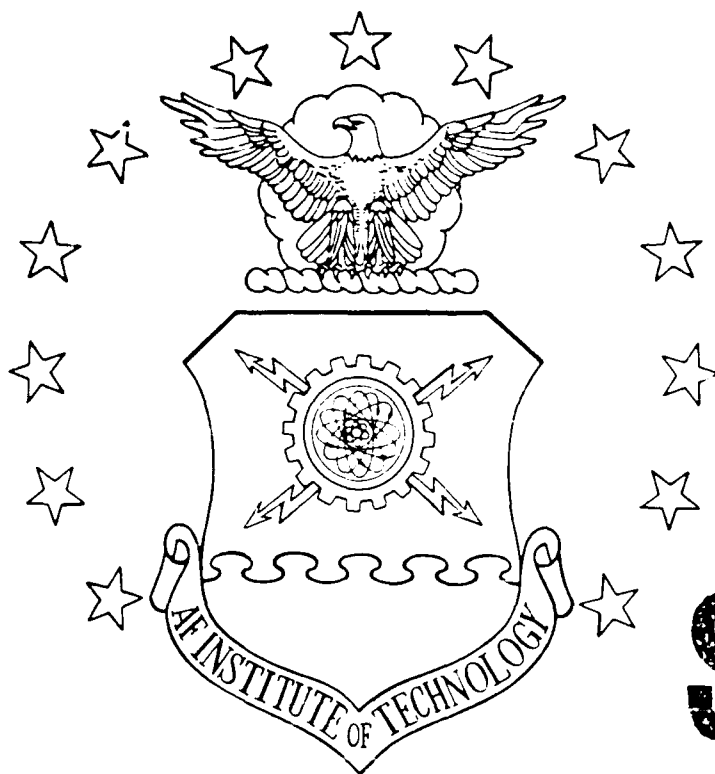


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AWACS FOR SAUDI ARABIA: A STUDY OF
FOREIGN POLICY AND POLITICAL PROCESS
THESIS

Robert J. Congelli
Major, USAF

AFIT/GSM/LSM/89S-4

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AWACS FOR SAUDI ARABIA: A STUDY OF
FOREIGN POLICY AND POLITICAL PROCESS

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the School of Systems and Logistics
of the Air Force Institute of Technology

Air University

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Systems Management

Robert J. Congelli, M.S.

Major, USAF

September 1989

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

Preface

The purpose of this study was to examine a political event which occurred in 1981 involving national security concerns of Saudi Arabia, Israel and the United States. That event was a protracted debate between the President and the Congress over a Saudi request to purchase five Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft built in the United States. This debate, which should have rationally decided the issue, quickly turned into an emotional battle as special interest groups fought to either block or promote the sale. The U.S. Congress challenged President Reagan on his belief that the proposed sale was in the national interest. The President was the victor, and now his reasons for favoring this sale can be more rationally examined, the sale's effectiveness measured and the lingering Saudi bitterness better understood.

I would like to sincerely thank my patient thesis advisor, Dr. Craig Brandt, for allowing me to be free and creative in researching an event which I find so fascinating. I owe my family more than words can express for giving me the support which allowed me to carry on.

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Ruthana, who passed away on January 15, 1988. I will remember the Gospel of John, 14:1-4.

Robert J. Congelli

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the 1981 sale of five Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft to Saudi Arabia in terms of the sale's actual effectiveness in achieving the foreign policy goals which former President Reagan claimed it would achieve. President Reagan, early in his first year in office, quickly discovered that the proposed sale was not popular with Congress, despite the fact that President Carter fielded the sale request from the Saudis just prior to the November 1980 election and was generally in favor of the sale himself. Congress, then having the authority to block major arms sales by virtue of the Arms Export Control Act of 1976, forcibly challenged the President not only on his interpretation of the national interest, but also on his ability to conduct foreign policy effectively.

The thesis examines President Reagan's expressed rationale for promoting the sale. The specific areas covered deal with U.S.-Saudi security concerns as well as the concept of presidential influence and leverage in the Middle East. The thesis also looks at the intense political battle and shows that a major arms sale was sanctioned not through logic or reason, but through raw emotion and political clout.

The Saudis found the heated arguments over their reliability, stability and motives to be a bitter embarrassment. The thesis concludes by citing specific examples of how the Saudis have since avoided such embarrassment by turning to other nations for arms, most notably, perhaps ominously, to the Chinese for long-range surface-to-surface missiles.

AWACS FOR SAUDI ARABIA: A STUDY OF
FOREIGN POLICY AND POLITICAL PROCESS

I. Introduction

Overview

The United States is one of several Western nations which sells arms to Saudi Arabia. There can be no doubt that these two economic giants share many strategic interests, and their mutual cooperation in the exchange of the tools of war is possibly the one interest which is the most important. Through the selective transfer of arms, a security connection has developed between Saudi Arabia and the United States. Moreover, a "special relationship" is said to exist between these two countries which is "composed of multiple strands which far transcend the military dimension" (37:185). Although their mutual security interests seem to coincide, on some issues sharp disagreement exists and this conflict has the potential to test that "special relationship" at times. Since the mid-1970s, even arms sales have begun to drift into this area of potential conflict. Vast cultural differences also exist, but in general, these two nations have come to depend upon one another for preserving and strengthening their common ties. In 1986, Richard W. Murphy, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, wrote:

Since the 1940s our mutual security ties with Saudi Arabia have been the foundation of the overall bilateral relationship--a relationship now under attack by radical and extremist forces in the region, some of whom exploit religion for political purposes. The continued sale of U.S. equipment to replenish and update Saudi forces strengthens our relationship and responds to a clear need for the continuing defense of Saudi Arabia. (31:22)

The Saudi monarchy is, and has been, openly and staunchly anti-Communist and so the Saudi government represents a barrier to Soviet influence in the Persian Gulf region. The Reagan Administration, which often targeted the Soviet Union as the major tyrant in the world, supported the friendly Saudis and other anti-Communist Arab nations with arms sales without sacrificing any support for Israel.

Military security is a major element in our relationship with both Israel and the Arab states. Israel is, of course the largest recipient of U.S. security assistance in the world. Egypt is the second largest. Both of those programs have been well understood and strongly supported by Congress as major elements in our strategy of peace in the Middle East. (31:21)

The United States actually has four major foreign policy instruments for promoting its interests abroad. According to former Secretary of State George P. Schultz, the specific instruments used to promote our interests are economic assistance, diplomatic engagement, U.S. military power and security assistance (44:58-60). Security assistance, specifically American willingness to sell top of the line weapons, is the focus of this thesis.

Security assistance serves a number of purposes: it helps allies and friendly countries to defend themselves and to deter threats of outside interference; it gives us influence to help mediate conflicts; it helps

sustain our access to valuable bases in strategic areas; and it gives us the opportunity to promote the importance of respecting civilian government and human rights. Security assistance also enables allies and friends to accept defense responsibilities that we might otherwise have to assume ourselves--at much greater cost in funds and manpower. (44:59)

Foreign military sales (FMS) is a major element of security assistance. This thesis will examine the sale of five sophisticated Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft to Saudi Arabia. 'The E-3 AWACS is a mobile, flexible, and survivable early warning command and control center for the identification, surveillance, and tracking of airborne enemy forces' (46:32). The Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) owns five of these aircraft (46:32). This FMS program, known as Peace Sentinel, was part of the largest single foreign military sale in history. It was designed to complement two other FMS programs also developed to modernize Saudi air defense capabilities: Peace Sun and Peace Shield (25:2). Peace Sun deals with F-15 fighter enhancements to include 1,177 AIM-9L Sidewinder air-to-air missiles and 101 sets of conformal fuel tanks for the Saudi F-15 fleet. A sleek conformal fuel tank mates snugly to each side of the F-15 fuselage providing additional range of operations (25:2-3; 57:1). Peace Shield, more closely tied to AWACS operations, is designed to be 'a network of command centers, ground radars, and communications sites strategically placed throughout Saudi Arabia' (46:33-34). When fully operational, Saudi AWACS aircrews will be able to

transmit their radar picture to regional defense facilities and so offer air defense commanders on the ground a first hand view of any air battle as it unfolds. Further knowledge of these latter two programs is not essential to understanding the issues within the scope of this thesis.

The AWACS sale, as important to security assistance as it seemed to some at the time, became mired in controversy from its initial proposal in 1981 through delivery of the first aircraft in 1986. President Reagan, in his first ten months in office, launched an intensive campaign to push this sale through both houses of Congress, especially the Senate. Special interest groups lobbied hard against the sale while others supported the President. In fact, "the lobbying efforts for and against the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia were among the most intense ever experienced by Congress (30:106)". In 1981 when President Reagan announced the AWACS proposal, some members of Congress immediately began to voice loud opposition to the sale. "Between March 24 and April 7, 44 senators and 78 House members made floor speeches denouncing the administration's proposal" (30:105).

After a rather bloody fight, the sale was approved in the Senate by a narrow 52 - 48 margin. The threat of another such battle over the delivery of AWACS in 1986 caused much concern and generated an inordinate amount of work to avoid a repeat of 1981. (46:38)

Problem Statement

The specific research problem for this thesis is to examine the history and debate of the Saudi AWACS proposal

by scrutinizing the rationales, arguments, political methods and tactics leading up to the Senate vote which allowed the AWACS sale to go forward. The focus will be an analysis of why the Saudis considered it to be in their interest to request the AWACS aircraft and why, and through what process, it was ultimately considered to be in America's national interest to agree to sell them this weapon system. Although the Reagan Administration was able to win narrow support for this arms deal, an apparent foreign policy victory, the Senate vote to not block the sale says nothing about whether this was an effective foreign policy tool. With the Iran-Iraq war apparently over and a new President in the White House, written history now offers the opportunity to evaluate the rationale for equipping the Royal Saudi Air Force with one of the most sophisticated and expensive weapons in the world. The opportunity now exists to evaluate if key U.S. civilian and military leaders were able to anticipate accurately the political and military events evolving from the AWACS sale. Within the realm of unclassified public information and knowledge, the problem for this research will be to put all of these relevant issues into focus and to draw conclusions about the overall effectiveness of this arms sale. Effectiveness, in this case, will be measured from the standpoint of the degree to which the national security goals, championed by President Reagan and

other key members of the executive branch, have been achieved as a direct result of the AWACS sale in 1981.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Saudi AWACS arms sale. A 1983 thesis study of the Peace Sentinel program, titled 'A Case Study and Supportability Analysis of Peace Sentinel,' makes the following conclusion:

The ultimate success of Peace Sentinel seems probable, assuming the RSAF follows the USAF guidance and provides full funding. However, the measurement of success for any Saudi FMS program is subjective, based upon the perspective of the individual. (25:115)

That highly comprehensive thesis was written prior to the delivery of the first AWACS aircraft and was tailored more toward the Saudis' ability to incorporate AWACS into their air force from an operational standpoint. This author will evaluate the effectiveness of that arms sale less from an operational viewpoint but more from a larger political overview using events of the last decade as a standard to measure the merits of the sale which President Reagan championed during his first year in office. Finally, this thesis will show how the events surrounding this sale have affected future arms deals between the United States and Saudi Arabia and how their 'special relationship' has weathered the AWACS storm.

Research Questions

1. Which government initiated the AWACS sale proposal?
2. What were the arguments for and against this sale?
3. In what forum were the issues debated and who were the actual decision makers?
4. How were the issues of the debate ultimately resolved?
5. What sequence of historical events contribute to an understanding of the Saudi AWACS debate?
6. To what extent have historical events supported the arguments for or against this sale?
7. What conclusions can be drawn concerning future arms sales to Saudi Arabia?

Scope

To the maximum extent possible, this study will focus only on the details of the AWACS proposal and the intense political finale which spawned the Peace Sentinel program. An explanation of one somewhat confusing technical point is necessary to prevent confusion later in the reading. According to a U.S. Department of State Bulletin and reported by authors Loewenhagen and Rosenberry, 'included in this FMS agreement are six KE-3A tanker aircraft (with an option to buy two additional tanker aircraft) and construction of an extensive support system' (25:2). Many of the other documents used as sources also refer to these tankers as Boeing KC-707 or in some cases KC-135 aircraft. The reader should not become confused should a citation contain any one of

these three designations. Given the political arena which this thesis examines, unnecessary details of this or any other Saudi FMS program will be omitted unless they contribute to clarification or understanding of a particular issue.

Background

A brief background and overview of some of the issues will aid in understanding subsequent chapters in which the AWACS controversy is examined in greater detail. Included here as a means of introducing certain important concepts will be a few specific details from the AWACS controversy. The reader should be confident that any AWACS issue introduced in this chapter represents only a sample of the details to follow. The Persian Gulf, with its great wealth and strategic military value, is a challenging area of study.

A Need for Defense. There are many reasons why the Saudis should be interested in buying defensive weapons, and why the United States should seriously consider honoring their requests. A former U.S. ambassador to Bahrain points out that the West has come to recognize a wide range of important interests in the Persian Gulf, such as commercial, financial, political and military. However, he states that 'oil remains at the heart of the critical strategic interest in the Gulf' (52:1).

Oil. On October 1, 1981, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee began hearing testimony on the AWACS proposal. Senator John Glenn, one of the members of that committee, made the following comment while questioning Secretary of Defense Weinberger:

I share your view that this area of the world probably is the most important place for the free industrial world's security. I do not think that is overstated. We get close to 20 percent of our oil, Western Europe 50 percent, Japan 75 percent, from that area, and approximately 60 percent of those totals come from Saudi Arabia. (55:69)

Little has changed over the last eight years. "As of today, the Middle East alone supplies about one-half of all oil in international trade. Sixty percent of the world's proven oil reserves are in the Middle East" (7:57). Oil experts are quick to point out that oil is more than a commercial commodity. "It acquired strategic status quickly, and it will retain it for decades to come" (7:61). Oil has become a commodity which must be defended. There are Gulf experts who "think the United States government must meet the legitimate security requirements of the Arab states by showing a greater willingness to accept the risks of arms sales that are required for the defense of moderate Arab governments in the region" (43:86). Clearly, threats to the region must exist.

