influenced by the past. Hartmann and Wendzel in their book America's Foreign Policy in a Changing World, call this principle "past-future linkages" (Hartmann and Wendzel, 1994: 35). This chapter will summarize the major events of this century effecting U.S.-Israeli relations from World War I to the Six Day War, from British Protectorate to American ally, and from Palestine to Israel. This will provide the necessary background for the more in-depth analysis of U.S. security assistance to Israel, 1967-1976.

#### **British Rule**

Although the United States was to eventually assume the role of the closest ally of Israel, the Americans were not the driving factor in the manipulation of events that initiated the creation of Israel. The British, who occupied the area known as Palestine during the First World War, were the driving factor in the establishment of a Jewish homeland. As a part of a series of pledges made by the government of Britain during war, the most famous being the Balfour Declaration, the British government stated it would look favorably upon the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The real purpose of this statement issued on November 2, 1917, by Arthur James Balfour, Britain's secretary of state for foreign affairs, was to gain worldwide Jewish assistance against the Germans and the Ottoman Empire.

Following the war, Great Britain was given the Mandate for Palestine by the victorious allies. As part of the Mandate the British were expected to encourage Jewish immigration into Palestine. However, not many Jews immigrated to Palestine until the 1930s and the rise of Hitler's Nazi Party in Germany. Those that did arrive were greeted by a hostile Arab majority. The mass arrivals of Jewish persons fleeing the strife in Europe only compounded the problem. The British found themselves dealing with the contradictions between the Balfour Declaration and their desire to appease the Arabs who were the majority and controlled the major commodity of the area, oil. They faced a dilemma of their own making; there was no way to establish a national home for Jews without angering the majority, the Arabs (Wilson, 1979: 19). By the outbreak of World War II there seemed to be no right answer to the Mandate.

### **The Truman Years**

The end of the war and the creation of the United Nations (UN) gave Great Britain the path it sought out of the deepening mess and escalating violence between Jews and Arabs. After attempting several negotiations between the two sides and watching a joint Anglo-American plan fail, the British referred the Palestinian question to the UN on April 2, 1947, for resolution, thus setting a time table for withdrawal of their forces from the region. The UN formed a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) in May 1947 consisting of members from the countries of Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia. UNSCOP was tasked to submit a report to the UN on the all issues regarding Palestine by September 1.

After several months of traveling throughout Palestine and hearings involving Arabs and Jews, UNSCOP developed their recommendations. The report presented to the General Assembly contained thirteen recommendations. The most important of these, and

the most controversial, was the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state, an Arab state, and an internationalized Jerusalem under UN control. Despite warnings from several in his cabinet that plan could not work, President Truman directed the State Department to support the partition plan (Truman, 1955, 155). On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly passed the partition plan and charged the Security Council to carry out the partition of Palestine.

With the partition plan now approved, the British announced the mandate would expire on May 15, 1948. Without the plan being implemented by the Security Council, the middle of May would find Palestine without effective authority and the United Nations unprepared to assume the role. The Arab nations had declared their opposition to division of Palestine and announced their intentions to defend their rights. With no chance for the UN to assume control of the situation, the Jewish partition of Palestine prepared for the declaration of an independent Jewish state and for the bloodshed that was sure to follow.

President Truman was still undecided about U.S. recognition for an independent Jewish state in Palestine. He personally endorsed the recognition of the new nation but recognized the political implication of such a recognition: the alienation of the Arab states. During the weeks leading up to the proclamation of the birth of Israel, Truman had grown weary of all the Zionist lobbying attempting to influence him into early recognition and support for independence. His frustration led to denying any meetings with individuals outside of the government on the subject and particularly anyone associated with Zionist lobbying efforts. The American Jewish community realizing the urgency of gaining American support called upon Eddie Jacobson, a lifelong friend of Truman, and a Jew. Jacobson had served with Truman in the Army and utilized his friendship with the President to arrange a meeting between Truman and Chaim Weizmann, president of the World Zionist Organization. This meeting on March 18, 1948, ended with Truman promising American recognition and support for Israel (Melman and Raviv, 1993: 29).

However, Truman still had one problem; the majority of his cabinet led by Secretary of State George Marshall were adamantly opposed as were most military advisors and foreign service officers. Their argument against recognition was that there “many times more Arabs than Jews, and the Arabs controlled most of the territory and a great deal of world’s oil” (Hartmann and Wendzell, 1994: 172). It is interesting to note that in his memoirs President Truman claims that both Secretary Marshall and Under Secretary Lovett were in total agreement with his policy of recognition of the Israel (Truman, 1955: 164). The President, of course, had the final decision and after much discussion, Truman, and therefore the United States, recognized the new state of Israel. In his memoirs, Truman writes:

But I wanted to make it plain that the President of the United States, and not the second or third echelon in the State Department, is responsible for making foreign policy, and furthermore, that no one in any department can sabotage the President’s policy. The civil servant, the general or admiral, the foreign service officer has no authority to make policy. (Truman, 1955: 165)

Initial assistance to Israel was purely economic. The United States imposed an arms embargo on Israel and the Arab states that had immediately gone to war against her. This official embargo, however, did not stop assistance from American citizens to the new nation. In fact, many American ex-service members, joined the forces of Israel in fighting the surrounding Arab nations. Jewish-Americans with combat experience were prime targets for contact by the Israelis. Besides personnel, much surplus U.S. equipment from World War II also found its way into Israeli hands (Melman and Raviv, 1993: 37-40). Despite the enormous advantage in equipment and personnel, the failure to coordinate their actions cost the Arabs their goal of destroying Israel. The Jewish state has survived the first challenge to its existence in what the Israelis call the War of Independence.

During President Truman's second tour, American attention to the Middle East was distracted by the invasion of the Republic of Korea by the communist North Korean army. This attack on June 25, 1950, became the overriding concern of the American foreign policy through the signing of the truce in Panmunjon on July 27, 1953. By this time, President Truman had been succeeded in office by World War II hero, Dwight D. Eisenhower who took office in January of that year.

### **The Eisenhower Years**

With a new president in office, and an uneasy peace on the Korean peninsula, America's interest again turned toward the Middle East. In summing the importance of Middle East activity and the containment of Soviet expansionism during his years as President, Eisenhower wrote in his memoirs:

Beginning in the latter months of my first term and for several years thereafter, no region of the world received as much of my close attention and that of my colleagues as did the Middle East. There, against a background of new nations emerging from colonialism, in the face of constant thrusts of new Communist imperialism, and complicated by the old implacable hatred between Israeli and Arab, the world faced a series of crises. These crises, which at times threatened to touch off World War III, posed a constant test to United States will, principle, patience, and resolve. (Eisenhower, 1965: 20)

The United States, along with Great Britain and France, in what was referred to as the Tripartite Declaration, attempted to remain neutral regarding the parties of the Middle East. The declaration basically stated that any sales of arms to a country in the Middle East would only occur after notification of the other tripartite nations. The belief was that this would keep the flow of arms to the Middle East to a minimum (Alteras: 1993: 146). The United States policy towards Israel and her Arab neighbors during this period was one of "friendly impartiality." President Eisenhower believed that the British, by virtue of their long history in the area of the world, "should continue to carry a major responsibility

for its stability and security” (Eisenhower, 1965: 23). The three western powers worked reasonably well together with the Arab-leaning British offset by the Israeli-sympathetic French, and the Americans mostly concerned with blocking Soviet influence in the region. This neutrality was about to change. Lieutenant Colonel Gamel Abdel Nasser helped orchestrate a coup of military officers that was instrumental in the overthrow of King Farouk in 1952. He spent the next two years following the coup as the Egyptian Premier. He eventually replaced General Mohammed Naguib as the official leader of Egypt in October of 1954.

Nasser initially demanded the removal of British troops from the Suez Canal which the British had already determined to cede back to the Egyptians. The action that changed the future of Middle East policies for the next twenty years, however, was Nasser’s request for arms from communist nations in the fall of 1955. Nasser had first approached the West about purchasing arms in February of that year but when the deal was not to his liking. Nasser initially requested \$27 million in arms and wished to barter cotton for the arms. The State Department, in keeping with the Anglo-Franco-American Tripartite Pact, required the Egyptians to pay cash for the arms they wished to purchase. The State Department also required the Egyptians to sign an agreement to use the weapons only for defensive purposes and to allow the United States to open a military office in Cairo to oversee training and use of the weapons. Nasser, of course, refused to accept the terms of the deal (Eisenhower, 1965: 24; Finer, 1964: 26). Nasser then turned to the communists. Eventually he made a deal with Czechoslovakia in which Egypt provided cotton and the promise of future cotton crops to the Czechs in exchange for arms. The Israelis were very concerned over the arming of their enemy and requested arms from the United States to counter the Czech supplies. Specifically, they requested modern fighters to counter the new Ilyashin bombers the Egyptians were to receive. This request was denied. Again, citing the Tripartite Pact of 1950, the U.S. allowed Israel to purchase arms wherever she



could with cash, but would not allow the financial aid or loans required to purchase advanced fighters (Alteras, 1993: 140-143; Finer, 1964: 28-29). In recalling this request, Eisenhower in his memoirs wrote: "After considerable deliberation, we concluded that in the circumstances a United States shipment of arms would only speed a Middle East arms race; therefore we decided against it for the moment" (Eisenhower, 1965: 25). Instead, with American knowledge, the Israelis received small quantities of arms from the French, although this was a violation of Tripartite Pact as well. It is true that the United States was concerned about an arms race in the Middle East but it was more concerned with maintaining its impartiality so as to not lose the Arab nations to more Soviet influence, a concern that didn't seem to bother the French. By allowing Israel to receive the weapons she needed from the French, the United States was able to ensure that Israel was capable of self-defense while maintaining overall U.S. neutrality (Alteras, 1993: 146).

On July 26, 1956, Nasser went one step further in isolating himself and Egypt from the West. He nationalized the Suez Canal and its property in retaliation for the withdrawal of U.S. funding for the Aswan Dam project on the Nile River. The combination of a hatred for Nasser and the possible closure of their economic lifeline pushed the British and French governments into immediate planning. While the European powers planned the use of force, the United States chose to pursue a solution through diplomatic channels and the United Nations. The main reason for a lack of U.S. concern over the nationalization of the canal was that it was well the law for Nasser to do so as long as he allowed for the international use of the canal. In his memoirs, Eisenhower wrote concerning the use of force to remedy the Suez Canal crisis:

My conviction was that the Western world had gotten into a lot of difficulty by selecting the wrong issue about which to be tough. To choose a situation in which Nasser had legal and sovereign rights and in which world opinion was largely on his side, was not in my opinion a good one on which to make a stand. (Eisenhower, 1965: 50)

The French, however, saw this as the proper time to take action to eliminate Nasser who was causing them trouble throughout North Africa. After months of planning with the British, and arming of Israel, the French, British, and the Israelis secretly developed their plan to finish Nasser and reclaim the Suez Canal. The plan called for an Israeli attack through the Sinai desert towards the canal. Within hours of the attack the British and French governments would demand a cease-fire and withdrawal by both sides under the pretense of protecting the canal and international shipping. The Egyptians would most likely refuse this ultimatum, thus providing the Anglo-French coalition with the justification they needed to seize the canal and then turn their attention to disposing Nasser (Alteras, 1993: 199-212).