The Threats. The Soviet threat is one that comes to mind immediately. The Soviet Union shares a common border with volatile Iran and supports Iraq with weapons.

The Soviet's relationship with Iraq and their potential inroads in Iran create concerns for the Gulf's vulnerable oil production facilities and transshipment routes. Several Western governments which largely depend on Gulf oil, not to mention the Saudis who supply it, look to arms and alliances or commitments to make a statement to the Soviets that their presence is not welcome nor will it be tolerated. Experts in Arab affairs believe, however, that the Soviet threat is less prominent today because the U.S.S.R. has developed sufficient oil and gas reserves of its own. They are not suggesting that Soviet intervention can be ruled out, however (7:59). Further, one expert believes that the Gulf nations must "develop contingency plans for this threat, not only collectively but especially in cooperation with friendly outsiders" (35:65).

The Iran-Iraq war has also been a threat to moderate Arab states like Saudi Arabia. In the U.S. State Department there are leaders who believe "it is clearly in U.S. and our friends' interests to see that Saudi Arabia and other moderate states are adequately equipped to counter potential Iranian aggression" (31:23).

Military experts share this view. One vividly describes potential attack profiles on Saudi oil terminals, stating that "the Persian Gulf is not much of a barrier to air attack and that without AWACS, warning time is cut to about five minutes at best" (46:32). In fact, the night

before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee convened to hear testimony on the AWACS proposal, three Iranian fighters flew across the Persian Gulf, dropped bombs, and set fire to oil storage depots in Kuwait. Kuwait is the tiny, oil-rich nation which borders Saudi Arabia to the north. The U.S. AWACS on patrol over eastern Saudi Arabia that evening detected and tracked the Iranian fighters from the very moment the fighters took off from Bushehr airport on Iran's west coast (55:1,12-15,34,15,53). The cease fire which currently exists between Iran and Iraq offers no guarantees to the Saudis for the future. The history of Iranian aggression lives in the minds of the Arabs on the Gulf's western shore and rather sharp cultural religious differences only prolong and exasperate the tension.

The Saudi Request. The Saudi monarchy became increasingly aware of U.S. AWACS capabilities at least as early as 1979, when President Carter deployed American E-3s to Saudi Arabia as a show of support when the North-South Yemen conflict erupted. Only a year later the Saudis asked the Carter Administration to sell them AWACS and other air defense enhancements. It was in Geneva in mid-1980 that Prince Sultan of Saudi Arabia urged Secretary of Defense Harold Brown for AWACS air surveillance aircraft in addition to F-15 conformal fuel tanks, bomb racks, and advanced AIM 9-L air-to-air missiles. Brown asked Prince Sultan

to wait on this request until after the Carter-Reagan November election before a decision would be announced (30:104; 40:121).

AWACS would provide the Saudis with an additional means of guarding their vast Kingdom. "The fact that the Kingdom is bordered by the Arabian Gulf (Persian Gulf), the Red Sea and wide deserts to the north and south means that attacks on the Kingdom would necessarily have to come through the air" (35:67). The type of attack referred to here is the rapid application of enemy offensive air power with a low probability of early detection by ground based radar and a high probability of seriously crippling Saudi oil production facilities or terminals.

The new Reagan Administration acted quickly and agreed to sell the Saudis five AWACS aircraft (30:105). After overcoming many roadblocks in Congress, the administration was allowed to deliver the first of the five planes in mid-1986 (11:6; 35:68).

Roadblocks. There were difficult roadblocks to conducting the sale because there were, and are today, influential people either skeptical of Saudi motives or totally opposed to selling major weapons systems to the Arabs. "The lobbying efforts for and against the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia were among the most intense ever experienced by Congress" (30:106). "The Israelis were, as

usual, strongly opposed to the sale of more modern weaponry to the Saudis" (30:106).

The Israelis. There are many experts who point out how the U.S.-Israeli relationship has strengthened under President Reagan (7:60; 27:37; 35:67). However, they also note that the U.S.-Saudi relationship "has been plagued increasingly in the last decade by complications arising from the close ties between the United States and Israel, and the latter's ability to influence and even prevent many U.S. arms sales to Arab states" (35:67). Key people in the State Department are trying to put to rest the claims that "friendship with one party to the Arab-Israeli dispute precludes friendship with the other" (31:20).

The Israeli objections to AWACS are viewed as two-part. Experts describe how Prime Minister Begin was extremely vocal; he condemned the proposed sale because he saw AWACS capabilities as a military threat (30:106; 31:23). The other Israeli objection, although not voiced publicly, was "the political threat of a growing strategic relationship between the United States and the Saudis, and possibly other moderate Arab States" (30:111). The Israeli battle against the sale was waged on the floor of Congress.

Congress. "Opposition to the sale immediately became manifest in Congress" (30:105). In 1981 there were dozens of congressmen from both houses who made floor

speeches denouncing the President's sale proposal (30:105; 46:38). Some congressmen who represented large Jewish constituencies and depended upon powerful Jewish groups for re-election support were soon caught up in a frenzy to block a seemingly dangerous sale to an Arab state, an enemy of Israel. After all, in 1981 there were many press reports coming out of Saudi Arabia calling for a "jihad," or holy war as the only means of resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict (55:39-43). "The U.S. Congress became so totally pro-Israel that it came to be called the captive of the Israeli lobby in Washington" (27:37). The Saudis were beginning to discover that their air defense requirements were becoming an embarrassing public debate.

"The Arabs watched with concern as they became targets of open hostility in the United States" (27:37). "Saudi problems with Congress over arms purchases go back to the 1970s, and the Saudis have found the experience increasingly objectionable" (30:100). The ever increasing lobbying efforts against these arms sales were led by special interest groups, as will be shown later in chapter five. The Saudi AWACS sale proposal, which the American Jewish community vigorously opposed, was a classic case.

Technology Compromise? Apart from the Israeli objections were the fears that AWACS technology could fall into enemy hands (30:106; 35:68; 46:35). On the other hand, some U.S. military leaders concerned with the eventual

interoperability of Saudi AWACS with other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) defense networks "fought hard to get the U.S. data link (called TADIL-A) released for use in Saudi Arabia" (46:39). This data link allows the AWACS crew to communicate data much more effectively to ground stations than by voice communication alone. With this ability and with U.S. approval, it is possible that some day the Gulf Arabs may build a regional air defense network with AWACS playing the key radar surveillance role. Nevertheless, senators who were worried about misuse of AWACS technology forced the President to state in writing "that transfer of the AWACS would take place only under conditions consistent with the Arms Export Control Act of 1976 and only after the President further certified that the Saudis had agreed to all conditions stipulated" (30:106). The Arms Export Control Act allows Congress to play a role in the sale of arms to foreign governments:

This law was adopted in order to require implicit Congressional approval for major arms sales. Its specific, unstated purpose was to involve Congress in any potential decision to sell advanced arms to Arab countries still formally at war with Israel. (2:287)

Following the AWACS debate in 1981, this law changed and the conclusion of this thesis will comment on those changes and their implications. For now, understand that the act "became law at a time of both deep distrust of the executive branch's motives and of enormous Arab petrodollar reserves"

(2:287). A facsimile of President Reagan's first letter of certification is included in Appendix A, in its entirety.

As stated earlier, the aircraft were delivered in 1986, six years after they were requested. However, even in 1986 there were threats by Congress to block delivery. They forced the administration and the Saudis into one more difficult and embarrassing round of written guarantees.

Summary

This brief literature review has provided an initial background to support the premise that the debate over the AWACS sale was indeed intense and that the rationale for selling the aircraft is worthy of historical review. Subsequent chapters will examine the pros and cons of the debate in greater detail, with emphasis on explaining the arguments set forth by each important party and the national security goals that each hoped to achieve. Before moving on to these very interesting areas, the following chapter will offer a very brief explanation of the methods used to conduct this research.

II. METHODOLOGY

Explanation of Method

An historical methodology was used to accomplish this thesis. The author recognized the importance of rigor and objectivity in the conduct of the research. Advantages to this type of study include:

- a. Certain problems can be studied in no other way.
- b. It is not always feasible or desirable to duplicate a large scale event.
- c. An historical study can contribute to a better understanding of an emotionally charged issue. The passage of time tends to allow the emotion to subside and permits experts and historians to sort out the important issues and events (9).

All of the above apply to this thesis, especially the last point. On October 1, 1981, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee made a statement in his opening remarks before the committee which epitomized the nature of the AWACS controversy. Senator Charles H. Percy stated:

In my judgment, there is no decision that the members of this committee will be called upon to make that will be more important than this decision. It is a decision that has a tendency to have a great deal of emotion in it. If every man was given and endowed by God with rationality, this is where rationality must overcome emotion and reason must be exercised by all of us. (55:2)

Despite Senator Percy's good intentions, emotional appeals overshadowed a good portion of the more rational testimony.

There are also distinct limitations to an historical study which include:

a. It can only examine and analyze the gross effects of an event, such as good vs bad, or successful vs unsuccessful. To draw fine, distinct lines and conclusions can be difficult or impossible.

b. There may be doubt about whether the researcher has gathered enough information.

c. There is sometimes a tendency to over-generalize the results or findings (9).

The author recognized all of these limitations and strove to minimize their presence in this thesis.

In general, the sources used in this thesis are factual or represent the opinions of scholars or statesmen who are either considered experts in Middle East affairs or were influential in some relevant way. Every document used as a source was carefully reviewed to insure it was true and not intentionally misleading. Each document was cross-checked against other sources, when it was possible, to insure the information was trustworthy. Finally, the author is confident that it was possible to conduct the research, analyze the information and draw meaningful conclusions without using classified information as sources. Only one source had a limited distribution (U.S. government agencies only) and that was the thesis by Loewenhagen and Rosenberry. None

of the information drawn from that thesis can be construed as sensitive to foreign nationals.

Information Sources

Three general sources of information were referenced to formulate an understanding and to piece together a rather complex political puzzle. These three categories of sources were: (1) congressional documents, (2) books dealing with international politics, and (3) periodicals ranging from newspapers to professional journals. Each source, even including newspaper articles, had its place in divulging facts, interpreting events, and adding life and color to a landmark case that was as much a media event as it was a major foreign policy decision. The following general, brief descriptions of each category will allow the reader to better understand how each contributes to the thesis.

Congressional Documents. A study of this type would be impossible without the unbelievably detailed account of events and opinions found in the congressional record. The author was fortunate to have discovered six excellent sources which capture all of the information reviewed in dozens of other such sources but not included in the bibliography. In 1981, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations sent a delegation of 17 senators on a fact-finding mission to the Middle East and to Tinker AFB, Oklahoma (the home of

the 552nd AWAC Wing), to gather information on AWACS and other related Saudi arms issues:

The report examines the principal foreign policy and national security issues raised by the proposed sale of AWACS and F-15 enhancement equipment to Saudi Arabia. It is based on a staff visit to Saudi Arabia and Israel between August 20-31, 1981, during which the staff delegation flew on an 8-hour AWACS mission operating out of Riyadh, and discussions conducted in Washington and Tinker AFB, Oklahoma. (57:III)

Without a doubt, this staff report was the single most important document used to prepare this thesis. The other congressional documents used were also vitally important because they contained the opinions of congressmen and the witnesses who testified before them.

Books on International Politics. The books used as references were written by people who have, for the most part, devoted their lives to politics, careers in the U.S. State Department, or the study of the Middle East and international relations. The author is confident that virtually every opinion borrowed from these statesmen and scholars is based upon their many years of understanding sensitive foreign policy issues and not upon personal biases. The author took great care to cite these persons properly to avoid misrepresenting their opinions or confusing their interpretations with those of the author. The book titled The Global Politics of Arms Sales, by Andrew J. Pierre was an excellent source of information as was The Lobby, by Edward Tivnan.

Periodicals. Periodicals contributed to this thesis in two important ways. Articles written in journals such as American Arab Affairs or Foreign Affairs offered the opinions of a much broader spectrum of persons who have also devoted their professional lives to the study of arms transfers, careers in the State Department, or who actually have lived in the Middle East. Their opinions were also valued and cited faithfully throughout the thesis. Newspaper articles also played an important role in that they give the reader a vivid impression of the emotional level which peaked in October, 1981. Recall that an historical study can help to put an emotional issue into better perspective. The few brief news items cited from select issues of The Washington Post and The New York Times will convince the reader that this was indeed an emotional battle between Capitol Hill and the White House.

Summary

This chapter has been devoted to presenting sufficient background on the conduct of the research to convince the reader that the information and ideas about to be presented in the next four chapters will be reliable. Chapter 3, to follow, will lead the reader through a discussion of the concept of the 'national interest' and why, in general, the United States sells arms to foreign governments. Chapter 4 will present a detailed analysis of why the Saudi Arabian Government found the AWACS aircraft to be so desirable.

followed by Chapter 5 which will present the President's rationale for promoting the sale and a look at opposing viewpoints. Chapter 6, Analysis and Conclusions, will rate the effectiveness of this arms deal and take a look at the current trend in Saudi arms purchases.

III. Arms Sales and the National Interest

National Interest

The term 'national interest' is often connected with arguments for or against the sale of weapons to foreign governments. The question that frequently arises is not only whether the sale is in the national interest of the United States, but also whether the recipient government's national interests are served as well. National interest is a term which means different things to different individuals or groups. When the President decides that an arms sale is in the national interest, how is it that so many others, congressmen included, find grounds to disagree? Should not the national interest be so perfectly clear that when the President cites national interest that the nation supports him in total? If the President is perceived as not having a clear understanding of the national interest, and if Congress expresses this through a decisive vote against an arms sale, what does this say about the judgment of our elected leader? How effective can the President be in foreign affairs when the nations of the world view this kind of internal discord?

These questions and issues make it necessary, at this point, to discuss the concept of national interest before proceeding with a detailed analysis of the Saudi AWACS arms deal. It is necessary because key players in this deal,

including the President, congressmen and foreign leaders, often expressed their views in terms of national interest. Many officials and scholars use the term national interest to describe foreign policy goals of nation states (33:1). This initial concept begins to shed some light on the problem of precisely defining national interest because foreign policy goals are quite often open to interpretation. A hierarchy of goals can be said to exist such as economic, social, political and national security, to name a few. Goal conflicts arise because different individuals and groups order their goals differently. In resolving goal conflict, very few would place national security anywhere but at the top of the hierarchy (19:8). "For better or worse, American security is the first concern of the United States and pollution, hunger, and the rest follow later down the list" (19:9). One could easily infer that the Saudis and Israelis feel the same way about national security.

National survival may well be at the top of everyone's hierarchy, but the President is faced with a world where the survival of one nation state may threaten the survival of another state. The Arab-Israeli conflict fits this description in the eyes of many Arabs and Israelis, and some outside observers as well. A generally accepted foreign policy goal of the United States is the achievement of a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Another generally accepted goal is to sell certain arms to friendly foreign

governments because, from the American perspective, this may benefit the United States in terms of its own national survival. If one accepts these two general goals as realistic, then any debate centered around them must reflect only the means of attaining them. It is a matter of choice.

National interest can be thought of as a description of foreign policy choice making (19:11). Professors Hartmann and Wendzel speak of national interests as claims or arguments on policy before some choice or decision is made. Once the choice is made, the national interest becomes part of the policy.

National interests will hardly be selected, or, if selected, retained as policy, when they are clearly incompatible with national values. By definition, through surviving the political process of debate, they must represent national values. (19:11)

With this view in mind, one can better understand why debating the national interest can occur. Not all issues described as being in the national interest are controversial, such as the declaration of war following the attack on Pearl Harbor. However, when the future value or advantage of a choice between interests is conjectural, the President can be forcefully challenged by Congress. The Saudi AWACS sale, as proposed by President Reagan, was offered to the Congress as a foreign policy choice where the enhancement of U.S. security was one of the goals. Congress, however, raised claims against the sale and challenged the President on his interpretation of the national interest.

Professor Donald E. Nuechterlein has reviewed the interpretation of national interest through the principal writings of other noted scholars and statesmen. His view is that there is no general agreement on how to define national interest. He attempts to focus on a meaningful definition by drawing a distinction between the nature of national interest and public interest. 'The public interest may be viewed as the well-being of the American people and American enterprise within the territorial boundaries of the United States' (33:6). He defines the national interest as 'the country's perceived needs and aspirations in relation to other sovereign states constituting the external environment' (33:7). Nuechterlein views public interest and national interest as being not mutually exclusive, but states that while Congress and the President share authority for the public interest, it is the President who must exercise the principal authority for setting U.S. foreign policy objectives (33:7).

U.S. national interests are the product of a political process in which the country's elected national leadership arrives at decisions about the importance of specific external events that affect the nation's political and economic well-being. Clearly, the determination of national interests is influenced, especially in a representative democracy, by the needs and aspirations of interests groups, bureaucratic structures, and various political factions; but ultimately the President has to make a judgment about the extent to which the national interest is involved in a specific international issue or crisis. (33:7)

Citing the American government checks-and-balance structure, Nuechterlein adds that the President may have to

persuade members of the House and Senate that his view really is in the national interest (33:7). President Reagan, in just his first year in office, faced a major foreign policy confrontation with Congress with his proposed sale of AWACS and other arms to Saudi Arabia--an \$8.5 billion deal. In the President's view, it was clearly in the United States' national interest to complete this deal with the Saudis. Congress, both the House and Senate, raised tremendous opposition to the President's proposal, perhaps even challenging presidential authority in the area of determining the national interest. The President would be forced to make a strong case in defense of his proposal to prevent Congress from blocking the AWACS sale.

Arms Sales in Foreign Policy

When the President is considering a major arms sale as an instrument of foreign policy, he is facing one of the most difficult challenges in global politics. 'Arms sales have become, in recent years, a crucial dimension of international affairs' (37:3). Critics of arms sales see these weapons promoting local arms races, increasing the violence associated with war, or perhaps increasing the likelihood that larger powers will be drawn into conflict. In some cases the purchasing country may be buying overly sophisticated or unnecessary weapons, placing a strain on its economy or ability to integrate the weapons into its military. There are also the questions of regional stability and the

balance of power, making or maintaining political friendships, and perhaps the nagging thought that if one's own country does not sell the weapons then some other country will be more than happy to cooperate (37:3; 32:1044-1045).

In general, arms are sought and purchased because a nation desires to maintain its security or to enhance its role or prestige within a region (37:6). This forces the President to carefully examine the region in question. When regional stability or international security is at stake, arms transfers 'should be managed so as to prevent or contain conflict and enhance the forces of moderation and stability' (37:7). This can be a tricky juggling act, especially in a region so volatile as the Middle East. Also, a weapons sale may look very promising in the short run, but it is very difficult to predict the internal stability of some nations, and the U.S. experience with Iran is a case in point. In fact, a \$1.3 billion AWACS sale to Iran was proposed by President Carter until the Iranian revolution brought the plan to a halt (6:435; 37:10; 59:317-323).

Even when a supplier country has adopted general policy guidelines, each weapons transfer decision will involve complex judgments and tradeoffs. Long-term risks must be weighed against shorter-term benefits. The prospective economic advantages of a sale may have to be balanced against potentially disadvantageous political or arms control consequences. One foreign policy goal, such as strengthening an alliance relationship or a nation's capacity for self-defense, may run counter to another goal, such as promoting human rights. As the debates of recent years on individual arms transfers show, one can almost take for granted that every decision will involve competing objectives. (37:7-8)

Rationales for Arms Sales. The next two chapters will examine the specifics of the Saudi AWACS sale. Central to understanding the debate over AWACS will be understanding the President's rationale for the sale and the congressional rationale opposing the sale. Author Andrew J. Pierre describes the uncertain rationales for arms sales by examining the traditional justifications for making weapons sales in three main categories. These categories are:

1. Influence and Leverage
2. Security and Stability
3. Economic Benefits

Influence and Leverage (37:14). A significant political rationale for arms transfers is the incredible influence the United States acquires in its subsequent relations with the recipient nation. Arms sales open many doors and afford U.S. political and military leaders close contact with their foreign counterparts. The United States faces competition from several Western European countries, not to mention the Soviet Union, when it comes to supplying arms to lesser industrial nations. The President would never casually risk the long-standing relationship the U.S. has cultivated with oil-rich Saudi Arabia. 'American arms sales to Saudi Arabia have been justified by the need to maintain a 'special relationship' with that country' (37:15). Even when no formal alliance exists, the U.S. will sell arms simply to deny other competing nations the influence that goes along with a major sale. Accordingly, some recipient

countries will take advantage of this competitive environment, using it as a means to get arms from an otherwise reluctant supplier (37:15). Leverage, on the other hand, may be the most significant political benefit resulting from arms sales or transfers. President Carter used a 1978 F-5E fighter sale to persuade Egyptian President Sadat to continue peace negotiations with Israel (37:15-16; 59:205).

Influence and leverage can also have a tendency to backfire, much to the frustration of the supplier. Arms sales may lend the appearance that the recipient nation is an "American puppet." The Shah of Iran received tremendous support in arms from the United States - those same arms becoming much too visible a tie to America. With the Iranian revolution, the U.S. lost all influence in Iran. A kind of reverse leverage can also develop. Once the arms are delivered, there must invariably be a U.S. commitment to training and support activities. It can become very difficult for the U.S. to not fulfill these commitments, especially if the recipient nation is of great importance to the U.S. economically or militarily (37:17-18; 6:434-435).

Reverse leverage of another type came into play in the spring of 1981 when the level of Saudi oil production was linked to arms sales. Speaking on American television Sheik Ahmed Zaki Yamani, the Saudi oil minister, stressed the importance that his country attached to the planned sale of five AWACS planes in the context of a discussion on both the price and future output of Saudi oil. (37:18)

Another risk in applying leverage is that the recipient may grow resentful of the explicit or implicit conditions

associated with the sale. If other suppliers are available, recipients may begin to look elsewhere for arms, and the main supplier will begin to lose influence and leverage, perhaps with tremendous political costs (37:18-19; 6:434-435). This particular point will become very apparent as this thesis progresses.

The President, Congress and the Saudis had to deal with the transitory nature of influence and leverage while considering and negotiating the AWACS sale. Influence and leverage will be highlighted in subsequent chapters.

Security and Stability (37:19). The rationale for supplying arms may be expressed in a desire to help promote the security needs of U.S. friends and allies. The Nixon Doctrine de-emphasized the presence of American military might overseas by equipping friends and allies with U.S. military equipment. In the recent years leading up to the Saudi AWACS sale, arms transfers became mainly sales versus grants. Emerging oil-rich nations like Iran and Saudi Arabia were able to purchase top of the line equipment rather than settle for gifts of older equipment being eliminated from the U.S. inventory. Most of these transfers have gone to the Middle East, and the inability to perceive their true benefits has made them highly controversial (37:19; 40:51-53).

Arms for allies are often perceived as being transferred within the context of creating, or maintaining, a regional balance of power. This is most

evident in the Middle East, where additional arms from both East and West have been justified as necessary to maintain the Arab-Israeli balance. (37:20)

The U.S. is, of course, concerned with a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute and attempts to be fair to both sides, but when one nation, like Israel, sees the security needs of the Saudis being met by the U.S., their reaction has often been negative. In a different case, the Saudis were long concerned about Iran and the growth of the Shah's military capabilities. Here the U.S. was concerned about the Soviet threat and so equipped Iran with arms, yet the Saudis felt threatened by their Persian Gulf neighbor (37:20). Saudi requests for arms were in part to counterbalance the Shah and "for reasons of both pride and politics they sought clear assurance of equal access to American arms" (37:20).

Another security concern for U.S. consideration is the need for military bases overseas. Nations like the Philippines and Spain have provided base rights in exchange for arms transfers (37:21). America's strategic planners could certainly make good use of a dependable base in the Middle East, especially in Saudi Arabia. The once "Two Pillar" strategy involving Iran and Saudi Arabia as regional powers in deterrence of Soviet expansion was weakened when the Shah fell from power. The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan made it clear to the U.S. that Saudi Arabia was now the only hope left in the area to help defend the

Persian Gulf oil so vital to U.S. allies in Europe and the Far East (4:4-5). Concerned about a perception of regional vulnerability, President Carter, in his January 1980 State of the Union address, warned the Soviets that the U.S. would repel any attempt to gain control of the Gulf region, using military force if necessary (4:5; 6:483; 59:391). To get this job done, however, requires bases for U.S. forces if they are to deploy to the region in a crisis. The questions of who will be willing to offer bases, under what arrangements, and at what price require political solutions.

Given the critical necessity of protecting the oil flow from the region, American planners would like nothing more than a military base in the area. The granting of any such facility is certain to include arms as part of the deal. (37:21)

While keeping friends secure may be a rationale for arms transfers, stability can be a strong consideration. Once transferred, the U.S. loses control of the use of the arms, even if prohibitive agreements exist as part of the deal. In a crisis situation, the recipient may use the arms in situations contrary to U.S. desires or stipulations. In 1981, the Israelis used U.S.-built fighters to bomb a nuclear reactor under construction in Baghdad, Iraq. Also, these arms could wind up in enemy hands during a regional conflict, perhaps exposing vital U.S. technology to Soviet intelligence. Similarly, if the recipient nation falls to revolution, as in Iran, the use and exploitation of U.S. weapons is totally out of U.S. control. Perhaps the biggest

unknown and fear is that the security arrangements may actually destabilize a region, dragging nations into war. U.S. arms competition with the Soviets can be played out in the smaller nations of a region. If it appears that one's recipient nation is about to be defeated in war, the supplier nation may also be dragged into conflict rather than see its friend be destroyed (37:22-24).

Security and stability issues were central to the debate over the Saudi AWACS sale. Following chapters will address the security concerns of Saudi Arabia and Israel in particular, and congressional concern over Saudi and regional stability will be addressed as well.

Economic Benefits (37:24). The third general rationale for arms transfers is the belief that significant economic gains are possible, to include employment in defense industries. In 1976, when NATO leaders began serious discussions about acquiring 32 of the very same AWACS aircraft for NATO, they were looking at a price of approximately \$75 million per aircraft. For Boeing Aerospace, the prime contractor, there were certainly economic benefits in this deal (48:153). The U.S. Air Force was also in the process of acquiring a fleet of 34 AWACS of its own. Boeing and NATO were hoping that the NATO deal could be settled in time to keep the production line going following the Air Force order, capitalizing on economies of scale (47:2,8-9). A side benefit related to economies of scale is that the

U.S. may also benefit by a reduction in the unit cost for aircraft being purchased for the Department of Defense. Also, exports may help to spread out or recover some research and development costs (37:24).

Nevertheless, Pierre suggests that on a national scale, arms exports comprise a relatively small proportion of total exports. In 1978, the year NATO finally agreed to buy a total of 18 AWACS, and two years before the Saudi request for AWACS, American arms exports came to only 4.7 percent of total exports. This figure, from the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, does not lend much support to any theory that suggests arms exports exist merely for economic reasons (37:25).

Governments that export arms to oil producing nations may face a sort of economic backlash. There is the possibility that oil prices may rise to allow the recipient to pay for costly weapons. 'It is no accident that the largest purchaser of arms in the late 1970s - Iran - was one of the leading advocates within OPEC of higher oil prices' (37:26).

Another pitfall is the role of commercial special interest groups in policy making. Even though a particular weapons sale seems economically small on the national scale, for a company largely dependent on these sales the stakes are high. Lobbying for a sale by important business interest groups may influence the decision makers, especially

those representing a region standing to gain economically from a big sale (37:27; 8:134).