On October 29, 1956, Israel began its part of the British-French-Israeli agreement with the dropping of paratroopers behind Egyptian lines in the Sinai. The Americans, despite intelligence sources that identified increased troop movements and an increase in the arrival of arms from France, were caught off-guard by the Israeli attack. However, less than 12 hours later when the governments of Great Britain and France issued their ultimatums to Israel and Egypt, the plan was exposed for what it really was, a three nation attack on Egypt and Nasser. The realization of the collusion between the three nations was bitter for the United States as it recognized it "had been double-crossed, first by Israel and now by its two NATO allies, in fact a betrayal of the special Atlantic relationship" (Alteras, 1993: 228-229).

The Eisenhower response was not what the British and French had expected. The United States condemned the British, French, and Israeli attacks and helped push diplomatic actions to the front of the United Nations. The United States, also, imposed various sanctions and unilateral actions on all three nations in order to end the fighting. With British and French forces controlling most of the canal zone and the Israelis moving at will throughout the Sinai, the diplomatic pressure and economic cost of the invasion

eventually halted the forces the Egyptian army could not stop. On November 7, a cease-fire was announced with only Israel capable of stating they had accomplished their goals. From a British and French view the military action could not be considered a success. In retrospect, Eisenhower wrote "Looking backward to those days, it is easy to see that the British and French won battles but nothing else. Israel, also winning battles, succeeded in unblocking the Gulf of Aqaba and temporarily halting the fedayeen raids across her borders" (Eisenhower, 1965: 98).

Under intense UN condemnation, Soviet threats of intervention, and U.S. pressure, Israel eventually agree to withdraw on January 13, 1957, from the territories seized during the conflict with the exception of the Gaza Strip and the area surrounding the Gulf of Aqaba (Alteras, 1993: 249-252). Gaza and the Gulf of Aqaba remained sticking points in the Israel withdrawal until March 4, 1957, when Ben Gurion ordered Israeli forces to withdraw and turn the regions over to UN control (Finer, 1964: 489). This change of heart was brought about by U.S. promises to support Israel's freedom to navigate through the Gulf of Aqaba (Alteras, 1993: 279).

Despite the fact that the United States saved Egypt from total defeat at the hands of the French-British-Israeli coalition, the Suez crisis pushed Nasser further into the Soviet camp and more anti-American and anti-Western. The irony of this is that this opened the door for a tremendous improvement in U.S.-Israeli relations. The Israelis, through their withdrawal from the Sinai and acceptance of the anti-Communist Eisenhower Doctrine, became a powerful player in the Middle East battle between East and West.

It is also during the Eisenhower presidency that Jewish-Americans began the process of consolidating to form a strong lobby within Congress. In 1954, the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) was established. In just its infancy, AIPAC was not able to accomplish everything it attempted such as delivery of advanced U.S. weaponry, but they did succeed in gaining for Israel generous U.S. economic and technical

assistance as well as moneys for cultural and educational exchange programs through the Eisenhower years (Alteras, 1993: 289).

During the eight years Dwight D. Eisenhower occupied the White House, the U.S.-Israeli relationship went through three distinct phases. The first was that of "friendly impartiality", where the United States attempted to treat Israel and her Arab neighbors equally. This was done to minimize Soviet influence in the region. It should not be assumed that this was a departure from the Truman administrations friendly actions during the creation of the Jewish state. At no time was President Eisenhower hesitant about the existence of Israel, nor was he less committed to defending her should that existence be threatened. Rather, balancing both sides of the Arab-Israeli problem against possible Soviet expansionism in the region dictated such a policy. The second phase was far more confrontational. This occurred during the Suez crisis in the fall of 1956. In this case, the U.S. overlooked the strategic interests, as Nasser had already placed Egypt into the Soviet camp, and instead took an approach condemning the Israeli attack with its British and French invasion of the canal zone as legally and morally unjustifiable. As Alteras writes in his book, Eisenhower and Israel, "...it represents a rare case in modern history, where moral principles overrode strategic interests" (Alteras, 1993: 317). The final phase is one of cooperation that occurred following the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai. At this phase, Eisenhower realized the strategic value of Israel in combating communism in the Middle East. This realization was the beginning of improved relations that would forge a lasting partnership throughout the Cold War.

### **The Kennedy Years**

The relationship between Israel and the United States began its turnaround during the Eisenhower administration but it was the abbreviated Kennedy presidency that forged

the deep bond between the two nations. Not coincidentally, this era also produced a change in the structure of U.S. security assistance policies to Israel.

When John F. Kennedy entered the Oval Office in 1961, the Cold War had been waging for over a decade. Throughout his administration, the Cold War would dictate American foreign policy issues. In fact, all foreign policy was examined through a East-West perspective. This perspective dominated the issues of the day. Security assistance to Israel had to take its place in line with other vital world hot spots such as Berlin, Vietnam, and Cuba. In August of 1961, the Soviets erected the infamous Berlin Wall separating the Soviet controlled eastern section of the city from the Anglo-Franco-American occupied sections. This physical separation increased the tension in a city already at the peak of tension. The Kennedy era also saw an increase in the role of the United States in Southeast Asia. The conflict in Vietnam would continue in importance until it dominated foreign policy through the remainder of the decade. A final foreign policy matter that occupied the President was the Communist government of Fidel Castro in Cuba. No other country is as heavily linked to the Kennedy Administration as Cuba. Starting with the Bay of Pigs invasion in April of 1961, through the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, until the rumored Cuba conspiracy in his assassination, no other country received the attention from Kennedy that Fidel Castro and Cuba did. These three global hot spots, Berlin, Vietnam, and Cuba, undoubtedly received much more attention than the events of the Middle East but it was with Israel that the seeds were sown for the next 30 years of American assistance.

Throughout the Eisenhower Administration, the Israelis had asked for HAWK air-to-ground antiaircraft missile systems to help them defend themselves from the perceived air threat of their Arab neighbors. Each time the request was denied by the American government as not being in the best interest of the United States or the best interest of Middle East peace. Kennedy approved the sale of five HAWK batteries worth \$21 million

at the time to Israel (Melman and Raviv, 1994: 101). This change of heart by Kennedy regarding HAWK has two underlying points. The first was the realization of the administration of the strategic value that Israel represented to American interests in the Middle East. With Egypt, and now Syria, receiving large quantities of military equipment from the Soviets, Israel was posed to assume the role of strongest ally in the region. By selling the missile system to the Israelis, Kennedy provided concrete proof of U.S. support to the country (Melman and Raviv, 1994: 101). A second reason concerned Middle East peace. On one hand, the delivery of the weapons systems maintained the balance of power between Israel and Egypt because Egypt was already in possession of Soviet-made missile systems that were the counterpart of the HAWK system. On the other hand, the sale of the systems was used as a tool in an attempt to persuade the Israelis to accept Palestinian refugees displaced during the conflict following Israeli independence. The return of these Palestinian refugees to their historical lands was seen as a key movement in keeping peace in the Middle East (Parment, 1983: 230-231).

On November 22, 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas thus prematurely ending this era of improved U.S.-Israeli relations. Throughout his less than three years in office, the Middle East had remained fairly quiet in comparison with the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. However, during his time in the White House, John F. Kennedy planted the seeds of security assistance that was to continue growing throughout the Johnson presidency and the remainder of the century.

### **The Johnson Years**

Lyndon Baines Johnson maintained a genuine personal fondness for Jewish people and the state of Israel. Throughout his years as President, this fondness proved to be a great advantage for Israel. Although his years in the White House will be remembered far more for American involvement in Vietnam, it was during his tenure that the U.S.

relationship became cemented in security assistance. The first year of a Johnson budget, FY 1965, brought an increase in overall aid to Israel of 75 percent from \$40 million in 1964 to \$71 million. The next year it soared to \$130 million (Melman and Raviv, 1994: 110-111). More importantly in the area of security assistance, the military proportion of the total aid package rose from 20 percent in 1965 to 70 percent in 1966. This rise in 1965 and 1966 is clearly evident in Figure 3.1, a graph of total sales agreements between the United States and Israel during the period of 1954-1967. Johnson also became the first President to sell the Israelis weapons that were capable of offensive operations when he agreed to sell 250 M-48 tanks in 1965 (Melman and Raviv, 1994: 111). On May 19, 1966, another key step in the American replacement of France as the leading supplier of arms, a role the French had held since before the Suez Crisis, occurred when President Johnson agreed to sell Skyhawk attack aircraft to Israel (Melman and Raviv, 1993: 111-113).

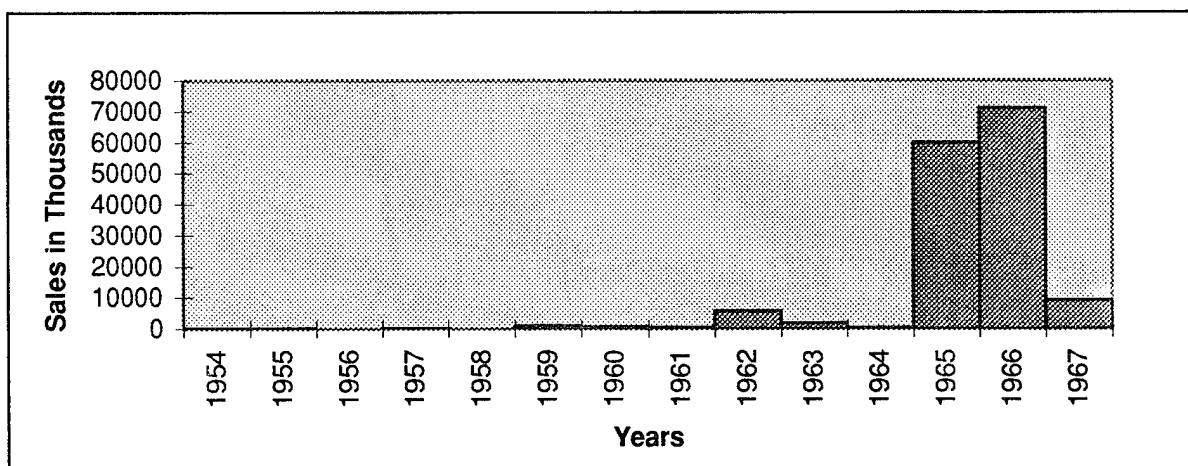


FIGURE 3.1 Total Dollar Value of Sales Agreements 1954-67 (DSAA, 1993: 106)

One reason for increasing arms transactions to Israel under the Johnson administration concerns Israel's nuclear ambitions. The Israelis had worked since the Eisenhower administration on developing a nuclear program. Many in the State Department believed that the best way to keep the Israelis from developing nuclear weapons was to ensure they had more than adequate amounts of conventional weapons to defend themselves (Melman and Raviv, 1993: 112-113).