The economic rationale cannot be ignored in weighing the pros and cons of arms deal, but economic incentives do not in themselves provide the sole reason to consummate an arms deal, at least from an objective viewpoint (37:27). The economic factors relating to the Saudi AWACS sale will be addressed mainly in the context of the lobbying effort by Boeing Aerospace and others with a financial interest in maintaining good relations with the Saudis.

Summary

This chapter has provided a framework for better understanding the complexities and the debate surrounding the Saudi AWACS sale. The next two chapters will look at the sale first from the Saudi perspective and next from the President's viewpoint. Rationales such as influence, leverage, security, stability and economic interests will be addressed. The national interests of Saudi Arabia, the United States and Israel will become clear as the analysis of the debate unfolds.

IV. President Carter and the Saudi Request

Introduction

Although the new Reagan Administration shouldered the responsibility for proposing to Congress the sale of AWACS and other Saudi arms enhancements, the Saudi rationale for acquiring AWACS can be traced, in general, to the decade of the 1970s and specifically to the years of the Carter presidency. It would be unfair and misleading to give the impression that the AWACS sale was a complete package in itself, with no other considerations for Congress to evaluate in its approval process. The package which President Reagan offered for approval was commonly referred to as "The Proposed AWACS/F-15 Enhancement Sale to Saudi Arabia" (57:i). On August 24, 1981, the executive branch provided advance notification to Congress of the administration's intention to sell to Saudi Arabia the following: five E-3A Advanced Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft, conformal fuel tanks for the current RSAF F-15 fleet, a supply of 1,177 AIM-9L Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, and six Boeing 707 aerial refueling aircraft with an option to purchase two more. Including all of the training, maintenance, and logistics support, the total package came to \$8.5 billion. The initial 3-year cost of the AWACS sale was \$5.8 billion (11:6; 48:152; 57:1-2).

This advance notification in August was not news to Congress, for the administration had begun the long process of selling their proposal to committees of both houses back in February of that year (54:6). The White House anticipated a difficult battle getting the package approved (48:148-149). Under the Arms Export Control Act, at that time, if both the House and Senate rendered a majority vote against a proposed sale, it was effectively blocked. This concurrent resolution had to be within 30 days of the administration's formal notification of intent to sell. Formal notification was expected, in this case, on September 30, 1981. Up to this time, Congress had never disapproved an arms sale in this way (49:25; 57:1; 54:17). If one reviews the various committee reports and hearings of subcommittees which took place between February and September of 1981, it becomes obvious that the AWACS portion of the proposed package took on a significance above and beyond the other enhancements. If enough representatives and senators had lined up against the AWACS enhancement, the entire package would have been disapproved in the process. Thus, as we now focus on the Saudi rationale for requesting the AWACS aircraft, one should now have a better notion of how AWACS fit in the composite deal and the significance of its near rejection by both houses.

Arms and Security for Saudi Arabia

The Saudis have been building a security connection with the United States since World War II (10:13-18; 40:51-53).

In the period between fiscal 1950 and 1973, the United States sold Saudi Arabia about \$213 million worth of weapons and ammunition, \$65 million in support equipment, \$59 million in spares and modifications, and \$1,975 million in support services, for a total of \$2,332 million. (54:2)

Sales escalated rapidly in the 1970s, and through mid-1981 the grand cumulative total increased to \$34.4 billion. The United States has helped improve all facets of the Saudi armed forces. In December of 1973, the Saudis asked the executive branch to accomplish a comprehensive survey of their air force capabilities and to develop a 5-to-10 year plan to modernize the Saudi Air Force. The executive branch agreed to look at the entire Saudi armed forces and a 45-man DOD survey team accomplished this task in 1974. 'That study, and subsequent American efforts, have been the basis for the substantial build-up of Saudi forces and infrastructure which has been undertaken in recent years' (54:2). Thus, when President Carter took office in January, 1977, a 5-to-10 year plan was already in existence for Saudi air defense needs. In 1978, President Carter proposed the sale of 60 F-15 fighters to Saudi Arabia. Then, as with the AWACS sale of 1981, Congress was a hurdle to contend with. The pro-Israeli lobby, as will be explained later, is very influential with Congress and is generally opposed to all

Arab arms sales (20:155; 48:135-138,152). However, following extensive hearings and debate, the Congress voted not to disapprove the sale, the Senate turning down a resolution of disapproval by a vote of 52-44* (54:2). Defense Secretary Brown and Assistant Secretary Bennett, in an effort to promote this F-15 sale, attempted to quell congressional fears of Saudi offensive threats against Israel by stressing in letters to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee the limitations of the F-15 package. The Saudis were being denied bomb racks or other systems that could increase the range or ground attack capability of the F-15. It was a defensive system whose mission was simply to intercept would-be attackers. The Saudis were also being denied the AIM-9L missile, a deadly all aspect air-to-air missile incorporating the latest U.S. technology (30:103-104; 57:3; 54:3). Also, Secretary Bennett's letter dated February 16, 1978, stated:

An F-15 sale will not lead to the sale of E-2C or E-3A AWACS. The F-15 has an excellent radar. Were the Saudis to purchase an aircraft with less effective radar than the F-15, they would be more likely to seek an airborne radar system. (57:3)

Although Bennett's statement was designed to sell the F-15 package to Congress, one could easily infer within its message an implied warning that AWACS at least had come up in the discussions with the Saudis over the need for some form of extended radar coverage for their huge Kingdom. The F-15 does indeed have an excellent radar, but it is not

designed as a surveillance radar and would not provide the Saudis any advance warning of an air attack. An astute congressman, rather than being reassured from a message like that, should have been forewarned that the Saudis were looking at AWACS and perhaps waiting for the right political climate to introduce their true desires.

This first F-15 deal made the Israelis unhappy, of course. They were seeing Saudi Arabia emerge as 'a well-equipped front-line state on Israel's eastern border' (58:922). But the Saudis were apparently not content with the extent of their air force modernization program, even with this \$2.5 billion fighter package. The Saudis continued to remain interested in upgrading their air defenses. Perhaps the state of the world, in their eyes, prompted continuing concern for greater air defense. In the spring of 1979, their southern neighbors, North and South Yemen, were fighting a war which threatened to spill over into Saudi Arabia. In March and April, President Carter sent two U.S. Air Force AWACS to Saudi Arabia as a show of U.S. force and support (40:53; 50:154; 57:3). Saudi officials found the ability to look at air activity in South Yemen, beyond intervening mountains, very impressive (57:24). In this way, 'the importance of the AWACS as a surveillance platform was not lost upon the many senior Saudis who were afforded an opportunity to take a first-hand look at the AWACS while it was deployed there' (57:3). Not surprisingly then, the

Saudis, in September, 1979, requested a feasibility study to determine if an airborne radar platform would be beneficial for their air defense needs (57:3).

The Role of AWACS

The attractiveness of AWACS lies mainly in its mobility, long flight duration, and especially its radar range. The E-3A radar can detect low flying targets (200 feet altitude) at a range of about 175 nautical miles (NM) if the AWACS is operating at its normal mission altitude of 29,000 feet. If the target is larger or flying higher, the detection range can increase beyond 240NM (57:60). Further specifications can be found in Appendix B. In contrast, ground radar stations are only capable of detecting low flying aircraft at ranges less than about 30NM. This is because the curvature of the earth shields the target from the radar's line of sight beam until it closes within range. For a fast moving fighter bomber, 30 miles offers only a few minutes warning time, not sufficient to scramble friendly fighters in time to intercept prior to a potential attack (46:32; 57:18-21). Also, the extreme temperature gradients in the air mass near the Persian Gulf can degrade standard ground-based radar about 75 percent of the time. 'This phenomena, known as ducting, could impede target detection until the enemy fighter was virtually on top of the radar' (57:21). To illustrate its value, AWACS could detect an Iranian fighter taking off from a base on Iran's west coast

the moment its takeoff speed exceeded 80 knots! With this warning, RSAF F-15s could be scrambled and be in a position to intercept the Iranian fighter well east of Saudi Arabia's huge, coastal oil facilities. Saudi Arabia's 'most vital economic/industrial assets, the marine terminals at Ras Tanura and Ju'aymah (which together account for the trans-shipment of 95 percent of the country's crude oil exports), lie at precisely the closest geographic point to its principal military threat, the Iranian bases at Bushehr and Shiraz' (46:32; 57:16). As the Saudis began to witness first hand the marvels of AWACS technology, it should have come to no surprise to Dr. Brzezinski, President Carter's National Security Advisor, that AWACS was on the Saudi desire list when he visited Saudi Arabia in February of 1980 (57:4).

AWACS and Political Connections

Prior to Dr. Brzezinski's visit, other world events were pointing to AWACS as perhaps the next Saudi political tie to the United States. The expression 'litmus test' was used quite frequently to characterize some of these major Saudi arms sales, usually by those trying to cast an element of doubt about the true Saudi motives for the deal. The implication of this 'test' is that the United States must fulfill any Saudi request for arms, going beyond genuine security needs, simply to maintain the U.S.-Saudi 'special relationship' and that the Saudis periodically ask for major

arms improvements to 'test' the current health of that relationship (58:933-934; 50:153). There are those who believe Carter's 1978 Saudi F-15 sale was a political issue and not military (30:104). But as the previous discussion of influence and leverage indicates, this can be a legitimate rationale for an arms purchase, and during the late 1970s the Saudis were seeing this rationale applied in connection with two major AWACS deals within key U.S. alliances.

NATO AWACS. From mid-1976 through December 1978, NATO's defense ministers were negotiating their own AWACS acquisition. Defense Secretary Harold Brown and Air Force Chief of Staff General David C. Jones were strong champions of AWACS for NATO, despite the tremendous costs and difficult cost sharing problems facing the NATO countries. Secretary Brown was personally involved in high-level discussions at NATO Headquarters in Brussels during this period. Secretary Brown realized not only the military value of AWACS in the European theater, but also the valued benefits of weapons standardization and perhaps more importantly, the symbol of alliance solidarity that a joint NATO AWACS program would bring (47:12-13).

Campaign architects seized on the theme of political solidarity and raised it to the level of an almost compelling rallying cry. The campaign also succeeded in increasing severalfold European appreciation for the system's formidable capabilities. Before the campaign ended in early 1978, the commander of the United States AWACS wing met with, at their request, senior political

and military leaders in all but three NATO capitals to detail for them a tactical commander's view of what AWACS could add to air battle management. (47:12)

These presentations were so successful that American embassies were flooded with positive reactions (47:12). Here was a weapon with no offensive fire power of its own being touted as a symbol of political solidarity. NATO's cooperative venture in acquiring 18 AWACS aircraft, the same type aircraft that the U.S. Air Force was procuring for itself, could not have gone unnoticed by the Saudis. Perhaps equally significant, here was a controversial weapons deal which was spared from President Carter's plan to eliminate billions in waste from the defense budget and to cut down on the exportation of arms in general. This was a militarily and politically solid deal. Proponents of the NATO AWACS force stated that NATO had to find a solution to low flying threats. Moreover, 'those involved directly in the unique force widely shared a feeling that the intangible benefits of NATO AWACS may prove its most valuable contribution to the alliance' (22:44).

The Saudis could not help but to take notice of these developments in NATO. AWACS was going far beyond fulfilling a legitimate security need. AWACS was symbolizing a test of political solidarity and a Democratic, American President was fully in support.

The Shah's AWACS. If the NATO AWACS security and political signals were not strong enough, the Saudis had

only to look across the Gulf at their Iranian neighbors. President Carter, on May 19, 1977, implemented his Presidential Decision Memorandum 13 and made arms transfers, in Carter's words, an 'exceptional foreign policy implement, to be used only in instances where it can be clearly demonstrated that the transfer contributes to our national security interests (37:52).' Further, the President stated that 'the burden of persuasion will be on those who favor a particular arms sale, rather than on those who oppose it' (37:52). There were, of course, specific guidelines set down as policy, including the following: 'The U.S. would not be the first supplier to introduce into a region newly developed, advanced weapons systems that would create a new or significantly higher combat capability' (38:3). Despite the President's intentions, there were a number significant arms transfers made during this time, the 60 F-15s he sold to Saudi Arabia in 1978 for example. The President was also providing strong support to Iran. In fact, the 'first major exception to the Carter policy' (37:56) was an agreement to sell Iran seven AWACS, a \$1.3 billion deal (6:435-436; 37:56; 59:319-323). This purchase was part of the Shah's plan to make Iran a major barrier to Soviet intrusion into the Persian Gulf region, but the Shah's almost insatiable desire for arms made his Arab neighbors nervous (10:44). The Shah had an air arsenal of 225 F-4s, 41 F-5s, 80 F-14s, and a strong desire for 460 F-16s and 250 F-18s (37:148;

59:318). President Carter considered the Shah a strong ally and so on July 7, 1977, he submitted the proposed AWACS sale to Congress. Unfortunately for Carter, he was forced to withdraw the proposal before Congress could formally reject it because the House International Relations Committee rejected it over concerns for security of U.S. advanced electronic equipment in Iran. The Shah became angry with President Carter, sending him a message threatening to withdraw his letter of intent to purchase. The President, at that point, was less than enthusiastic about pushing the sale with Congress, but ultimately felt compelled to follow through on an existing contract. He resubmitted the proposal in September, 1977, after his staff had done some work on Capitol Hill, and this time Congress approved the sale (6:435; 59:319-323). He and Congress, aware of the growing dissension in Iran, were willing to push this sale through because of the Shah's 'ability to maintain good relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and his willingness to provide Israel with oil in spite of the Arab boycott' (6:435).

Again, the Saudis could not help but notice the strong political implications of this AWACS deal. The AWACS aircraft was, and is today, almost a symbol of ties to the United States. With its impressive black and white rotating radome, it is an unmistakable show of American force or American connections. Fortunately for the United States, the aircraft were never delivered to Iran. The Ayatollah

Khomeini returned to Iran on February 1, 1979, and the U.S Embassy was overrun on November 4, 1979. For the Saudis, the political instability in Iran would make future arms deals with the U.S. a tougher proposition, adding one more element of doubt in congressional minds. If the Saudis had been waiting for the proper political climate to request AWACS, at least a stronger rationale for improving their air defenses was about to surface across the Gulf, beyond Iran, in Afghanistan.

The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan

There were two major world events which would make the Saudi AWACS sale a near "fait accompli," the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December, 1979, followed by the Iran-Iraq war which erupted in the fall of 1980. The military options which President Carter used to react to these events made owning AWACS irresistible to the Saudis and virtually impossible for the President to deny. The growing instability in the Persian Gulf region was posing many serious problems for the President and his military planners. Up to this time, U.S. strategy in the Gulf had operated at two distinct levels:

At one level, America supplied weapons and training to help friendly countries develop an appropriate defense capability that it was hoped would foster prospects for peace in the region. At the other, America's own military capability, operating in a global context, sought to deter outside military pressure--meaning, of course, Soviet pressure--against the region. (51:119)

The Afghanistan invasion made the second commitment all the more pressing, and President Carter immediately began to voice his resolve to maintain security in the Gulf region. In his January, 1980, State of the Union address, the President outlined what would become known as the "Carter Doctrine" (6:483; 59:391). His doctrine linked denial of Gulf oil supplies as a security threat to both the U.S. and other Western nations. The U.S. Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) had already been announced in October, 1979, symbolizing American resolve to being able to project strength into the region on short notice (4:5; 42:437; 51:119). U.S. AWACS was part of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, now known as the US Central Command (USCENTCOM), and the aircraft belonged to the 552nd AWAC Wing, Tinker AFB, Oklahoma (4:26-27; 46:36-37). The RDF allowed the President to plan for contingencies in far-off Southwest Asia by planning to project AWACS and other air, naval and land units into the region "in time to deter a Soviet attack" (4:26). This type of U.S. thinking, and planning, would have a profound effect on the Saudi perception of their role in regional defense (50:154).

When Dr. Brzezinski visited Saudi Arabia, in February 1980, he was given a list of equipment which the Saudis desired to purchase, a list that included the F-15 enhancements and AWACS (51:4). Why would the Saudis want their own AWACS knowing that the RDF could deploy its own radar planes

to Saudi Arabia almost overnight? The Saudis outwardly shared the American perception of the Soviet threat to the Middle East. Senior Saudi officials told U.S. congressmen on a 1981 AWACS fact-finding mission that "the Soviets want to control the oil wells and the routes to those wells" (57:12). The Saudis further believed that the oil dependency of the West made their oil important to the Soviets, and the Saudis linked the invasion of Afghanistan to this concept, as Afghanistan gave the Soviets potential access to the Gulf (57:12). In addition to providing the Afghan rebels with about \$1.5 billion in aid over 7 years (32:1049), the Saudis began looking for ways to counter the Soviets should their country ever be threatened. The unsettling effect of Soviet advances justified Saudi requests for large military purchases. The Saudis have no unrealistic perceptions of being able to single-handedly ward off a Soviet attack. "One Saudi official estimated that the Kingdom, with all that it is buying, could defend itself against the Soviet Union for 2 or 3 days at the most" (57:12). In his testimony before Congress, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff echoed this belief. General David Jones stated:

They (the Saudis) are realistic enough to know they cannot cope with the entire Soviet Union. There is no way they could build a defensive capability that could counter the Soviet Union. (55:57)

The question again arises--why spend billions for AWACS when the RDF could handle it, and planned to handle it?

The answer lies in the image and role that the Saudis play in the Arab world.

The Leaders of the Arab World. The Saudis, oil-rich and growing increasingly more powerful militarily, had a need for their own high technology weapons and a lesser, planned or visible reliance on direct U.S. military force like the RDF. The Saudis are the guardians or protectors of the holy city of Medina and the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Approximately 2 million pilgrims from eighty countries around the world make the annual "hadj" to Mecca (37:176; 40:93-96). Even prior to Afghanistan, the Iranian revolution "fostered a new set of fears that Islamic fanaticism would spread to the faith's birthplace, which would have implications for the continued authority and rule of the Saudi family" (37:177). On November 20, 1979, the Grand Mosque was seized by about 500 fundamentalist Saudi Muslims who felt the Saudi government "failed to vigorously maintain the tenets of Islam" (57:46). Other non-Saudi Muslims participated as well, some perhaps with PLO terrorist training in South Yemen. That same day riots broke out within the minority Shi'ite community in the Eastern Province, the oil-rich province so important to the Saudi economy (57:46). The Al Saud ruling family could not afford the perception, within the Arab world, of instability or weakness. With the Soviets prominently treading on Afghanistan, they felt a greater need to maintain a leadership position.

The Saudi interest in augmenting their defense capabilities can also be seen as part of a desire to increase the nation's political credibility. Here the intended audience is less the West, which is already duly impressed by the nation's oil power, than the Arab world, which has the latent capability of undermining the Saudi leadership structure. Having watched the weapons acquisition of such other Arab countries as Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, at a tempo that in the past outpaced their own, the Saudis in the late 1970s did not wish to have the image of being left behind. (37:177-178)

To understand the rationale for Saudi Arabia placing AWACS on their "desire list" is, therefore, to understand the importance they placed on prestige within the Arab world. As the Soviets poured troops into Afghanistan, the Saudis certainly valued their close military relationship with the United States, but they also believed that planned U.S. basing of AWACS in Saudi Arabia would "put them in an untenable position with their Arab neighbors" (57:12). American congressmen visiting Saudi Arabia were told, "To have our own AWACS is much better with our Arab neighbors. It is much more prestigious" (57:12-13).

The Air Feasibility Study

Most of the weapons sought by the Saudis were favorably received by the Carter administration, but the Saudis were told in April 1980 that the AWACS request posed significant problems. The administration, no doubt, needed more time to sort out issues like Saudi internal stability, security of U.S. technology and, of course, the Arab-Israeli arms balance. The U.S. did offer to "conduct an air feasibility

study without prejudice to the United States ultimate position on any sales' (57:4). The Saudis next met with Defense Secretary Brown in Geneva on June 26, 1980, and renewed their request for AWACS (30:104; 40:121). Secretary Brown told Saudi Defense Minister Prince Sultan that the air feasibility study would have to be conducted before a decision could be made, but that the U.S. was prepared to deploy AWACS to Saudi Arabia for joint training missions (57:4). Also, 'Brown urged Sultan to postpone the requests until after the November 1980 elections' (40:121).

The feasibility study was formally initiated on September 8, 1980. It would take six months before it was finally presented to the Saudis, on March 6, 1981 (57:4). However, the second major event making AWACS a virtual 'fait accompli,' and wholly justifiable in Saudi minds, began on September 22, 1980. Iraq invaded Iran.

The Iran-Iraq War

For the 'protector of Islam's holiest places' (36:99) the war between Iran and Iraq provided political opportunity along with potential dangers. Neither Iraq nor Iran were popular among the Gulf oil producing nations. This had not always been the case for Iraq, as for centuries Iraq had been a good neighbor. 'Iraq's intellectual, cultural, artistic and political stirrings in the early part of this century had a profound influence on audiences farther south' (36:98). However, following the 1958 revolution, Iraqi

governments threatened regional monarchies with 'heir own brand of radical government by organizing and supporting subversive movements in the Gulf (36:98). This tended to die down over the years, and the Iranian revolution redirected Arab suspicion even further from the Iraqis.

Gulf Arab relations with Iran have always been problematic, and their suspicions of Iran have two fundamental bases. First, there is the natural suspicion of hegemonic ambitions on the part of the largest country in the Gulf. Memories of Iranian invasions of the Arab coast through the centuries still linger. (36:100)

The second fear, of course, was the growing Islamic fervor and revolution in Iran. With the war now providing anxious moments for the oil-rich, but vulnerable, Saudis, the question of which nation to support (if any) became a major issue. 'Iraq, as a radical republic with regional ambitions, close ties to the Soviet Union, and a record of hostility toward its smaller neighbors, was naturally suspect' (36:101). However, Iran's attacks on Saudi Arabia's legitimacy as protector of the holy Islamic places settled the issue, and the Saudis sided with Iraq throughout the war.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, with some contributions from Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, provided Iraq with an estimated \$35-40 billion in war loans during the conflict, all of which is probably unrecoverable. The Saudis also allowed Iraq to use pipelines to conduct millions of barrels of oil to the Red Sea for transport, and the Arab Gulf

nations combined to counter Iran with a persistent, united, Arab and Islamic front (36:99). The Saudis, anticipating these outcomes, expected to be targets for swift Iranian reprisals and so with the uncertainties of war in the wind, they called upon the United States for support (40:53). The date was October 1, 1980 (57:4):

Eight days after the Iran-Iraq war began in 1980, the United States sent the Saudis four E-3A Sentry airborne early warning and control system (AWACS) aircraft, at Saudi request, to help them deal with a possible Iranian attack on their oil fields. (32:1052)

This decision by President Carter reflected his belief that Saudi Arabia was central to U.S. strategic interests in the Gulf region (6:559). Ambassador Joseph Wright Twinam described the President's significant move to send AWACS to help patrol the Eastern Province:

When the Iran-Iraq war erupted the Saudi government asked the United States to send AWACS to shore up the air defense of the Eastern Province. The U.S. promptly responded in a watershed decision that not only made the U.S. decision to sell AWACS to the Saudis ultimately unavoidable but also represented a significant breakthrough in practical U.S.-Saudi cooperation to enhance the security of the Gulf side of the Arabian Peninsula from air attack. (50:154)

Operation Elf One. The four E-3A AWACS planes and accompanying KC-135 tankers, operating out of the international airport in Riyadh, constituted a highly visible operation--code name Elf One. The E-3As immediately began a continuous radar patrol over the Eastern Province, each individual mission lasting about 13 to 14 hours. With the exception of a few minutes of radar outage during air

refueling operations, this marathon aerial surveillance operation provided the Saudis with a continuous radar picture of the Gulf, 24 hours a day, for over eight years.

Throughout the war between Iran and Iraq, the E-3s flew more than 86,500 hours for a total of about 34 million miles. They were supported by KC-135s from the Strategic Air Command, which flew about 6,800 refueling sorties. (23:5)

American presence took many forms during those years. The airport location was such that if the hot, desert winds were blowing from the south, the aircraft would take off directly toward the heart of downtown Riyadh. With both E-3As and KC-135s taking off at their maximum gross weight, this frequently provided the residents of Riyadh with a loud, if not obnoxious, American ritual several times each day as the four-engine jets labored in the heat, at low altitude, at full takeoff power. The operation required a large contingent of U.S. military personnel to keep flights on schedule. Aircrewmembers, maintenance specialists, and even administrative personnel were all quartered in large hotel converted by the Saudis for the exclusive use by Elf One. In fact, the hotel was only a few miles from the end of the runway, its military "guests" often enjoying a dip in the pool as the afternoon aircraft launch or recovery roared overhead. Americans were always spending their free time, and dollars, in the city stores--gold jewelry, cassette tapes and tape players being the preferred items. To say that there was an obvious American presence in the capitol

of Saudi Arabia would be an understatement. The Saudis went to great lengths to make their guests comfortable and secure, but it was a culture shock for both host and guests. It was an incredible partnership, but one the Saudis could only live with knowing that, some day, their own AWACS aircraft must grace the sky over Riyadh and that the Americans must relinquish control of the operation. A Saudi officer was scheduled to fly on every U.S. AWACS mission, but the issue of Saudi prestige in the Arab world required more than their mere presence on these missions.

From the Saudi point of view, then, the only way Peace Sentinel (as it would be called) weapons systems could viably be employed to defend Saudi territory was for the Saudis themselves to own those systems - lock, stock, and barrel. (25:33)

Transition

Following the AWACS deployment in October came the presidential election in November, 1980. President Carter, having fielded the Saudi request for AWACS, would pass on the decision to President-elect Reagan (40:121). President Carter personally felt that it would be better to let U.S. crews man the AWACS and perhaps decide to sell the aircraft in three or four years. His close staff of Muskie, Brown and Brzezinski agreed (6:579).

We all agreed that we should let them (the Saudis) have the missiles and also keep the AWACS on station in Saudi Arabia, manning them with American crews. Over a period of 3 or 4 years in the future we might decide to sell the planes to Saudi Arabia.

Diary, November 24, 1980. (6:579-580)

According to Jody Powell, Carter's Press Secretary, the President recommended the F-15 enhancements to the incoming Reagan administration but "on AWACS, however, President Carter agreed to make no commitment to Saudi Arabia nor any recommendation of approval to the new administration" (39:A24). The Reagan transition team did not want to make a joint offer to the Saudis concerning the requested F-15 enhancement/AWACS package.

Thus, the Carter Administration indicated its views on this matter to its successors, but neither bound the American Government nor precluded the new administration from doing its own evaluation of the proposed sale and reaching an independent decision-- which the Reagan Administration did. (57:5)

The U.S. rationale for supplying AWACS to the Saudis was, therefore, left up to President Reagan to formulate and present to Congress. The next chapter will focus on the President's rationale, the process and content of the debate, and the Israeli position.