A second reason for increasing the arms to Israel involved U.S. arms deals with Israel's moderate Arab neighbor Jordan. The U.S. was attempting to keep Jordan in the western fold and out of the Soviet camp by offering weapons. Knowing that selling weapons to Jordan would bring howls of protest by Israel and Israel's friends on Capitol Hill, the administration believe the best way to appease the Israelis was to keep them well-armed with the best weapons the United States possessed (Melman and Raviv, 1993: 112-113).

While American security assistance to Israel was on the increase, so was military assistance to Egypt and Syria from the Soviet Union. Tensions, always high between the Arabs and Israelis, grew even higher in the spring of 1967, culminating with Nasser's demand that the United Nations withdraw its peacekeepers from the Sinai, where they had been stationed as part of the agreement ending the Suez Crisis. Immediately upon the departure of the UN on May 18, the Egyptians moved into the Sinai and took positions along Israel's border. Nasser next closed the Strait of Tiran to Israeli shipping thus blockading the Gulf of Aqaba and Israel's shipping route to Asia. Apparently Nasser believed that the combined strength of Egypt and Syria could defeat Israel and that the United States was too involved in Vietnam to respond to Israel's needs (Melman and Raviv, 1993: 115).

Wanting to avoid a war in the Middle East, President Johnson sought a diplomatic multilateral solution to the crisis and urged the Israelis to show restraint and not launch a



preemptive strike (Johnson, 1971: 291-292). In Tel Aviv, the Israeli government prepared for war and sought American assistance. Remembering the lessons of the 1956 Suez Crisis and the rift with the United States over their actions, the Israelis were not going to act without first coordinating with America. What the Israelis really expected was American assistance in ending the blockade as a part of the security pledge that Eisenhower had made to them in exchange for their withdrawal from the Sinai. As the days of May passed and June opened, the chance of a successful diplomatic solution looked bleaker each day. The Israelis realized that the American Congress and public would not favor U.S. troops in combat in Vietnam and the Middle East, so as the days continued to go by they prepared alone for war. In the early days of June, the tone of American responses to Israel changed from that of urging restraint and seeking the diplomatic solution to one that would at least tolerate an Israeli attack. This was all the American sign the Israelis needed. On June 5, 1967, the Israeli armed forces went into action against the combined forces of Egypt and Syria (Melman and Raviv, 1993: 115-120).

## **Summary**

There is little argument that the United States has played a pivotal role in the history of Israel. That role began long before the creation of the Jewish state in 1948. It dates back to the time immediately following the first World War and continues through until today. The U.S. support of the UN resolution recommending division of Palestine into Jewish and Arab parts was one of the first formal steps taken by the government in support of a Jewish homeland. When the U.S. became the first nation to recognize the creation of Israel, few could imagine the direction that relationship would take over the next decades. Although every American president has publicly supported the existence of Israel, in an effort to minimize violence in the Middle East and in an equally important

effort to not offend the Arabs, American support was initially economic in nature. It was not until after the Suez Crisis that President Eisenhower began to realize the role that Israel could play in stemming the flow of communist expansion in the Middle East. When President Kennedy assumed office the friendship continued to flourish and the delivery of HAWK missile batteries proved the bond was tightening between the two states. With the decision to sell tanks and attack aircraft to the Israelis during the Johnson administration, there was no longer any doubt with whom American interests in the Middle East lie. The United States was now the leading supplier of Israeli arms.

The preceding pages have introduced a history of U.S.-Israeli relations since the turn of the century and brought the reader to that point where America has taken over in providing security assistance to Israel. The next chapter will start with the Six Day War and examine in-depth the U.S. relationship to Israel in terms of foreign policy and security assistance through the Yom Kippur War of 1973 until the peace with Egypt in 1979.

## **IV. America Takes Over 1967-1979**

### **Chapter Overview**

The Six Day War marked the transformation in American security assistance to Israel. Although Israel routed the armies of Syria, Egypt, and Jordan without the influx of American aid, the fact that the United States was able to keep the Soviet Union out of the conflict ensured a swift Israeli victory. After the war and throughout the 1967-1970 War of Attrition, the United States replaced the losses sustained by Israel and replaced France as the key provider of arms to the Jewish state. Figure 4.1 on the next page shows the trend of sales agreements from the United States to Israel during the period of 1967-1979. When Richard Nixon became president, the use of arms transfers increased in importance as the United States attempted to counter Soviet influence in Egypt and Syria through a strong Israel. This support for Israel reached its peak during the 1973 Yom Kippur War when U.S. Air Force cargo planes delivered much needed equipment and ammunition to Israeli forces. Following the war, American arms transfers were used to gain Israeli concessions towards peace with Egypt. It was in this post-war time frame that weapons were also used to bring Egypt into the American fold. President Carter successfully used both economic and military aid to gain Israeli and Egyptian agreement on the Camp David accords which formally brought to an end the hostilities between the two nations that had raged since 1948. This chapter examines the changes in security assistance to Israel beginning with the Six Day War and ending with the formal signing of the Camp David accords.

### **The Six Day War 1967**

With what the Israelis interpreted as at least not American disapproval, if not tacit approval, they attacked Egyptian forces in the Sinai Peninsula on the morning of June 5,

1967. In order to avoid the label of aggressor in initiating the conflict, the Israelis initially claimed that the Egyptians had attacked Israeli positions in the Sinai with both armored and air forces. Meanwhile, Egyptian radio reported Israeli air attacks on Cairo as well as ground attacks in the Sinai (Smith, 1967: A1). Although the initial reports from both sides were filled with distortions of the truth, what occurred on that June morning was a three prong attack by the Israelis that caught the Arabs, as well as the rest of the world, by surprise. While the majority of Israeli forces were engaged in the Sinai and the Gaza Strip, others forces had entered western Jordan and surrounded Jerusalem, while the third prong of the attack exchanged artillery fire with Syrian forces in the region of the Golan Heights (Kosut, 1968: 66-67; U.S. Denies Charges, June 7, 1967: A1, A19).

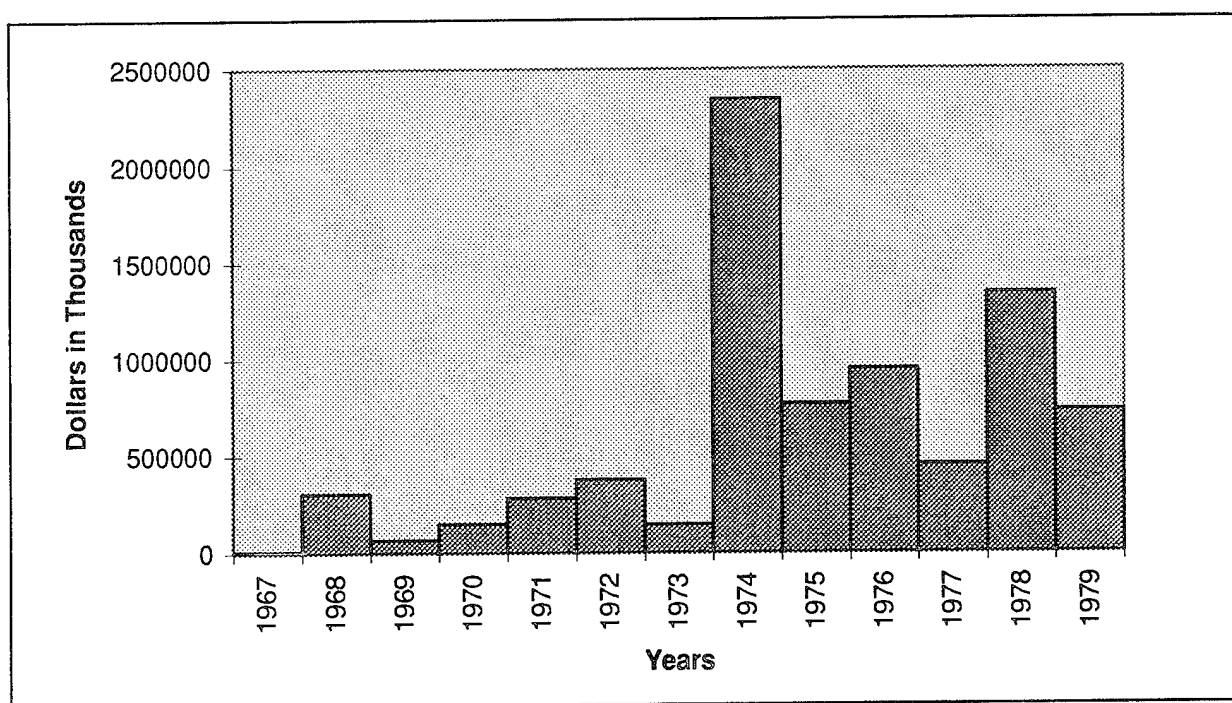


FIGURE 4.1 Total Dollar Value of Sales Agreements 1967-79 (DSAA, 1993: 106)

Despite early Egyptian claims of success on the battlefield, the Israeli forces captured the Gaza Strip and scored quick victories over Egyptian forces in the Sinai by June 6, the end of the second day of fighting. With the Arab air forces destroyed by the Israeli air onslaught on the first day, the Israeli ground forces were able to enjoy a tremendous freedom of movement throughout the Sinai without fear of Egyptian air attack. By June 7, Israeli forces were in control of most of the peninsula and were within 30 miles of the Suez Canal. Fierce fighting continued in the area around Mitla Pass on June 7 but by the next day the Israelis were in control of the entire Sinai to the Suez. Fighting halted when both sides agreed to a UN Security Council sponsored cease-fire (Kosut, 1968: 66-79).

Israel was just as successful in the Jordan campaign as they had been in the Sinai. Most of the fighting centered around the battle for Jerusalem. By June 6, Israeli forces had surrounded the city and house to house fighting between Jordanian soldiers and Israeli forces continued for two days. On June 7, the city was surrendered to the Israeli commander. That same day fighting ended throughout Jordan as both sides accepted a UN call for a cease-fire. The cease-fire found Israel in complete control of Jerusalem and the entire west bank of the Jordan River (Kosut, 1968: 86-89).

While Israeli forces concentrated on defeating the Egyptians and capturing Jerusalem, the fighting along the border with Syria was limited to artillery exchanges with the Syrians using the positions on the Golan Heights to inflict much damage on Israeli villages. Heavy fighting did not begin until June 9, after Egypt and Jordan had agreed to a truce. Able to focus attention to the north, the Israelis shattered Syrian defenses and by the morning of June 10 were in control of the Golan Heights. Next, the Israelis attacked further into Syria but fighting was halted later that day when both parties agreed to a UN call for a cease-fire (Kosut, 1968: 89-91).

In only six days, the Israelis had routed the armies of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Her forces occupied an area of land far larger than the country itself with the entire Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the west bank of the Jordan River, Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights conquered. Actual numbers of casualties varied depending on their source. Israel claimed that 7,000-10,000 Egyptian soldiers had been killed with 500-600 Egyptian tanks destroyed in the Sinai alone. President Nasser confirmed on November 23 that 10,000 soldiers had been killed along with 1,500 officers and that 80 percent of Egypt's military equipment had been destroyed. On July 5, Jordanian Premier Saad Jumaa listed his country's loss as 6,094 soldiers while Syria announced only 145 killed with 1,598 wounded in its limited engagements. Israeli losses were far less than Arab losses with the bulk of the casualties being 275 killed and 800 wounded in the Sinai fighting against the Egyptians (Kosut, 1968: 91-93).