V. President Reagan and the U.S. Rationale

A New President

The Reagan transition team certainly had many important national and international concerns to study or consider in addition to the proposed AWACS/F-15 package which they inherited from President Carter. One concern for the new President was to head off foreign affairs critics by formulating early on a solid Middle East policy which offered new hope for peace and stability in the region. Accordingly, President Carter's willingness to at least present the F-15 portion to Congress must have been tempting to President-elect Reagan, since this might ultimately have swayed congressional Democrats when it finally came time to vote. The incoming administration, however, did not want to be rushed, and it was divided. In particular, the new Secretary of State, Mr. Alexander Haig, counseled caution (49:25). Haig, and designated Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, consulted with Secretary of State Muskie and Secretary of Defense Brown and concluded that the Reagan Administration would review the situation itself and make a decision after taking office on January 20, 1981 (57:5). Mr. Weinberger was the person who undoubtedly convinced President Reagan to sell AWACS to the Saudis. Weinberger believed that America's first concern in the Middle East was to defend the Saudi oil fields against a Soviet, or Soviet

sponsored, attack (49:25; 48:139,141). Predictably, the Reagan team would be forced to address AWACS and shape its Middle East policy right from the beginning:

Historically, the region has forced itself upon the attention of the White House early in each president's term. When Ronald Reagan assumed power in 1981 he intended to focus on curbing inflation, cutting taxes and raising the defense budget. But within his first ten months Reagan had to address the Syrian missile crisis in Lebanon, the Israeli bombing of Iraq's nuclear reactor, the fight over the sale of AWACS aircraft to Saudi Arabia and the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat. (20:158)

The Reagan Middle East Policy

The Reagan Administration wasted no time, once in office, to address the Saudi arms request.

On February 26, 1981, the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee were briefed on the administration's position and told that recent events in the Persian Gulf were seen as threats to Saudi oil resources, and therefore the assurances given in 1978 were no longer appropriate. (30:105)

President Reagan was proposing the sale of AWACS and F-15 enhancements that Secretary of Defense Brown, only a few years earlier, had deemed unnecessary for the Saudis' air defenses. Despite the Saudis' failure to support the Camp David peace negotiations, their potential influence on the Palestinian issue and their increasing role in regional security made this initial dealing with them critical (30:105). However, when congressional opposition began making floor speeches denouncing the proposal, Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker asked the President to defer

the submission to allow time for more extensive consultation (54:10). The President, also tending to key domestic issues at the time, agreed and put off notification of his intent to sell until August (30:105).

Reagan's Arms Transfer Policy. Even though the AWACS/F-15 package was deferred to a later date, the administration did begin to make its Middle East and Persian Gulf policies publicly known. In March 1981, Secretary Haig, Under Secretary Buckley, and others appeared before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs and they outlined U.S. interests in the region. The following summarizes the administration's policies (5:24):

We consider arms transfers to be an important implement of our global defense posture and our foreign policy. We believe they should be used in a positive manner to advance our national security interests. Specifically we intend to use arms transfers for the following purposes:

1. To strengthen the military capabilities of friends and allies.
2. To enhance important bilateral relationships we have with other countries.
3. To support our overseas basing and access requirements.
4. To send signals to friends and adversaries alike about American determination to act on behalf of its interests. (5:24)

Although not advocating a lack of restraint or an uncontrolled arms sales approach, Reagan's philosophy was clearly a departure from Carter's Presidential Decision

Memorandum 13 (59:319). The new administration also voiced specific objectives for the Gulf region (5:24):

The U.S. has a fundamental interest in nurturing an environment in the region in which the local states are able to develop sound political and economic institutions and relationships. In order to realize our specific objectives, we must:

1. Demonstrate the ability to counter the influence of the Soviets and their allies.
2. Ensure continued Western access to the oil of the Persian Gulf in adequate quantities and at a reasonable price.
3. Ensure the continued existence and strength of our friends in the region.
4. And continue to work towards peace between Israel and her neighbors. (5:24)

These presentations to Congress, in late February and March 1981, were certainly the administration's first steps in laying the groundwork for congressional acceptance of future arms sales, including the controversial AWACS sale. The administration was deliberate in mentioning the Soviet threat to the region: "Most significant, the Soviets, capitalizing on their surrogates and their geographical proximity to the region, have exploited and created opportunities to further their interests to the detriment of the West" (5:24-25). Although the President's delay in presenting the AWACS sale to Congress allowed him time to explain his Middle East policies, the delay also bought time for Israel's friends to organize and lobby hard against the sale.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)

On May 15, 1981, the Executive Director for AIPAC, Thomas A. Dine, appeared before the Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations. Mr. Dine had recently assumed his position at AIPAC, the pro-Israel lobby, in October 1980 (48:136). Only two months later, during the Carter/Reagan transition, 'AIPAC got the word that there would be another attempt to sell arms to the Saudis' (48:137). This sale, of course, was the AWACS/F-15 enhancement package. AIPAC was born in the mid-1950s, its goal being to insure the United States' continuing support of Israel. The AWACS controversy, with Mr. Dine at AIPAC's helm, advanced AIPAC to the forefront of American politics:

The American Jewish community and its lobbying arm, AIPAC, took on the President of the United States again, and the result was the end of AIPAC's national obscurity and the beginning of a revolution in Jewish politics. The AWACS battle is a striking example of the current state of the art of Jewish political power, a self-contained picture of what Tom Dine likes to call 'Jewish muscle on the job.' (48:138)

Mr. Dine's testimony before Congress was detailed and extensive. The major thrust of his argument was that there was no threat facing Saudi Arabia justifying the sale and that the sale was merely a "litmus test" which would ultimately endanger American interests in the region (58:930-934). Addendum III to Mr. Dine's testimony included the following conclusions (58:934):

The sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia should be opposed for the following reasons:

1. Internal Saudi security is lax; Saudi stability is questionable. There is danger of the aircrafts' secrets being compromised by defection, diversion of technological manuals, accident, or through Soviet intelligence activities.

2. The sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia will destabilize the arms balance of the region. Never before has any Arab state taken such a quantum technological leap ahead of its Arab neighbors or Israel.

3. There has been no Saudi quid pro quo. Saudi Arabia continues to reject the stationing of American troops in the region; refuses to moderate its oil pricing or supply policies; supports the terrorism of the PLO politically and financially; undermines Egyptian President Anwar Sadat; and coordinates opposition to the Camp David peace process.

4. For several years after the sale, American personnel will be involved in the AWACS training program, making American involvement in any regional conflict more likely.

5. Saudi AWACS will endanger the security of Israel. All of Israel -- its airfields, aircraft and defense systems -- will be exposed to the 'sight' of the AWACS flying well within Arab airspace. When used in conjunction with Saudi offensive aircraft such as the enhanced F-15 and the air forces of other Arab states, AWACS becomes a potent offensive system.
(58:934)

Mr. Dine and AIPAC used their blend of logic and rhetoric in order to win support for their cause in both the House and Senate. AIPAC knew that the House, with a large majority of partisan Democrats, would be certain to vote against President Reagan on this issue (48:142). With the momentum of a major defeat in the House as a precedent, if a majority in the Senate (barely controlled by Republicans) were also convinced, the sale would be blocked. In early

February, Dine had done a vote count in the Senate, and the numbers looked good" (48:142). Mr. Dine was committed to AIPAC's interests and he spoke to the Senate Majority Leader, Howard Baker, concerning his objections to the AWACS sale. During their conversation, Baker became convinced the President would face a major battle on this issue. The President was riding an immense wave of popularity, especially following the March 30 assassination attempt by John W. Hinckley, Jr., but it would take all of Baker's skills and influence to win this fight for the President (48:148-149).

He (Howard Baker) informed the White House that he required a total commitment to winning. James Baker, Reagan's chief political advisor and legislative liaison, took over the day-to-day coordination of the AWACS fight, working closely with Howard Baker and the Saudis. The signal went out to members of Congress that the President himself was lobbying this one, and he wouldn't take kindly to losing. (48:150)

The President's rationale for supporting this package would have to be very convincing to insure at least 50 senators lined up with him on the vote. Before examining his reasons in detail, it is only fair to briefly examine the Saudi lobbying efforts, which nearly rivaled AIPAC's in intensity.

The Pro-Saudi Lobby

The Reagan Administration, not fully cognizant of the "juggernaut that the Israeli lobby was riding toward Capitol Hill" (48:141-142), had very partisan allies in the effort to promote AWACS in the Senate. These allies were Frederick

G. Dutton, a paid Saudi lobbyist, and some representatives from several prominent U.S. companies (30:107). Mr. Dutton was an experienced Washington agent who had previous positions advising such notables as Adlai Stevenson, John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and George McGovern. As a Saudi lobbyist, Dutton used tactics which were on par with AIPAC's methods (48:142-144). "Dutton was in favor of matching AIPAC's efforts with a major Saudi offensive of his own, though he recognized that by March, as the Reagan Administration was preparing to go public with a formal announcement of the Saudi sale, AIPAC had been rounding up opposition for almost five months" (48:142-143). Dutton came up with a simple slogan which galvanized the pro-Saudi sentiment in Washington: "Reagan or Begin?". The Saudis, however, did not initially feel that their position was in serious jeopardy, especially since two presidents supported their cause. In fact, the "Reagan or Begin?" slogan, which the newspapers all published, was too confrontational for the Saudis; the American Jewish community said it had anti-Semitic overtones. With or without a his slogan, Dutton's main strategy was to work on senators who were known to be "riding the fence" on the AWACS issue rather than adopting AIPAC's style of attacking all of Capitol Hill (48:143-145). The lobbying effort took on added importance on April 21, 1981, for on that date the White House officially announced that the proposed package would include AWACS. Once the

AWACS sale went public, the prestige factor for the Saudis became a major issue. A 1981 congressional fact-finding report stated: "An adverse decision could hurt the relative influence or standing of the Defense Minister, Prince Sultan, and others who have a basically moderate, pro-Western orientation and support the sale" (57:8). The Saudis, not having the American ethnic support so fundamental to AIPAC's efforts, relied heavily on the economic lever to further their cause. Ordinarily, most U.S. companies having business connections with Arab countries shy away from providing financial help for pro-Arab political causes (8:131-132). These companies, although naturally concerned about maintaining good relations with the Arabs, seemingly "have no interest whatsoever in providing domestic critics with excuses to call them anti-Israel, anti-Semitic, or anti-anything that can be avoided" (8:132). The AWACS controversy, however, prompted the major firms standing to benefit from the sale to fight for congressional approval. "Proponents mustered a potent coalition of private corporations and political conservatives to contact individual Senators who seemed to be wavering over the vote" (8:134). An ad hoc group of businessmen from about 40 companies having Middle East connections was formed in Washington. Key members included the Boeing Company, which manufactured the aircraft, Pratt and Whitney, Exxon and Mobil. This coalition worked to persuade individual senators by voicing

the economic advantages of the AWACS sale and also their views on national security aspects (8:134).

The president of Boeing sent telegrams to 1600 of his firm's sub-contractors urging their support through their own representatives. Brown and Root (construction firm) supplied position papers to senators from states in which the firm and its affiliates are located. The president of Pratt and Whitney sent telegrams predicting that a Senate veto of the President's plan would only force the Saudis to turn to non-American aircraft producers. (8:134)

Jobs, exports and other economic incentives not only worked in the Saudis' interests, but formed one more element of consideration for the President as he and Howard Baker began their own systematic crusade for senatorial support. The President would have to show how the AWACS sale fit his Middle East plans and its impact on U.S. national security. He would be forced to apply the political power of his high office to secure the 50 Senate votes required to avoid defeat.

The President's Rationale

The President had several distinct reasons for selling AWACS to the Saudis, however, there was perhaps one prerequisite to consider before even beginning the campaign of explaining those reasons to Congress. That prerequisite, much more relevant for the President than to the Saudis, was awaiting a favorable outcome of the air feasibility study which had been completed on December 15, 1980. The Saudis had not waited for the feasibility study report, which they ultimately received on March 6, 1981, before lobbying hard

for AWACS. For reasons of security and prestige (detailed in the preceding chapter) the Saudis wanted AWACS no matter what the end result of the feasibility study offered. The reason why the Saudis received the report three months after it had been completed was not explained in the literature, but the delay may have been the result of recoordination within the executive branch as the result of President Carter's departure and President Reagan's recent January 20 inauguration. From President Reagan's viewpoint, had the feasibility study not suggested AWACS as an air defense option, then the President would have had a more difficult decision to make, focusing primarily on influence or economic justifications to sanction the sale. This probably would have jeopardized the proposal.

The study made no recommendations; rather, it detailed the number, cost and personnel needs for equipment required to provide full border coverage of Saudi Arabia under each of three scenarios: (1) ground-based radar only; (2) a combination of ground radars and the E-2C 'Hawkeye' airborne radar aircraft; and (3) a combination of ground radars and AWACS. (57:4)

The White House had from December 15, 1980 (the date the study was completed) until April 21, 1981 (the date AWACS went public) to review the feasibility study.

The study found that the Saudi radar requirement could be met, respectively, by (1) 48 ground radars, (2) 34 ground radars with 11-15 'Hawkeyes,' or (3) 18 ground radars with 5 AWACS. In case (1), though, the Saudis would lack any low-level radar surveillance much beyond 20-30 miles of their borders. (57:4)

The Saudis, having received VIP tours of the AWACS by General Jones, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other U.S. officials, probably did not consider the "Hawkeye" option quite as sophisticated or prestigious. In any event, they had their appetite for AWACS reinforced by the air feasibility study results (57:4).

With this formality now complete, the President was free to launch a complete sales pitch to Congress, with security issues being the foremost argument.

Security Rationale. With all that has happened in the last few years including "glasnost," the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the apparent end to the Iran-Iraq war, it is difficult to recall the world tension which existed as President Reagan took office. The Persian Gulf in 1981, however, was a troubled region to which President Reagan, like his predecessor, totally committed U.S. resources to deny Soviet influence or disruptive activity. The Soviets were to be denied inroads into that strategic, oil-rich region at the "crossroads of three continents" (42:433). Europe, Japan, and to a much lesser extent the U.S. were highly dependent on the oil which vulnerable supertankers carried through the Gulf's Strait of Hormuz. The West's security was linked directly to the security of the Gulf, including keeping the Soviets out of Iran (4.26; 42:433). Since nobody really knew how Iran would react to a Soviet invasion or whether Iranian leaders would call on the

"Great Satan" for assistance, the U.S. nevertheless had to be prepared to defend Iran by launching attacks against the Soviets primarily from "lodgements" on the Arabian Peninsula (4:12-17,26). For the ability to fight the Soviets effectively, the President's approach to Middle East affairs required gaining a regional consensus that the Soviets were the biggest and most persistent threat to the Gulf's stability and security.