Although in the first days of fighting it was unclear who had initiated the actual combat, to the United States it was not important. The overriding U.S. goals were to obtain a cease-fire, stop the bloodshed, and keep the Soviets out of conflict. The manner in which the U.S. accomplished this was through constant communication with the Soviet Union. President Johnson had been in diplomatic contact with the Soviet Union from the onset of hostilities, and worked to bring the matter to the UN for resolution. By working to solve the problem through the UN, Johnson proved that the United States was not a participant in the fighting and this provided the leverage he needed to keep the Soviets out as well.

In fact, in an attempt to prove that the United States was interested in only peace, and not taking sides in the fighting, the initial statement by U.S. State Department briefing officer, Robert J. McCloskey, to the press included the phrase, "our position is neutral in thought, word, and deed" (Finney, 1967: A1). This statement caused confusion and turmoil among the administration, the Congress, the American people, and Israel. Many

initially interpreted this statement to mean that the United States was not concerned with the outcome of the fighting and hence the preservation of Israel. This statement caused an outrage in Congress, as many Congressmen claimed that the U.S. may not be a belligerent but was not neutral in defense of Israel's right to exist. Senator Joseph B. Clark of Pennsylvania was clear about where he believed America's interests were when he said, "Morally, as well as legally, we are an ally of Israel. We are not neutral" (Kenworthy, 1967: A19). The State Department spent the next days attempting to correct the American position. In recounting the McCloskey statement, President Johnson wrote in his memoirs:

Perhaps the remark was designed to reassure the Arabs that we were not engaged in the hostilities, but within minutes those words were carried in radio news bulletins to an unbelieving nation. The statement was an oversimplified approach to a complicated situation. We were certainly not belligerents, but our successive guarantees since 1950 to the independence and territorial integrity of all the states in the area made "neutral" the wrong word. (Johnson, 1971: 298-299)

The June 6, 1967 New York Times summed the American position by stating the Johnson Administration "sought today to maintain a neutral role in the Middle East without formally committing itself to be neutral" (Finney, 1967: A1). The main idea being that the United States was still committed to the right to exist of the Israeli state but was not prepared militarily to become involved in the conflict, unless the Soviet Union became involved or the survival of Israel was endangered.

A key in the close communications with the Soviets was the "hot line" between Moscow and Washington. This marked the first use of the "hot line" for purposes other than exchanging New Years greetings. Beginning the morning of June 5, President Johnson communicated directly with Soviet Chairman Kosygin and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, outlining the American position regarding the conflict and asking for Soviet support in ending the fighting. President Johnson believed the use of the

“hot line” was instrumental in minimizing the spreading of the war and keeping the superpowers out of it. One example when the use of this communication line proved valuable occurred when Nasser, seeking Soviet support, claimed that U.S. and British aircraft had flown in support of Israel and attacked Egyptian sites. Recalling his June 6 conversation with the Soviet Chairman, Johnson wrote, “I mentioned the false Arab allegation in my answer to Kosygin over the hot line. I told him that since his intelligence knew where our carriers and planes were, I hoped he would emphasize the facts to Cairo” (Johnson, 1971: 298-299).

This communication virtually assured an Israeli victory without any other type of American assistance. By immediately involving the Soviets in the peace process, the Johnson Administration kept them from becoming involved on the side of the Arabs. The Soviet adoption of the cease-fire resolution in the Security Council of the UN on June 7, brought about sharp criticism from the Arabs and other third world nations who believed that the communist giant should have come quickly to the aid of the nations it had armed. It has been argued that the Soviet Union realized early in the fighting that they could not provide the type of assistance that could have saved the Arab armies without direct involvement of Soviet troops and aircraft. Understanding that this would bring an American response, the Soviets opted to assist in negotiating a cease-fire before the Arab armies and all their Soviet-supplied equipment were further destroyed. Late in the conflict, June 10, when the Soviets accused Israel of ignoring the cease-fires and threatened action towards Israel, President Johnson positioned the Sixth Fleet closer to the Syria indicating to Moscow American resolve to “resist Soviet intrusion in the Middle East” (de Onis, 1967: A21; Johnson, 1971: 301-302). In effect, the Soviet Union and the United States neutralized each other, neither wishing to risk superpower confrontation. This allowed the Israelis and the Arabs to fight each other without outside interference, which ensured an Israeli victory.



While official U.S. aid to Israel did not increase during the Six Day War, unofficial aid from Americans poured into the nation. The June 9 *New York Times* reported that more than a dozen private citizens, largely Jewish-Americans, contributed over \$1 million each to the United Jewish Appeal for the Israel Emergency Fund. In New York City, 23 fund raising events for Israel raised more than \$20 million on June 8. Many citizens were reported to have sold all their possessions and donated them to the Israeli cause (Handler, 1967: A1, A11). In his book The Lobby, Edward Tivnan writes that in the first three weeks after the start of the war, the Jewish-American community raised over \$100 million in cash. He claims for much of American Jewry, the threat to Israel became a threat to Judaism as a religion, and changed forever, the way Jews in America looked at Israel (Tivnan, 1987: 63-64). The impact of Jewish-Americans would continue to play a large role in U.S.-Israeli relations for years to come.

The Six Day War marked a changing of the guard in security assistance for Israel. Outside of the HAWK batteries and tanks, the Israelis received the bulk of their military assistance from France including the Mirage fighters that controlled the air from the start of the war. On June 5, 1967, France immediately suspended the shipment of arms, military equipment, and repair parts to all nations involved in the fighting. Since France provided arms to Israel and none to the Arabs, this suspension of arms and equipment amounted to an arms embargo of Israel (Tanner, 1967: A18). For a variety of reasons, including the threat of an oil embargo by the Arabs, France and the rest of Europe would never regain their position as the primary suppliers of military equipment to Israel (Organski, 1990: 142). From this point on, the United States would assume the role as main supplier of Israeli security assistance.

The reason the Americans were willing to assume the role of main supplier of arms to Israel was to counter the rearming of Egypt and Syria by the Soviets. Nasser, with the majority of his army and equipment destroyed, was more dependent upon the Soviets than

he was prior to the Six Day War. The largest difference after June 1967 was that this time, Nasser could not barter with the Czechs or the Soviets for equipment. He had no way to pay for the equipment and was, therefore, required to accept the aid on Soviet terms. These terms included use of naval and air facilities for Soviet ships and aircraft, along with a permanent presence of USSR military personnel on Egyptian soil (Vatikiotis, 1974: 130). This rearming occurred quickly following the end of the war with the first equipment arriving in Egypt on June 14, 1967. By June 15, both Syria and Egypt had received 200 MiG jets each (Kosut, 1968: 163-164).

This rearming of the Arabs threatened the current balance of power and was a direct threat to Israel. This renewed Soviet presence in the Middle East, coupled with the fact that hostilities between the Israelis and the Egyptians never completely ceased following the Six Day War, brought about an unprecedented amount of U.S. arms sales to support Israel. On October 24, 1967, the U.S. announced the scheduled December delivery of 48 Skyhawk attack bombers that had been arranged under a transaction signed in 1966 (Kosut, 1968: 165). For Fiscal Year (FY) 1968, the first year after the Six Day War, total sales agreements to Israel rose to \$308,644,000 from \$9,300,000 in FY 1967 (DSAA, 1993: 106). Congress, who had been confused by our initial neutral statement at the beginning of the Six Day War, became intricately involved in the rearming of Israel. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1968 passed by Congress in October of that year contained the following section:

Sec. 651. Sale of Supersonic Planes to Israel.--It is the sense of the Congress that the President should take such steps as may be necessary, as soon as practicable after the date of enactment of this section, to negotiate an agreement with the Government of Israel providing for the sale by the United States of such number of supersonic planes as may be necessary to provide Israel with an adequate deterrent force capable of preventing future Arab aggression by offsetting sophisticated weapons received by the Arab States and to replace losses suffered by Israel in the 1967 conflict. (Foreign Assistance Act, 1968: 1121)

## **The War of Attrition 1967-1970**

From July 1, 1967 through August 8, 1970 border skirmishes continued between Israeli and Arab forces with the heaviest fighting along the Suez Canal. This conflict became known as the War of Attrition, with its focal point being the clash of Israeli and Egyptian air, ground, and naval forces in limited engagements throughout the area surrounding the Suez Canal. One of the most violent clashes occurred on October 21 when Egyptian forces sank the Israeli destroyer *Elath* off the northern coast of the Sinai Peninsula. Israel responded with heavy shelling of oil facilities in Suez City. The conflict continued in the same manner of attack and reprisal for many months and included battles between Jordanian forces and Israel near the Jordan River in August (Kosut, 1968: 171-182).

Although there were tremendous opportunities for the War of Attrition to escalate into an all-out battle like the Six Day War, it never did. A crucial point during the combat occurred in 1970 when the USSR sent combat personnel into Egypt in an effort to offset the Israeli domination of the skies over Cairo. Despite the provocation of Soviet-Israeli aerial combat in the Egyptian skies, this action actually brought a new cease-fire instead of escalation. Some experts claim that the Soviet introduction of combat personnel to Egypt proved to the Israelis that they could gain no more through force and that the power of the USSR would support the existence of Egypt and Nasser just as American power would support the existence of Israel (Campbell, 1974: 17).

Throughout the War of Attrition, U.S. arms sales to Israel remained at extremely high levels. In FY 1969 total sales agreements dropped to \$70,347,000 from the 1968 high of \$398,644,000 the previous fiscal year, however, this was still the third largest amount of arms sales in history. The next year, FY 1970, the amount doubled FY 1969 to over \$150,989,000 with total sales deliveries surpassing \$215,864,000 (DSAA, 1993:

106). It became apparent that the conflict in the Middle East was becoming split along Cold War lines with Egypt and Syria in the Soviet camp and Israel in the American camp.

### **The Nixon Years**

Richard M. Nixon succeeded Lyndon Johnson in the Oval Office on January 20, 1969. A staunch anti-Communist, he assumed the Presidency of a nation that was questioning its involvement in Southeast Asia. Lewis Sorley, in his book Arms Transfers Under Nixon, summed up the national attitude in 1969 when he wrote:

But it was Vietnam that preoccupied the nation. A decade that began with a rash of political assassinations and was punctuated by recurrent racial turmoil, demonstrations, riots, and burnings of sections of American cities neared its end with the war as the most contentious and divisive issue. The political signposts that had read Watts, Dallas, and Selma now referred to Danang and My Lai. Soon they would also be marked Cambodia, then Kent State. (Sorley, 1983: 11)

Although Vietnam was in the forefront of the concerns of the American public, Nixon had more in mind than only Southeast Asia. He assumed office with six foreign policy topics on his agenda consisting of ending China's isolation, improving relations with the Soviet Union, introducing the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks between the superpowers, negotiating a peace agreement in the Middle East, ending American involvement in Vietnam, and solving some of the problems of international economics (Sorley, 1983: 11).

One of the first foreign policy announces from the new administration became known as the Nixon Doctrine. There were three key elements of the Nixon Doctrine:

First, the United States would uphold its treaty commitments.  
Second, the United States would provide a nuclear shield to allies or any nation whose survival the U.S. considered vital to U.S. security.

Third, the U.S. would furnish military and economic assistance when requested according to treaties, but would look at the nation threatened to assume the primarily responsibility for its defense. (Sorley, 1983: 24)

This statement became the primary justification for the use of arms transfers and sales to accomplish American foreign policy objectives around the world (Sorley, 1983: 25).

Nowhere was this arms transfer policy more apparent than in the Middle East. One of the six major foreign policy objectives of the Nixon Administration had been the negotiating of a Middle East peace between Israel and the Arabs. There were two other goals of this objective besides the obvious one of reducing the chance of a major Arab-Israeli armed conflict. The first of these two less obvious goals was the removal of the Soviets and their influence from the region. This could be accomplished by providing the Egyptians an alternative to the USSR for procuring military hardware and support. The second, less noted goal, was to secure continuing U.S. access to the region's oil supply (Sorley, 1983: 42). The method to accomplishing these goals was through the transfer of American arms to increase the leverage of the American position on both the Israelis and the Egyptians.

Despite the fact that no arms transfers occurred between Egypt and the United States during the Nixon Presidency, the Administration realized the key to Middle East peace and frustrating Soviet influence began with Egypt. Henry Kissinger, recalling his days as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State for Nixon, wrote in his book Years of Upheaval:

Thus Egypt became the key to Middle East diplomacy. Tactical necessity reinforced what Egypt had earned by its size, tradition, cultural influence, and sacrifice in a series of Arab-Israeli wars....It had sacrificed its young men to the cause of Arab unity and of Palestinian self-determination. In the process it had lost the Sinai peninsula and repeatedly risked its national cohesion. Egypt had earned the right to make peace. (Kissinger, 1982)

A breakthrough for the possibility of renewed American-Egyptian relations came when Nasser died on September 28, 1970. His successor was Anwar el-Sadat, who had served as Nasser's vice-president. Although neither Nasser nor Sadat were communists, the dependence of Nasser on Soviet assistance and American distrust of Nasser, made any type of reconciliation with Egypt impossible while Nasser was in power. As early as the funeral of Nasser, the first secret contacts were initiated between the United States and Egypt (Sorley, 1983: 55-58). With Sadat as the leader, a new era in relations was dawning.

Those relations took a dramatic upswing on July 18, 1972, when Sadat demanded the withdrawal of Soviet military personnel from Egypt. This chilling in Soviet-Egyptian relations had occurred over time as Sadat, like Nasser before him, became frustrated with the Soviets. Although the Soviets had replenished the stocks of the Egyptian military following the 1967 Six Day War and had provided some of its most technologically advanced equipment and personnel during the War of Attrition, it appeared to Sadat and the Egyptians that the Soviets always promised more than they could deliver (Sorley, 1983: 53). The demands of the Soviets in return for the weapons and the stationing of Soviet personnel also damaged Egyptian pride and Egyptian standing in the Arab world. Although the Americans never promised arms to Egypt to get Sadat to send the Soviet advisors home, Sadat knew that ridding his country of the Soviet influence would tremendously improve relations with the United States. It would be several years before American arms would actually find their way to Cairo, yet it became implied as early as that July date in 1972 that eventually the Egyptians could look forward to American support and thus cut themselves loose from dependence on the Soviets (Sorley, 1983: 60-61).

If efforts at limiting Soviet influence in the region and developing full relations with Egypt and possibly other Arab nations were not difficult enough, they were

compounded with the need to keep the Israelis happy. Sorley sums up Israeli concerns over American diplomatic reaches towards the Arabs this way:

Here was encapsulated one of the central policy issues that was to occupy the attention of the Nixon administration throughout the various phases of its attempts to restructure the situation in the Middle East so as to advance U.S. strategic interests and increase the chances for a negotiated peace. While Israel wanted to see U.S. influence over its enemies increase, it did not want to give up any part of the "special relationship" in order to help it achieve that, thereby creating a near-insoluble dilemma. (Sorley, 1983: 79)

The best method for Nixon to keep the Israelis happy and be able to improve relations with Egypt, was to keep the Israelis well-armed. For the fiscal years 1971 and 1972, the total dollar figures for sales agreements were \$285,301,000 and \$381,336,000 (DSAA, 1993: 106). The highest and third highest amount of sales in the history of U.S.-Israeli arms transactions and proof that the "special relationship" was not threatened.

It appeared that American policy was working in the Middle East by the fall of 1972. The Soviets were removed from Egypt, secret meetings were being conducted between Kissinger and the Egyptian national security advisor, Hafiz Ismail, and the Israelis were receiving large sums of American aid (Kissinger, 1982: 205). Nixon was reelected by an overwhelming margin in the elections that fall and optimism was high in the Administration following the Inauguration on January 20, 1973. This optimism over the Middle East would be shattered the morning of October 6, 1973, Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year for Jews, when Egyptian and Syrian troops attacked Israel.

### **The Yom Kippur War 1973**

The initial attack by the Arabs was quite successful because it caught the Israelis off-guard. Egypt and Syria had been conducting military operations near the Israel occupied territories for several months but had announced each before hand as an exercise. Because this too, had been announced as an exercise, the Israelis did not counter

with their normal troop mobilization during the exercise so as to not provide provocation to the Arabs and out of respect for the Yom Kippur holiday (Kissinger, 1982: 450). This failure to mobilize proved disastrous during the early fighting.

Although the assumed aim of the Arab attack was to destroy Israel or at a minimum recover the land lost in the fighting of 1967, Kissinger claims that Sadat never believed the Arabs could defeat Israel militarily, his fundamental objective was to destroy the “belief of Israel’s invincibility and Arab impotence...Sadat aimed not for territorial gain but for a crisis that would alter the attitudes into which the parties were then frozen” (Kissinger, 1982: 459-460). The goal was to force the negotiations at a different level by inflicting casualties on the Israelis, proving them vulnerable, and restoring the self-respect of the Egyptians, and all Arabs, that was lost in 1967 (Kissinger, 1982: 460).

Israel immediately requested American arms and ammunition to replace that destroyed or expended and to build stocks for continued fighting. The American response would be molded by two factors outside of the Middle East. The first was the Soviet Union. Although they no longer had advisors in Egypt, they were still an ally of the Arabs and remained the supplier of arms for both the Egyptians and the Syrians. Determining what role the Soviets would play in this crisis would help determine the American response. The second factor was a domestic issue known as Watergate. The Watergate issue, with its struggle between the President and Congress, placed Nixon in a position where his authority and power were deteriorating. Kissinger, himself, was unsure of American power to respond to the fighting as “it was not clear that Nixon retained enough authority to manage the manifold pressures about to descend on him” (Kissinger, 1982: 468). In recalling Nixon’s actions during the crisis Kissinger wrote:

Nixon was thus preoccupied with Watergate and its ramifications throughout the Middle East Crisis. This did not keep him from being informed, or from making the key decisions. But it did inhibit the frenetic, restless, penetrating leadership



that had characterized his performance in previous crises. His courage had not been impaired; it was if anything reinforced by the fatalism with which he faced the last phase of his Presidency and by his desperate desire to be seen to vindicate the national interest in the area of foreign policy that was his forte. (Kissinger, 1982: 470)

Kissinger was in frequent contact with the Soviets attempting to enlist their aid in ending the fighting, as well as determining their role in the crisis. While this dialogue was on-going the Egyptians had advanced their line of fighting approximately five miles into the Sinai Peninsula parallel to the Suez Canal. The Syrians were making inroads on the Golan Heights, as well (Kissinger, 1982: 476). The Soviets delayed taking the issue to the United Nations and according to Kissinger, "the Soviets wanted to let the war run its course a little longer or else they did not have as much influence with their Arab friends as we had thought" (Kissinger, 1982: 481). With the Soviets procrastinating, Kissinger, with Nixon's approval, gave permission for an unmarked El Al plane to pick up eighty Sidewinder air-to-air missiles at a Virginia naval base on the night of October 7. The missiles were not needed to change the outcome of the battle but provided a morale boost to the Israelis and reassurance of American support (Sorley, 1983: 89-91; Kissinger, 1982: 480-486).

By October 8, 1973, the Syrian advance had been stopped and the Israelis were regaining the ground lost in the first two days of battle forcing the Syrians back to the cease-fire lines (Smith, 1973: A1). In the Sinai, stiff fighting continued with tremendous losses in manpower and equipment registered by both sides (Sorley, 1983: 89; Middleton, 1973a: A16). By October 9, it looked as if the fighting, especially on the Egyptian front, might become another war of attrition which favored the larger Arab armies now under resupply in both Egypt and Syria by Soviet airlift (Kamm, 1973: A1; Finney, 1973c: A1; Kissinger, 1982: 497). It was becoming more obvious as the fighting continued that

these were not the same Arab armies that the Israelis had humiliated in 1967 and that victory would not be as swift as those six days in June (Middleton, 1973b: A19).

With fierce fighting still raging in the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula, the Israelis asked the United States to speed up the delivery of equipment promised before the fighting began as well as to deliver replacements for equipment destroyed in the fighting. As many as 500 Israeli tanks and armored vehicles, as well as, 15 F-4 Phantoms and 45 A-4 Skyhawks have been destroyed in combat (Finney, 1973d: A18).

The United States hesitated at first, not wanting to take on a larger role in the battle, but by October 13, the Nixon Administration made the decision to begin the replacement of Israeli equipment and ammunition on a much larger basis (Finney, 1973d: A1; Kissinger 1982: 512-513). A shortage of Israeli cargo airplanes coupled with a lack of charter flights willing to fly into a combat zone forced the United States to use U.S. Air Force C-5s and C-141s to deliver the aid and counter Soviet airlift to Egypt and Syria. The first American planes began arriving on October 14 and in the first two days approximately 500 tons of materials and equipment were delivered by 30 flights (Gwertzman, 1973: A1; Finney, 1973a: A1).