The Reagan Administration has actively sought to gain a strategic consensus with key Western-oriented states in the region (Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, the Sudan, Jordan, Somalia, Oman and others) that the major threat to their security is the Soviet Union. (57:11)

Gaining this consensus was politically important because the President knew that projecting U.S. forces into the region was the only way to militarily deter or defeat the Soviets if they invaded. The Reagan strategy for the region included the premise that "American regional policy must be primarily military and unilateralist" (42:439). The regional states would simply be expected to provide supply bases and facilities. Reagan was not looking for a new "regional policeman" to replace the Shah, "this job would, in principle, be reserved for the United States" (42:439). The President, knowing that the Saudis and other Arabs would refuse permanent U.S. bases on their soil, needed to have assurances that at least good facilities would exist for contingencies (4:14). The Saudis, if they could secure their own AWACS and supporting KC-707 tankers, were planning

on building their own modern support base at Al Kharj. Al Kharj, about 35 miles southeast of Riyadh, would have at least five 12,000 foot runways, each separated by about three miles in order to limit the potential for collateral damage from air attack (25:100). With the interim facility at Riyadh's airport, and ultimately Al Kharj, U.S. AWACS could 'bed-down' with the help of Saudi logistic support, aircrew quarters, and security already in place (25:101-104; 37:185; 42:440). This is tremendously significant for AWACS, which requires special aircraft ground equipment, maintenance test facilities (plus spare parts), and personnel support in a secure environment in order to keep operations going for a sustained period. Without Saudi AWACS, the U.S. would be forced to commit several C-141s or C-5s to immediately transport this equipment at a time when airlift could be strained to the limits (57:11). Fuel storage, either at Riyadh or Al Kharj, would also solve a major problem for USAF AWACS planners (4:44-51).

Military bases and international airports in the Gulf will certainly possess substantial storage facilities and stocks of fuel, which would play a central role in supporting U.S. combat forces. (4:45)

All of these reasons help explain why the President wanted to sell AWACS and other weapons to the Saudis. It was a crucial step in preparing the U.S. for war. It was a strategy of posturing weapons and facilities in defense of an important oil-rich country that on one hand refused U.S. bases while on the other hand had legitimate air defense

requirements and insisted upon U.S. arms (42:439). With AWACS, the Saudis would preserve their leading role in the Arab world while providing the USAF with ideal conditions for contingency operations. Additionally, the President knew that it would not be until 1990 at the earliest before the eight Saudi crews needed to operate all five AWACS (41:4) would be trained and that "critical AWACS maintenance, logistics, and support functions, particularly radar and computer software support" (41:4) would be permanently performed by U.S. personnel in Saudi Arabia. In the future, U.S. AWACS crews arriving in Saudi Arabia during a crisis could expect to receive valuable intelligence from their Saudi counterparts and assistance from U.S. technicians, and actually review Saudi AWACS tapes of enemy air activity over Iran, for example, prior to flying their first missions. A Saudi AWACS capability, in time, would thus be significant beyond the basing support role. In fact, along with their enhanced F-15s, the AWACS radar would provide the Saudis with a means to launch effective resistance which would hopefully slow the Soviets until the USAF, or perhaps carrier based airpower, arrived to help.

Military logic was not enough to convince some members of Congress who expressed concern about security of U.S. technology, the stability of the Saudi government, the perceived threat to Israel, or the perceived lack of Saudi support for Middle East peace. The President was forced to

use other arguments (implying influence and leverage) to address these concerns, including a last minute letter to Congress just before the vote.

Influence and Leverage Rationale. Deciding to use influence or leverage as reasons to consummate the arms agreement put the President in somewhat of an awkward position. If he had come right out and said that the U.S. needed the sale so that he could control the Saudis militarily or influence them politically, this certainly would have put the Saudis in the embarrassing position of looking like American puppets. If, on the other hand, the President had said he needed the sale or else oil prices might rise, this would have made the Saudis look like "blackmailers" and the President look weak or powerless. These specters of leverage and reverse leverage were publicly avoided by President Reagan for the most part by his careful description of the long standing cooperative relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. However, it was clear that failure to deliver AWACS would have led to a serious rift in the good will between the two nations and the potential for the President's influence with the Saudis to be diminished. To further persuade Congress, the President would use other examples of how a no-vote would result in his losing influence with the Saudis.

The Saudis had an option other than AWACS, something that some members of Congress either overlooked or refused

to admit. In retrospect, the current Saudi Deputy Minister for Information Affairs, Fouad A. Al-Farsy, writes:

The refusal of your Congress to supply arms to one of its best customers is puzzling, to say the least. The belief seems to be that the United States is the world's sole supplier of military hardware and that the economic dislocations inherent in the decision not to supply American arms to a good friend are of no consequence whatsoever. (1:86)

The Nimrod Alternative. The United States did not have a monopoly on airborne radar platforms in 1981, although the U.S. was farther along in aircraft production than the British and their Nimrod program. The British were developing the Nimrod AEW Mark 3, an improved version of the Nimrod series, for their air defense contribution to NATO (47:7-9,33,47). The Nimrod program was definitely an option for the Saudis, although delivery of the first Nimrod to the Kingdom would depend on the successful conclusion of research and development (57:27-28).

Purchase of the British Nimrod appears to be the most likely Saudi alternative should the Kingdom give up its efforts to obtain the AWACS. If one assumes that the Nimrod development program will succeed in meeting British and NATO requirements and that the British could support Saudi manpower, training, and logistics needs, then the Nimrod would be fully capable of performing the air defense mission envisioned for the AWACS. (57:V)

Prime Minister Thatcher visited Riyadh in April 1981 and "declared that Britain would be happy to supply the Kingdom with aircraft and other weapons, such as tanks" (57:27). With the British government willing to sell Nimrod to the Saudis, those who feared an AWACS threat to Israel

faced and interesting dilemma. With Nimrod, the Saudis would not feel as compelled to avoid antagonizing Israel as they would with AWACS (54:15; 53:16; 55:52). In fact, the President was assuring Congress that the U.S. would 'pull the plug' on AWACS if the Saudis were to use it against Israel. The President was trying to retain influence with both the Israelis and the Saudis, while calming those concerned about Israel's security. In reference to Nimrod, Secretary of Defense Weinberger made the following point in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

I am able to assure the committee--and I do not say it from any other point of view than getting the full information before you--that if the sale does not go through, the Saudis would immediately go to London to place their orders and they would immediately go to Paris to order Mirage fighters from the French. (55:52)

The minority on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who supported the President, including Howard Baker, tried to make this clear to their fellow senators:

Perhaps most significantly, Israel could not rely upon the British to attach any conditions to a Nimrod sale or to be as inclined to 'pull the plug' on the system should Saudi Arabia employ the Nimrod against Israel in peace or war. Moreover, a disapproval of the sale will make the Saudis generally less willing to rely on the U.S. as a source of military equipment, further diminishing our influence on the development of Saudi political and military policies. 16)

The Need for Influence: Middle East Peace. The President's need for constructive influence with the Saudis went far beyond the need to insure that their purchase of an airborne radar platform would be nonthreatening to Israel.

President Reagan was also facing the same major problems in the Middle East that President Carter worked so hard on - a solution to the Palestinian deadlock and hence peace between the Arabs and Israel. President Carter's success with the Camp David peace accords was only a partial success because it left Saudi Arabia feeling left out and in an awkward position between hard-line Arabs and the United States. The Saudis came under increasing pressure to condemn President Sadat, mainly because Camp David did little to resolve the Palestinian question, "envisaging only a vaguely defined 'autonomy' for the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza, not Israeli withdrawal from occupied territory" (40:114). The Saudis also took exception to Sadat meeting Prime Minister Begin without informing them of his plans and also his meeting Begin in Jerusalem on enemy soil. The Baghdad summit meeting in November 1978 saw the Saudis join the other hard-line Arab nations in condemning Sadat, rejecting Camp David, and breaking relations with Egypt. But the Saudis were apparently a moderating influence in Baghdad, and they did not break off relations with Egypt completely (40:113-114). It was obvious, however, that U.S.-Saudi relations were strained and that future cooperation by Crown Prince Fahd on the Palestinian issue required some "fence mending." Even so, the Saudis continued to moderate their reaction to Sadat and the U.S., despite some very unflattering press in the United States (40:115-116). This

stalemate certainly would have been even further aggravated had President Reagan flatly refused to sell the Saudis their requested arms, and his prospects for being an influential broker on the tough Palestinian issue jeopardized in his first year in office.

As the summer of 1981 counted down to the Senate vote on AWACS, there were two major world events which further emphasized the need for Presidential leverage in that troubled region: Israel bombed the Osirak nuclear power facility under construction in Iraq, and President Sadat was assassinated.

The Osirak Attack. On June 7, 1981, the Israeli Air Force bombed the Osirak reactor at the Tuwaitha Atomic Center near Baghdad, Iraq (34:224). This attack was not coordinated with the United States in advance, and the Israeli F-16 fighter-bombers and their F-15 escorts flew over Jordan and Saudi Arabia en route to their target (8:6-7; 48:151-152). According to Tivnan, this raid went undetected by the U.S. AWACS planes on patrol in 'northeast Saudi Arabia' (48:152). Of course, the U.S. AWACS planes focused their attention on the Persian Gulf, not Israel, so no legitimate loss in credibility was incurred for failing to detect a raid originating in Israel and flying at the limits of the AWACS surveillance range (57:42). Prime Minister Begin ordered this attack presumably in self defense, citing that Iraq would build nuclear

weapons with the reactor. Coming just before Begin's barely successful re-election, this attack was popular in Israel but protested around the world (8:7; 48:151). With Prime Minister Begin also loudly protesting the proposed AWACS sale on the grounds of Israeli security, despite the fact that all three living ex-presidents were strongly for it, some assumed that Begin would have little reason not to target a Saudi AWACS should a perceived need someday arise (8:8; 34:244; 48:152). The Israelis viewed AWACS as both a peacetime and a wartime threat. In peacetime, they feared the Saudis could use AWACS radar to monitor Israeli air training and tactics since the radar coverage would include most of Israel if the Saudis operated the planes near the Gulf of Aqaba or farther north near the Jordanian border. This could also provide the AWACS crews with early warning of Israeli air raids in Lebanon, for example, or warning of preemptive strikes against Arab targets similar to the 1967 war. If war were to occur, the Saudis' willingness to use AWACS in coordinated attacks against Israel was possible, but not considered likely (57:30-43).

A sustained Saudi attack on Israel would result in the loss of a good part of the attacking fleet. This would seriously degrade Saudi Arabia's ability to defend itself against Israeli retaliatory attacks. Its remaining air force would be vulnerable to annihilation. Expensive new development projects such as the Saudi military cities, the multibillion dollar industrial complex at Jubail, and the \$15 billion gas recovery plants near the Persian Gulf could easily be struck by Israeli aircraft. As one senior Saudi official stated, 'such an attack against Israel would

be suicide for us, and our history shows that we are not suicidal.' Indeed, Saudi Arabia has played only a very limited military role during previous Middle East wars. (57:34)

Israel's potent air force, as demonstrated by the Osirak raid, would not suffer significantly by a Saudi AWACS presence other than creating a new counter-intelligence dimension which could be eliminated, if necessary:

Though some Israelis even argued that the AWACS were not a real threat to Israeli security--one Israeli general had described the unarmed surveillance planes as 'big buses,' which the Israelis could blast out of the sky without much effort--there seemed to be a consensus in Israel that all arms sales to Arab countries ought to be opposed, as a matter of principle. (48:152)

How Prime Minister Begin ever assumed that the President would back off from the AWACS proposal after such a flagrant violation of Saudi Arabian air space and Israel's air of impunity is simply unimaginable. This bombing raid made the President's need for more leverage with both parties a must. Saudi ownership of a fleet of Nimrods was another bombing raid just waiting to happen. At least with AWACS, the Israelis would have to think very carefully about attacking such a close friend of the United States. In its own way, AWACS would offer stability as long as the Saudis played by the President's rules. Following the Osirak raid, 'Reagan or Begin?' really began to heat up.

Despite a Washington backlash against Israel over Osirak, in late August AIPAC's forces were still confident that AWACS would go down in defeat. The Reagan Administration, which had planned to make its formal notification of

the sale to Congress on September 30, made a last minute postponement until the next day (16:A2; 29:1).

The postponement touched off intense speculation about whether the administration is planning a last-minute maneuver, possibly involving a revision of the sales package, aimed at preventing what appears to be a near-certain congressional veto of the deal. (16:A2)

The sale was formally proposed to Congress on October 1, 1981, exactly one year to the day that President Carter sent the four E-3s to Saudi Arabia at the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war.

The Sadat Assassination. The summer of '81 was over, and in October the politicians and press in Washington were riveted on one issue--AWACS.

To those involved in the AWACS battle, and many watching on the sidelines, it seemed as if the business of government in Washington had stalled while the White House and Congress focused only on the sale of five airplanes to Saudi Arabia. (48:156)

Almost every edition of The Washington Post had articles speculating on the outcome or quotes from senators either supporting or denouncing the proposed sale. However, on October 6, Egyptian President Sadat was assassinated, and suddenly the AWACS sale had a new significance attached to it. The tragic death of Sadat brought to an end the long-standing feud between Sadat and King Khalid of Saudi Arabia. Following their break in relations in 1979, Sadat had made some very caustic remarks against the Gulf Arabs which closed any possible doors of reconciliation over Camp David (34:49,242). As Husni Mubarak succeeded Sadat, there was

hope that relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia might improve and that there might be opportunity for further progress with the Camp David foundation.