With American planes resupplying the Israeli forces, the stalemate began to turn on the battlefield. At the height of the airlift a total of twenty C-5As, C-130s, and C-141s arrived daily bringing an average of 50 tons an hour (Kissinger, 1982: 525). Some of the equipment provided to Israel included F-4 Phantom and A-4 Skyhawk aircraft, C-130 transports, M-60 tanks, armored personnel carriers, and TOW anti-armor weapons (Sorley, 1983: 94). As the fighting continued, Israeli forces soon controlled the Golan Heights and moved within 40 kilometers of Damascus, Syria. In the Sinai Peninsula, the Israelis had crossed the Suez Canal and were advancing on Cairo when the first cease-fire, a joint Soviet-American proposal, was declared on October 22 (Bickerton and Klausner, 1995: 174). Soon, however, as it happened so many times in the Middle East, the cease-

fire began to unravel. Both sides accused the other of cease-fire violations. The Egyptians claimed the Israelis, who had surrounded and trapped the Egyptian Third Army on the east side of the Suez Canal, were set on destroying the army, while the Israelis countered that the Egyptians had attacked them in an attempt to break out of the entrapment (Kissinger, 1982: 575-579). The Soviet Union warned the United States and Israel that it was prepared to come to the aid of the Third Army with Soviet forces and demanded a joint U.S.-Soviet force intervene. Nixon refused to consider a joint force and countered the threat of Soviet unilateral action on October 24 by upgrading the Defense Condition (Defcon) of American forces from its normal peacetime DefCon IV to DefCon III, the highest peacetime readiness condition. To ensure the Soviets understood the concern of the American President, he additionally alerted the 82d Airborne Division for movement (Kissinger, 1982: 579-589). On October 25, the crisis came to a close when the Soviets backed down from their demand for a joint U.S.-Soviet force and agreed to support UN Security Council Resolution 338 calling for direct negotiations between the Arabs and the Israelis (Kissinger, 1982: 591-599; Bickerton and Klausner, 1995: 175). The Egyptians were certainly ready for peace and the U.S. pressured the Israeli government to accept the cease-fire and halt hostilities without destroying the encircled Third Army (Sorley, 1983: 92).

Fighting had ceased in the Yom Kippur War with Israel holding more land than it had held at the beginning and the Egyptian Third Army still cut off from its supplies but in little danger of annihilation. The United States emerged as the big winner in the conflict and the prestige and power of the Soviet Union had been damaged. The Soviets would never wield the same amount of influence in the Middle East again. The U.S. had proven it had the ability to support its ally in a manner that far exceeded the capability of the Soviet Union and when the Soviets threatened direct intervention, the U.S. answered without hesitation. When the Soviet Union could no longer assist its allies from slowing

the advance of the Israeli forces, it was again, the United States that negotiated the cease-fire. The Yom Kippur War had proven to the Arabs the superiority of American arms and American assistance over the what the Soviets offered. American became the clear winner over the USSR in the battle for influence over the Middle East (Organski, 1990: 35, 164).

However, this new prestige did not come without a cost. As early as October 17, the Department of Defense estimated that it needed an additional \$2 billion to support the replenishment of arms shipped to Israel and two days later, President Nixon asked Congress for \$2.2 billion in emergency aid for that country (Gelb, 1973: A1; Finney, 1973b: A12). A second cost to the Americans was an oil embargo that was started by the Organization of Arab Oil-Producing Countries (OAPEC) on October 17. It marked the first time that the Arab nations had used oil as a weapon. The embargo which lasted until March 1974, was estimated to cost the United States over 500,000 jobs and a \$10-\$20 billion loss in gross national product (Bickerton and Klausner, 1995: 176-177). A final cost to the United States was in its own military readiness. A General Accounting Office investigation following the war showed that the Army had withdrawn 369 M-60 tanks and 500 armored personnel carriers from war reserve stocks and that 5 percent of the nations supply of air-to-surface missiles had been shipped to Israel during the war (Sorley, 1983: 97). It was fortunate for the United States that no events transpired in the next year that would exploit this lack of readiness.

Although Israel had proven its superiority on the battlefield once again, the Nixon Administration realized that the manner in which the 1973 war had ended would not result in a lasting peace. The next step was to use its influence over Israel, along with its newly found influence over the Egyptians, to gain a true peace. Nixon turned to Kissinger and to what became known as "shuttle diplomacy" to work for peace. By November 11, Kissinger had negotiated for a return of troops to the cease-fire lines of October 22 and for relief of the beleaguered Egyptian Third Army. In January 1974, Israel and Egypt

signed a disengagement accord in which Israeli troops drew back across the Suez Canal to positions approximately 20 miles east of the canal while the Egyptians would reduce troops in the area and emplace only defensive weapons around the canal. The agreement also established a buffer zone that would be patrolled by UN troops. In May, the United States and Egypt resumed full diplomatic relations. Also that month, the Israelis and the Syrians agreed to a disengagement pact for the Golan Heights (Bickerton and Klausner, 1995: 184-185). Of course, in order to reassure the Israelis and gain their cooperation, the arms continued to flow to that country with \$2,344,425,000 in total sales approved for FY 74 and \$769,035,000 for FY 75 (DSAA, 1993: 106).

On August 4, 1974, Richard Nixon resigned as President of the United States in order avoid what appeared to be certain impeachment. Although his Presidency had been cut short, he had achieved many of the foreign policy goals that he had set out to accomplish when he was sworn-in on January 21, 1969. In had improved relations with the Soviet Union through détente, he had opened the door to relations with China becoming the first President to visit the People's Republic of China in 1972, he had withdrawn the United States from the unpopular war in Southeast Asia, and, after the war of 1973, brought the Middle East closer to peace. In the Middle East alone, Nixon had seen the victory of America's ally over the Soviet supported nations of Syria and Egypt in the war. His foreign policy was instrumental in Egypt's rejection of the Soviet Union and its return to the American fold. Finally, his staunch support of Israel in war had proven to the Arabs, Israelis, and the rest of the world that American support and friendship were still a powerful ally even in the post-Vietnam world. Perhaps it was Kissinger who best summed Nixon's support of Israel when he wrote:

And yet when all was said and done, in every crisis Nixon stood by Israel more firmly than almost any other President save Harry Truman. He admired Israeli

guts. He respected Israeli leader's tenacious defense of their national interest. He considered their military prowess an asset for democracies. (Kissinger, 1982: 203)

## **The Ford Years**

Gerald Ford became the 38th President of the United States following the resignation of Nixon. Prior to October 12, 1973, Ford had been the House Minority Leader when Nixon nominated him to become Vice-President when Spiro Agnew resigned. On August 9, 1974, he assumed the highest office in the land. During his short time in office, the most pressing issues of his Presidency were domestic issues, foremost, countering the enormous inflation rates and unemployment that was plaguing the nation. This did not mean that Ford did not devote attention to Israel, in fact, during his Administration two major changes in arms transfers to Israel occurred.

The first major change was contained in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974. The Senate version of the bill was passed in both Houses of Congress in December 1974. The law "authorizes the President to furnish assistance under the Act and credits and guaranties under the Foreign Military Sales Act to nations in the Middle East. Such assistance, credits, and guaranties are to be provided within the framework of existing law" (Foreign Assistance Act of 1974, 1974: 6724). This Act provided for economic aid to Egypt, Jordan, and Israel, as well as providing military assistance to the latter two nations. The major change was that it authorized \$100,000,000 of the credits for sales to Israel in FY 1975 be forgiven. The reasoning behind this was the state of the Israeli economy following the Yom Kippur War the year before. Congress believed that in order to keep the Israeli economy from collapsing while still ensuring that Israel received the arms and equipment needed, that some of the credits should be forgiven (Foreign Sales Act of 1974, 1974: 6723-6724).

The second major change occurred in how the goal of arms transactions to Israel. Prior to the Yom Kippur War in 1973, American arms to Israel had been primarily sent for

the legitimate defense needs of Israel. Following the war, arms transfers became a negotiating tool aimed at gaining Israeli cooperation in the peace process and not necessarily based on the true defense needs of Israel. A prime example of this change in the use of arms occurred in the spring of 1975 while Kissinger was involved in another round of shuttle diplomacy. Kissinger was negotiating a further disengagement of Israeli forces from the Sinai Peninsula while Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister, refused to consider any withdrawal further than the lands occupied following the 1967 war plus control of the key mountain passes of Gidi and Mitla. A frustrated President Ford threatened a reassessment of U.S. policy in the Middle East and suspended arms deliveries to Israel in order to bring them back to the negotiating table. The Israelis agreed in June to return to negotiation and on September 4, 1975, Egypt and Israel signed a second disengagement accord (Bickerton and Klausner, 1995: 186).

The peace process, which would reach its fruition under the next Administration, was back on track. Throughout the remainder of his time in office, the amount of total sales agreements for Israel remained at high levels with \$769,035,000 and \$946,185,000 for FYs 75 and 76, respectively. Also in FY 76, \$80,421,000 was approved for sales to Egypt, the first sales of American arms to that country in over ten years (DSAA, 1993: 106). Sorley provided an accurate summary of the Nixon/Ford years and the U.S. relationship with Israel when he wrote:

Looking back at these crowded years of the American-Israeli interaction, it is clear that there was a continuing commitment to both the military and the economic well-being of Israel, a determination to make it possible for Israel to negotiate from a position of strength, and a conviction that for its own best interests, as well as those of the United States, it must negotiate a peaceful settlement while that was still possible. Arms transfers were an obvious and even central element in this process, both in maintaining the position of security and in encouraging, indeed bargaining with, the Israelis to negotiate a settlement. (Sorley, 1983: 104)

## The Carter Years

Jimmy Carter assumed the Presidency of the United States on January 20, 1977. While every American President since Truman had been a defender of Israel's right to exist, most looked at Israel largely from a strategic viewpoint, with America's interests first. As he wrote in his memoirs, Keeping Faith, for Carter this support of Israel had a deeper root in religion, much more than just American strategic interests:

The Judeo-Christian ethic and study of the Bible were bonds between Jews and Christians which had always been part of my life. I also believed very deeply that the Jews who had survived the Holocaust deserved their own nation, and that they had the right to live in peace among their neighbors. I considered this homeland for the Jews to be compatible with the teachings of the Bible, hence ordained by God. These moral and religious beliefs made my commitment to the security of Israel unshakable. (Carter, 1982: 274)

This does not imply that President Carter did not have other goals and objectives in the Middle East besides the security of Israel. Although not as clearly outlined as Nixon's goals in the Middle East, Carter was concerned with human rights, Israeli security, Soviet influence, Middle East peace, and oil imports (Carter, 1982: 279). He recognized the strategic value of Israel but in a statement that, at best, represents a naive new President, wrote in his memoirs: "I had no strong feelings about the Arab countries. I had never visited one and knew no Arab leaders" (Carter, 1982: 274-275). Ironically, he would remember Egypt's Anwar Sadat as a man he "would come to admire more than any other leader" and as "my close, personal friend" (Carter, 1982: 282, 284). This respect for Sadat made Carter even more determined to bring peace to the Middle East.

Although the fighting had stopped in 1973 and by 1975 there had been two disengagement accords signed between the Israelis and the Egyptians, peace was still a



long way removed from the Middle East. There seemed to be irresolvable obstacles between the two states. Egypt, of course, wanted a return to the borders as defined prior to 1967. This would return the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip to Egypt, the West Bank to Jordan, and the Golan Heights to Syria. The Egyptians also championed the cause of an independent Palestinian homeland and recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as the representative of the Palestinian people. The Israelis believed the occupied lands provided protection from another Arab attack and refused to consider a separate Palestinian country or recognize the PLO (Bickerton and Klausner, 1995: 195; Carter, 1982: 276-285; Melman and Raviv, 1994: 175-180).

Carter, like Nixon before him, recognized Egypt as the starting point to peace. Even though defeated on the battlefield in 1973, Egypt remained the leader of the Arab world with Sadat as the strongest individual Arab leader. When Sadat and Carter met for the first time on April 4, 1977, Carter was surprised at the willingness of Sadat to work towards peace. Sadat seemed willing to deviate from the demand that Israel draw back to the 1967 borders, instead realizing that flexibility was important in the negotiations. Carter sensed that Sadat was the only leader bold enough to make peace with Israel (Carter, 1982: 282-284).

Meanwhile in Israel, Rabin had chosen not to run for reelection and had been replaced as Prime Minister by right-wing Menachem Begin. In Carter's initial meeting with Begin on July 17, 1977, he had been impressed by the new Prime Minister's "eagerness to work with me," however, this optimism was short-lived when Begin recognized permanent Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank (Carter, 1982: 291).

Although Carter was frustrated at first, Begin was not the militant anti-Arab that many believed him to be. The real Begin was determined to accomplish what no Israeli leader before him had been able to do, make a lasting peace with the Arabs (Melman and Raviv, 1994: 175).

The position of the United States in the peace process, as it had been officially since 1967, was the adoption of UN Resolution 242. The key points of UN Resolution 242 included withdrawal of Israeli forces to positions prior to the 1967 conflict; political independence of every country in that area, along with their right to live in peace within secure borders; freedom of navigation through international waterways and; a just settlement of the refugee issue (U.S. Official Statements, 1992: 4). The trick was in defining what constituted political independence, secure borders, and a just settlement of the refugee issue. The Americans, Israelis and Egyptians all had their own definitions of these terms.

Proposals, rejections, counter-proposals, and more rejections continued through 1977, including a joint U.S.-USSR statement regarding peace rejected by the Israelis, until a historic day in November when Sadat announced in front of the Egyptian National Assembly that he was willing to go all the way to the Israeli Parliament in search of peace. Begin immediately accepted the proposal and issued a formal invitation to Sadat, and any other Arab leader who wished to come, to visit Israel. On November 19, the President of Egypt addressed the Knesset and announced that Egypt was ready to establish a permanent peace with Israel. He also announced, however, that this peace would require Israeli recognition of Palestinian self-determination (Bickerton and Klausner, 1995: 196-

197; Melman and Raviv, 1994: 179). Although the visit and speech by Sadat were of historic proportions, the two sides were still a long way from an agreement.

The next year, 1978, began with an American plan that was rejected by both sides. For the next seven months negotiations continued but no real progress was made. The Israelis refused to accept Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank or Gaza Strip and the Egyptians would accept no proposals without resolution of the Palestinian question. In August, Carter requested both Begin and Sadat meet him at the Presidential retreat in Camp David, Maryland. This meeting would finally produce the accords that would change the future of the Middle East (Bickerton and Klausner, 1995: 196).

Although the meeting of the leaders of Israel, Egypt, and the United States was scheduled to last for only three days beginning on September 5, it was thirteen days later when success was actually achieved. Many meetings were conducted throughout the thirteen days, some with only Carter and Begin, some with Carter and Sadat, many with all three leaders and their advisors, and others with only the three leaders present. On multiple occasions one party or the other attempted to end the talks but each time President Carter was able to play the role of mediator and bring both parties back to the negotiating table. On Day Eleven, a Friday, it appeared that the summit had been a failure and Sadat summoned a helicopter to leave Camp David. Carter was able to convince the Egyptian leader to remain until Sunday when everyone would leave the Presidential retreat together. Remarkably, on Day Twelve, Carter reached what he considered "breakthrough" ground on the Sinai issue during discussions with Begin. What had dragged on for eleven days and appeared as a failure, now came quickly together and by

Sunday, Day Thirteen, all sides were in agreement on two separate accords, the Framework for Peace in the Middle East and Conclusion of a Peace Treaty Between Egypt and Israel (Carter, 1982: 322-403).

The first accord, "Framework for Peace in the Middle East", called for negotiations between Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and representatives of the Palestinian people to resolve the Palestinian issue in the West Bank and Gaza regions. It further set up procedures for the transfer of authority to a self-government for the regions to replace Israeli forces while negotiations continued regarding the ultimate status of the regions (Bickerton and Klausner, 1995: 196-197; Department of State, 1984: 76-81).

The second accord, "Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty Between Egypt and Israel", was a draft peace proposal to be negotiated and signed within the next three months. It provided for a phased Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula and restoration of the Sinai to Egyptian rule. Further, it allowed for Israeli use of the Suez Canal. It specified the location and numbers of Egyptian troops that could be stationed in the Sinai and called for establishment of full diplomatic relations after the treaty was signed and an interim withdrawal of Israeli forces accomplished (Bickerton and Klausner, 1995: 197; Department of State, 1984: 81-83).

Gaining the approval of the Egyptian and Israeli leaders on the two Camp David accords required more than just reaching a compromise, it required American dollars. It has been estimated the Camp David accords cost the United States \$5 billion to "buy" Middle East peace, in both military and economic aid, with \$3 billion for construction of new air fields for the Israelis to replace the lost Sinai facilities and to cover the cost of

redeploying troops out of the Sinai (Bickerton and Klausner, 1995: 198; Melman and Raviv, 1984: 183). The additional \$2 billion for the Egyptians was in the form of tanks, planes, and air defense weapons systems (Bickerton and Klausner, 1995: 198). Carter denies any claims of "buying" peace and nowhere in his memoirs is there any mention of military or economic concessions by the U.S. to gain signatures on the accords (Carter, 1982: 426).

On March 29, 1979, the formal signing of the treaty took place on the lawn of the White House. Egypt received harsh criticism from every other Arab nation for signing a "separate peace" with Israel. Many Arab nations severed diplomatic relations with Cairo and imposed an economic boycott. Frustration was felt by many that the agreement ignored the issues of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights but for the peoples of Israel and Egypt, it appeared that peace was becoming a much closer reality (Bickerton and Klausner, 1995: 199-200).

## **Summary**

The thirteen year period between the start of the Six Day War and the formal signing of the Camp David accords in Washington recorded a tremendous change in the relationship between Israel and the United States. Nowhere was this change more evident than in the area of security assistance.

When the Six Day War began, the United States had historically provided minimal arms and military equipment to the Israelis. HAWK air defense systems and some tanks were the limit of American-supplied military equipment. The bulk of Israel's defense needs came from their long-time supporter, France. When France imposed an arms

embargo on the region during the war and then carried it over after the cease-fire, the United States stepped in to replace the equipment destroyed during the war.

When Richard Nixon assumed the Presidency in 1969, he was determined to counter Soviet influence in the region and saw Israel as a key American ally in the fight against the spread of Communism. By the time Egyptian and Syrian forces attacked in 1973, Israel was a well-trained, American-supplied force. Nixon also initiated the most blatant U.S. support of Israel up to that time, when he ordered U.S. Air Force cargo planes to resupply military equipment, arms, and ammunition to Israel during the hostilities. The flights were as much a support of the existence of Israel as they were a message to the Soviets and the Egyptians. The message to the Soviets was clear, the United States would do what was necessary to protect Israel while the message to the Soviet-supplied Egyptians was to prove the superiority of American support and equipment. This message was not lost on the Egyptians

During the Ford and Carter years, security assistance became a bargaining point to negotiate concessions from the Israelis in the peace process. Arms and equipment could be used in either of two ways. First, the United States could threaten to withhold the assistance if the Israelis refused to comply with American wishes. The second, and more frequent occurrence, was the promise of additional weapons, advanced systems, and so forth in exchange for Israeli cooperation in the peace process.

From providing arms required by a small nation surrounded by much larger hostile nations bent on destroying it, to bribing cooperation from that nation in the peace process, the amount of U.S. security assistance to Israel changed greatly, as did its goals and objectives. The only constants throughout the period were that the United States never failed to provide the arms, ammunition, and equipment that the Israelis needed. This constant eventually brought about peace between the Israelis and the Egyptians, and, most importantly to American interests, established the United States as the key leader in the

Middle East and reduced the Soviet Union to a role as only a provider of arms to radical Arab regimes in Syria and Iraq.

## **V. Conclusion**

### **Chapter Overview**

The relationship between the United States and Israel was traced in a historical context in this research. First, an overview of Israel's history from that of Palestine, a British Protectorate, until the eve of the Six Day War in 1967 was presented. The impact of the United States on events in Israeli history, particularly in the area of security assistance, were examined in a fairly broad manner in order to provide the reader with a historical background. The period that began with the Six Day War and ended with the signing of the Camp David Accords which formally brought peace between Israel and Egypt saw a large change in the American position. This period of only 12 years saw increased American involvement in the security assistance of Israel and the use of security assistance to accomplish many U.S. objectives in the region. This chapter will provide a conclusion to this research by providing answers to the research questions outlined in Chapter I as well as the problem statement of identifying the factors that shaped U.S. foreign policy, and its security assistance implications, to Israel from 1967 until 1979.

### **Conclusions**

Before providing the conclusion to the overall research question of identifying what factors shaped U.S. foreign policy, and its security assistance implications, to Israel during the period of 1967-1979, this chapter will first answer the four related subordinate questions.

Research Question #1: What were the threats, real and perceived, to Israel's survival?

In identifying threats to Israel's existence, this research did not attempt to distinguish between real and perceived threats. It is the strong belief of this author that it



is not important to separate real from perceived threats because perception is reality to the one with that perception. In this case, whether a threat was real or not does not matter if Israel perceived the threat to be real. The best example of this was the Yom Kippur War of 1973. During the research, no historian stated the existence of Israel was ever in doubt despite the surprise attack by Egypt and Syria. In fact, as pointed out in Chapter IV, Sadat realized that the destruction of Israel was not possible when he initiated the conflict. Instead, he hoped to shatter the Israeli belief of invincibility and bring about a new round of negotiations. However, regardless of the likelihood of the Arabs winning on the battlefield, the fact that the Arab nations engaged in combat with Israel, made the Arab nations a real threat in eyes of the Israelis and this author.

The actual combat with the Israelis makes the Arabs the most obvious threats to Israel's survival. In this research, these Arab neighbors can be broken down into two categories. The first category is those nations who actually fought against Israel either in 1967 or 1973 and shared borders with Israel. Leading this category are Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. These nations posed a particular threat to Israel because of the common borders which eventually led to disputed and occupied territories following the fighting. The second category of threats are hostile neighbors that do not share a border with Israel or send troops into combat to the degree that the previous three nations did. Although they did not play a large role in the actual fighting, hostile Arab countries such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia were threats because of financial backing they provided Egypt, Syria, and Jordan as well as because of their refusal to accept the right of Israel to exist. It could be stated, especially concerning 1973, that nations such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia were instigators of hostilities by encouraging Egyptian and Syrian action against Israel.

A completely different threat to Israel was posed by the Soviet Union. By arming the Syrians and Egyptians throughout most of the period being studied makes the Soviets a threat to Israel. The presence of Soviet military advisors in Egypt and the engagement

in aerial combat between Soviet and Israeli pilots increased the potential of escalating conflict between the two countries. This threat peaked in the waning days of the Yom Kippur War in 1973 with the threat of direct Soviet intervention to save the Egyptian Third Army. However, it is important to note that in every case, research shows that any action of hostile intent by the Soviet Union directed towards Israel was met by an overwhelming counter-action by the United States. The first instance of American actions to counter the Soviet threat of interference was during the Six Day War in 1967 when Johnson moved the Sixth Fleet closer to the coast of Syria signaling American resolve to keep the Soviets out of the fighting. During the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Nixon also showed American resolve to counter the Soviet threat of intervening to save the entrapped Egyptian Third Army when he increased the defense condition of American forces around the globe, essentially placing them at a higher state of readiness for war. Nixon further countered the Soviet threat by mobilizing the elite 82d Airborne Division and preparing them for movement to the Middle East. In both cases, the Soviets backed down not wanting to force a confrontation with the Americans.

In summary, there were two distinct threats to the Israelis during this time. The first were the hostile Arab neighbors including both those that engaged in actual combat with Israeli forces and those who financed that action. A second threat to Israel was the Soviet Union, although the United States provided an effective counter to that threat throughout the period.

Research Question #2: What were the threats, real and perceived, to U.S. interests in the Middle East?

The first threat to United States interests in the Middle East was the Soviet Union. During the period of 1967-1979, the Cold War with its implications of communist expansion around the globe, was the driving factor behind all American foreign policy

actions. In the Middle East, this scenario was played out in textbook fashion. The first example of this is the Johnson Administrations resupply of arms to Israel following the Six Day War in 1967. This resupply was directed to counter the flow of arms into Egypt and Syria from the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. When Nixon came into office, two of his major Middle East objectives were to counter Soviet influence in the region as well as to entice the Egyptians to remove the Soviets from Egyptian soil. Other than the standard Cold War response to Soviet expansion, there was one specific reason to limit Soviet influence in the region, oil. As recognized by the Nixon Administration, it was imperative to the strategic and economic well-being of the United States and the West to counter any Soviet attempt to control the oil reserves of the Arab nations.

The Arab nations themselves constituted a threat to U.S. interests as well. This was especially true of the more radical regimes such as Syria and Egypt under Nasser. Anti-American sentiment was high in many Arab nations because of the U.S. support to Israel. This sentiment made these nations very vulnerable to Soviet influence and exploitation. Also, the Arab nations controlled much of the world's oil reserves. As proven by the oil embargo of 1973, the ability of the Arab nations to use oil as a weapon to cripple Western economies was also a very real threat to American interests.

Just as the Arab nations and the Soviet Union were threats to Israel, they were also threats to American interests in the region as well. The major difference was that in the eyes of the United States, the Soviet Union was a much larger threat to U.S. interests than were the Arabs.

Research Question #3: What was U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East, in general, and Israel in particular?

With the Soviet Union firmly entrenched in Egypt by 1967, U.S. foreign policy to the region took on the classic Cold War perspective. Everything the United States did

was done with countering Soviet influence in mind. This Cold War philosophy amounted to assisting the more moderate Arab nations such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia as well as non-Arab Iran to counter the spread of communism, as well as providing support to Israel. When Sadat replaced Nasser as the leader of Egypt, the foreign policy of the U.S. towards that country was slightly modified. The goal, besides countering Soviet influence, became the removal of Soviet forces and influence from the country and the bringing of Egypt into the Western fold.

Besides countering the Soviet influence in the region, a second Middle East objective was to negotiate a permanent Middle East peace between the Arabs and the Israelis. Despite the strong support shown by the Americans towards Israel following the Six Day War in 1967, it is evident in the research that each American president believed a balance of power between the Israel and her Arab neighbors was the key to Middle East peace. Each President wanted an Israel capable of defending herself and defeating the Arabs but not one so powerful that Israel would not feel the need to negotiate a peace. This desire for peace also had Cold War overtones. If the Americans were capable of pushing the peace process, then Soviet prestige in the region was damaged and American prestige increased.

A final U.S. objective towards the region was to ensure the flow of oil to the U.S. and the West. Again, in this case, ensuring the flow of oil meant limiting Soviet influence while increasing American prestige among the oil producing nations. This clearly ties in with assisting the moderate Arab nations while exerting some control over the Israelis.

Regarding foreign policy towards Israel, the key was a strong nation capable of self-defense, while using security assistance to extract concessions from Israel towards the peace process. As mentioned above, the United States did not want an Israel so strong that it did not need to participate in the peace process nor one that could completely overrun her neighbors. Instead what America wanted, and succeeded in producing, was a

country which had a battlefield advantage over any of her regional foes, but one which America was able to exert some type of control over. However, at no time during the period was there any doubt that the military power of the United States would ensure the survival of Israel.

In summary, the East versus West conflict of the Cold War tremendously impacted U.S. foreign policy towards all sides in the Middle East. With Egypt and Syria, clearly in the Soviet camp, America turned to Israel as its ally in countering Soviet influence and expansionism as well as to the pro-Western moderate Arab regimes. When the United States saw the opportunity to win Egypt back to the West, it initiated contact with Sadat despite Israeli concerns. While America was always prepared to back Israel, when Israeli survival was not at issue, countering the Soviet Union became the main factor in U.S. policy in the region.

Research Question #4: How did U.S. foreign policy shape security assistance to Israel?

The United States used security assistance to Israel in an effort to accomplish its foreign policy goals in the region. As the foreign policy goals evolved through the period under study so did the purpose for the security assistance. This researcher identifies three distinct phases of U.S. foreign policy affecting the security assistance to Israel.

The first phase occurred immediately following the Six Day War in 1967. With France maintaining its arms embargo on Israel, President Johnson did not hesitate to arm the Israelis in an effort to counter the arms provided to Syria and Egypt by the Soviets. The major goal of American policy was to counter anything the Soviets attempted in the region. As the Soviets were rearming the Syrians and Egyptians, the natural tendency of the United States was to better arm the Israelis than their Arab enemies.

The second phase occurred during the Nixon Administration. Besides continuing to arm the Israelis as a response to Soviet sponsored Egypt and Syria, the security

assistance to Israel took on the additional foreign policy goal of proving to the Egyptians and others in the Middle East that American arms, American support, and American influence in the region were far superior to anything the Soviets could supply. Not only could the United States provide more technologically advanced systems to the Israelis, but provide them in greater numbers, and when the Yom Kippur War had been decided, American influence could halt the Israelis which no amount of Soviet support seemed capable of doing. This phase also contained the movement of specific requested items to Israel in order to placate them while the United States provided arms to more moderate Arabs like the Jordanians and the Saudis.

The final phase of the foreign policy shaping of security assistance occurred during the Ford and Carter Administration. During this time frame, American foreign policy was directed towards gaining a lasting Middle East peace. Both Presidents used security assistance to gain concessions from the Israelis. In some cases this amounted to promising the Israelis additional equipment or technology in exchange for land occupied since the Yom Kippur War but it also included the threat of withholding U.S. security assistance and arms if the Israelis were did not comply with American demands.

In each of the three phases, security assistance continued to flow to Israel. The difference was the foreign policy goals which the United States hoped to accomplish through the use of security assistance. Each phase had a distinct goal of the United States and that goal influenced the amount and type of aid that was provided to Israel.

Overall Research Objective: What factors shaped U.S. foreign policy, and its security assistance implications, to Israel during 1967-1979?

The number one factor that shaped U.S. security assistance to Israel from 1967-1979 was "the strategic factor". This strategic factor was the countering of Soviet influence in the region. Had the Soviet Union not become a major impact in the region

through the arms deals with Syria and even more so with Egypt, the United States would not have been as eager to replace France as the major supplier of arms to Israel. Research makes it clear that in the final months of the Johnson Administration and through the Nixon years, that efforts to contain and even roll back the communist threat in the Middle East were the driving forces in the types and quantities of equipment that Israel received from the United States.

A second factor was the genuine desire of the United States to seek peace in the region. Whether the security assistance provided was to ensure Israel was able to defend itself, negotiate from a position of strength, or to gain concessions from the Israelis, the Americans provided arms with the desire to see a negotiated peace in the Middle East. With a history of defending Israel's right to exist since the creation of the Israeli state in 1948, the United States was certainly the strongest ally during this period but the United States could not afford to casually disregard the Arab nations and the massive oil reserves under Arab control. For this reason, the U.S. was determined to arrange a lasting peace which would accomplish three objectives. First, a lasting peace would reduce Soviet influence in the region. Second, by orchestrating the peace, U.S. prestige in the region would grow. Finally, peace and stability in the region would ensure the uninterrupted flow of oil to the West.

A third factor that influenced American foreign policy and security assistance to Israel during the period under study was Vietnam. American involvement in the war in Southeast Asia influenced American behavior around the globe, not only in the Middle East. Even after the withdrawal of the last American service member, the experience of Vietnam affected everything the United States did in the foreign policy arena. The specter of Vietnam raises interesting questions such as would America have supported U.S. ground troops in Israel to battle Soviet troops entering on behalf of Egypt and Syria? Fortunately, that question will forever remain unanswered. However, it cannot be ignored

that the American focus on Vietnam during the war coupled with its aftermath, severely influenced American foreign policy and security assistance around the world.

### **Recommendation for Further Study**

This research provided a general history of U.S. relations with Palestine and then Israel, from the turn of the century until the eve of the Six Day War in 1967. It then provided a more in-depth examination of U.S. relations with Israel from the Six Day War until the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979 with a focus on security assistance. This research provides three distinct areas that should be considered for more in-depth research of a smaller duration of time.

The first area of research could be the period immediately following the Six Day War when America takes over the role of leading supplier of arms to Israel. With American sinking deeper into Vietnam, the decisions made to resupply the Israelis and counter the arming of the Egyptians and Syrians by the Soviet Union deserves further investigation. A second area of research could be a deeper study of American actions during the Yom Kippur War of 1973. Nixon's decision to fly U.S. military transports into Israel with supplies coupled with alerting American forces around the globe in response to Soviet threats would provide exciting research. A final area of follow-up research would be a study of the impact of security assistance in gaining peace in the Middle East. All three areas would provide fascinating research for students of history and political science.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided a conclusion to this research project. Each of the four research questions are answered in the chapter as well is a summary the overall research objective of identifying the factors that influenced U.S. foreign policy and security to Israel during the years of 1967-1979. Finally, this chapter finished with a listing of three possible areas of continued research.



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## Vita

Captain Lance J. Newbold is from Boone, Iowa. He graduated from Central College in Pella, Iowa in 1985 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Management. After being commissioned through the U.S. Army Officer Candidate School and completing the Air Defense Officer Basic Course, Airborne School, and the Junior Officer Maintenance Course, he was assigned to White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico.

Following his White Sands tour, Captain Newbold was assigned as Executive Officer, A Battery, 5th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery, 2d Infantry Division in the Republic of Korea. Following that 12 month assignment, he returned to the United States to attend the Ordnance Officer Advanced Course at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama.

His most recent assignment was with the 611th Ordnance Company, 32d Army Air Defense Command in Miesau, Germany. Captain Newbold performed duties as the Executive Officer for fifteen months and assumed command of the Patriot and Hawk maintenance company in May 1992. He entered the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio in May 1994 and graduated with a Master of Science degree in Logistics Management in September 1995. His assignment following graduation was with the Ordnance Missile and Munitions Center and School, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama.

Permanent Address: 1410 Prairie Avenue  
Boone, Iowa 50036

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