By the time Sadat was assassinated in October 1981, Saudi-Egyptian relations were still strained, but some high-level contacts had been resumed, especially with Vice President Husni Mubarak. The Saudis will doubtless seek to draw Egypt closer to a moderate Arab consensus now that Sadat is no longer alive, but it will be some time before the basic differences between the two countries can be overcome. For the United States, it is especially important to encourage the normalization of relations between Cairo and Riyadh. (40:146)

Several congressmen immediately capitalized on this theme and introduced their comments into the congressional record in the both the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee, where the AWACS proposal was disapproved in each case. The following is from the minority views of Senator Baker and seven others:

The Arabs, Europeans and others are looking at the AWACS vote by the Senate as a sign of what type of Middle East policy Congress will support. American friends among the Arabs are universal in their support of the sale. Former President Sadat of Egypt supported the sale, despite his differences with the Saudis. If the sale is rejected, alternatives to the Camp David approach to peace may well gain momentum. (54:17)

The following similar view is from the dissenting opinion Representative Paul Findley:

Most damaging of the repercussions of a congressional decision to block the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia will be the great harm it will do to U.S. leadership and credibility in the Middle East. This important consideration should not be passed over lightly especially now that our great friend, Anwar Sadat, is no longer alive to advance moderate and peacemaking efforts in the Middle East. (53:16)

The Vote

On October 15, 1981, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee recommended the sale be disapproved by a vote of 9-to-8. The minority views of Howard Baker and 7 others certainly expressed the President's concern that his influence in the Middle East was on the line should a majority in the full Senate vote against him. The impending Senate vote would be crucial because in the House, the Foreign Affairs Committee approved a concurrent resolution disapproving the sale by a 28-to-8 margin on October 7 and the full House supported this resolution on October 14 by the staggering vote of 301-to-111 (30:106; 54:6-7). If the President could not convince at least 50 senators to vote for the arms deal, it would be a major foreign policy defeat with uncertain ramifications for U.S.-Saudi relations. The President was forced to send a letter to the Senate, dated October 28, 1981, in which he made assurances regarding the use and control of the AWACS and also one more appeal emphasizing the importance of this sale with respect to his influence in the Middle East peace process (see letter at Appendix A).

Political Pawns. Sadat's death also played one more subtle but important role in the AWACS vote; it gave at least one Senator an excuse to change his position, at the "eleventh hour," and support the President with his vote. Iowa Republican Roger Jepsen, in his first term, changed his mind only 48 hours before the vote. He had previously

denounced the sale from the very beginning, even going so far as to pledge his efforts to block the sale in a keynote address before AIPAC's annual conference in May 1981 (30:107; 48:159). In an interview in The Washington Post dated October 28, 1981 (the day of the vote), Senator Jepsen stated that Sadat's assassination had changed the stakes and that despite this reflection of Arab government instability, he would support the President and his ability to conduct foreign policy (15:1,A7). In fact, there was much more to this apparently noble about-face which, when examined, brings to light the ominous true reason why the sale passed the Senate vote. The day before the vote, Jepsen announced, in tears, that he had decided to vote for the sale (48:159). One can assume those were not tears of joy. In the last few days before the vote, the White House, faced with near certain defeat, applied all of the political pressure it could muster to win--at all costs. The debate had turned ugly in its last days. The following are from The Washington Post:

This paragraph appeared in an article on October 24:

In fact, the opposition has become so confident that Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass) yesterday urged Reagan to withdraw the package of AWACS planes and other aircraft equipment as a means of containing damage to himself and to U.S.-Saudi relations. 'It is one of the most dangerous arms sales ever considered by our country,' Kennedy said. 'I therefore call on the President to withdraw the proposed AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia before the Senate votes.' (13:A14)

It only took one day for the White House to respond:

President Reagan, fighting to save his \$8.5 billion aircraft sale to Saudi Arabia from congressional veto, told reporters yesterday that the sale constitutes the 'greatest security' for both the United States and Israel, and senators who refuse to see that 'are not doing their country a service.' (14:A9)

On October 27, Senate Democrats took one last shot at the President's proposal:

This, the day before the full Senate vote, it still looks bad for the President. Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif) thinks there are 56 votes lined up against, 41 for, and 3 undecided. He also expressed anger toward 'administration charges that Israel has interfered in domestic U.S. affairs by opposing the sale. The administration apparently is seeking to make a scapegoat of Israel and Israel's friends in the United States. The administration has no one to blame but itself for its problems with the Saudi arms package.' (17:A4)

The Victory. On October 28 the President's letter of assurance was delivered to the Senate. This letter stated that the arms sale was in accordance with the Arms Export Control Act, that the Saudis had agreed to all stipulations concerning operations and safeguarding of U.S. technology, and that it was no threat to Israel (41:1-5). Further, the President concluded:

I am persuaded, as I believe Congress will be, that the proposed Saudi air defense enhancement package makes an invaluable contribution to the national security interests of the United States, by improving our strategic posture and the prospects for peace in the Middle East. I look forward to continuing to work with you toward these vital goals.

Sincerely, Ronald Reagan. (41:5)

That very day, the Senate voted in favor of the President by a margin of 52-48. Of those who supported the President

there were 41 Republicans, 10 Democrats and one independent. There were 36 Democrats and 12 Republicans who remained unconvinced by the President's final plea (30:106).

Summary

Although the President had won a major victory, the concluding chapter of this thesis will show that all of the legitimate rationale for AWACS was upstaged, perhaps to the point of becoming irrelevant, as presidential versus congressional authority to conduct foreign policy became the real issue. In the end, the AWACS sale had little to do with 'litmus tests' or even 'Reagan or Begin?' In the final analysis, it was 'Reagan or else!' (48:158).

VI. Analysis and Conclusions

Analysis

The White House, with the help of Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker, had won a major foreign affairs victory by narrowly winning approval of the Saudi arms deal despite persistent congressional objections. With 52 senators voting in support of the President the margin of victory was only three votes; a 50 vote tie would have been sufficient. The main tactic used by the White House in October 1981 to attain this victory was not a re-emphasis of the stated rationales of U.S. defense posturing, Saudi security or Middle East peace influence. Had the President used this last month to simply restate his case, he probably would have lost the Senate vote. Only two weeks earlier, a clear majority of the House found this arms deal to be inappropriate and their October 14 vote of 301-to-111, although not unexpected, must have bolstered the confidence of those in the Senate who may have been sheepishly contemplating a vote against the President. The burden of deciding this whole weighty issue would fall on the shoulders of those few senators who were in a position to be politically manipulated one way or the other. The central issue was supposedly about a quantum leap in military sophistication for a friendly, moderate, oil-rich Arab nation. In the end, however, the whole issue became a test of whether the President

should be allowed to conduct foreign policy as he sees fit or whether the U.S. Congress had the right to say no. This became a battle in which President Reagan refused to back down, and he used all of his political leverage and might to prevent Congress from setting a very significant precedent. The tactic used by the White House in late October was pure "political hard ball." If this explains the narrow victory, how does one judge the effectiveness of this arms sale based upon stated rationales which seemingly failed to convince most of the decision makers that the sale would be in the national interest? This question ultimately raises the issue of accountability should the U.S. AWACS technology ever be compromised, should the five AWACS ever be used against Israel in peacetime or, in the worst case, should the Saudis be actively drawn into the next Arab-Israeli conflict and suffer grave military and economic losses. If any one should happen, there will certainly be some members of Congress who will point to President Reagan's tough tactics in the waning days of October 1981 as being an improper method of settling such a critical issue. The remainder of this chapter will allow the reader to draw final conclusions about whether the sale should logically have passed in Congress, whether it was effective given the President's earlier arguments, and where U.S.-Saudi arms deals are headed in the future.

Presidential Political Leverage. The prospect and significance of losing this first major foreign policy initiative was not lost upon the President nor other former members of the executive branch. The following quote is by former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger from his commentary written and published in The Washington Post on October 6, 1981:

The administration acted prudently in fulfilling the commitments of its predecessors on the AWACS sale. The damage of a negative vote to our position in the Middle East, to a moderate evolution of the area and to a constructive peace process would be grave, perhaps irretrievable. The Congress must not undermine the President's authority in international affairs by a rejection of the sale; the consequences would haunt us for many years in many fields. (21:A21)

Those leading the fight to challenge the President's authority were Mr. Dine and his AIPAC staff. In fact, those senators who were elected to office with AIPAC's support and the Jewish vote probably did not need many reminders of AIPAC's position on AWACS. However, AIPAC was fighting this battle to the bitter end and taking nothing for granted:

The vote now seemed up for grabs. AIPAC was trying to hold its lead, and in the final weeks sent a copy of the novel Holocaust to each member of the Senate. (One AIPAC staffer flying out of Washington noticed a fellow passenger, a Republican senator, reading the book intently.) The lobby was not above some horse trading of its own. (48:158)

As AIPAC was using theatrics to cement support for its case against AWACS, the White House, feeling it was about to lose its case to a partisan Democratic and Jewish bloc of votes, began to work on key senators with similarly tough

lobbying tactics. Those targeted would be conservative Democrats and those wayward Republicans, like Senator Roger Jepsen, who were catering to the Jewish vote (13:A14). The White House was able to enlist the support of former presidents Carter, Ford and Nixon in the campaign to support the President (30:106-107; 48:157). Former President Nixon, in an interview in the October 4 The New York Times, stated:

Defeat on AWACS would be a serious embarrassment to Reagan, both at home and abroad. Israel's friends should not be under any illusion that they help Israel's cause by embarrassing and undermining the authority of their indispensable friend in the White House. (3:1)

Former President Nixon had met with Secretary Haig in New York 10 days before his statement was released, but Nixon and the White House denied that he had been asked to make the statement (3:10).

Another means of convincing senators to vote for AWACS was for them to meet the President at the White House in private. Howard Baker, working with White House Chief of Staff James Baker, decided which senators needed to meet the President and then hurried them off to the White House. The President must have been very convincing in these meetings which included either small groups of senators or sometimes just one individual, and a total of 44 senators heard the bottom line in this way (24:A13; 48:157-158). Of the 22 Democrats who President Reagan saw "one-on-one," 10 voted for the sale. The President also talked to 22 Republicans, of which 14 voted in favor of the sale (24:A13).

The President had appealed to their patriotism and respect for the office of the Presidency, but Reagan's main argument, in private, was really quite simple: the proposition that had once been 'Reagan or Begin?' had become 'Reagan or else!' (48:158)

The political careers of some senators were caught between AIPAC's forces and pressure from the White House. 'Senator Dennis DeConcini, an Arizona Democrat, charged that someone 'close' to the President had promised him Reagan would not campaign against him in 1982 if he voted for the sale' (48:158). There are other examples of this nature which indicate that the White House was perhaps making deals for votes, although the President denied that such deals were taking place (30:106-107; 48:158-159). As the pressure mounted, certain key senators emerged as supporters of the President.

All along the way, the White House had been looking for a key Democrat to go along with them. After trying unsuccessfully with several senators, they finally found their man in Oklahoma's David Boren, a former governor who confided in Dine that he believed a chief executive had to keep the promises of his predecessor. (48:159)

Senator Boren had been on record as opposing the sale, however, he changed his mind after being invited to the White House on October 26 (14:A9). Senator Howell Heflin, an Alabama Democrat, admitted to feeling the pressure to change his vote. Alabama was one state in which the business community stood to benefit from the arms deal, and Heflin was being lobbied from that angle as well (45:A6). The President landed his final supporters after Republican

Roger Jepsen, an early and vigorous opponent of the AWACS sale, changed his vote only 48 hours prior to the Senate vote (30:107-108; 48:158). Senator Jepsen, not up for re-election until 1984, explained to the press that he changed his mind in light of Sadat's death and because he was disturbed about the partisan lines being drawn over an issue so important to the President's foreign policy effectiveness (30:107-108; 15:A7). The fact that he apparently changed his position with such anguish indicates the arm twisting forces at work in Washington:

What had happened? 'We just beat his brains out,' a White House aide explained in a two-page article on the AWACS battle and Jepsen in the Des Moines Register. 'We stood him up in front of an open grave and told him he could jump in if he wanted to.' The same day eight 'uncommitteds'--four from each party--endorsed the sale. (48:159)

One Washington Post reporter who had been covering the AWACS debate and who witnessed the Senate vote was struck with the irony of what had transpired in the last few days leading up to the vote. In his column following the roll call vote, Lee Lescaze wrote:

The result was an odd phenomenon. As they (the senators) stood to announce they favored the sale, those whose switches gave Reagan his victory said they remained convinced that the sale was a bad idea. (24:A13)

After months of careful study, followed by months of detailed testimony before Congress by both sides in this debate, the AWACS/F-15 enhancement package was sanctioned

by the emotional, not always logical, American political system.

American policy making had turned into a kind of battle of champions--powerful special-interest groups dueling one another for the heart of Congress. There were actually three lobbies at work during the AWACS battle: the pro-Israel lobby, the Saudi lobby, and the biggest and most powerful lobby of all, the White House. (48:161)

The Measure of Effectiveness. The objective of this research was to evaluate the AWACS proposal, the debate which ensued, and then determine if the sale was effective. We now know that the President had specific national security and foreign policy goals which he hoped to attain by granting the Saudis the arms which they requested. The facts also indicate that many congressmen, probably most, believed the President's foreign policy goals with AWACS were not in the national interest. Unfortunately, we have also just witnessed the fact that this sale may have passed in Congress only because the President, fearing defeat, got tough with his opponents in the last few weeks:

Caught between the unfavorable mood of both the House and Senate and the need to maintain a credible relationship with the Saudis, the Reagan administration recovered from its slow start and pulled out all the stops to turn around the votes of key senators. (30:106)

If the President had stated from the outset that one of his rationales for this sale was to force Congress to accept the principle that it is the President (not Congress) who decides issues like arms sales to foreign governments, then

one would have to judge President Reagan's tactics and the sale as highly effective from that standpoint. This topic was no doubt discussed in private meetings in the oval office. In late October, the President's allies in the Senate even tried to use this argument to win more support. The last sentence in the minority views of the Foreign Relations Committee's rejection of the proposal stated:

While in no way abdicating the role of Congress in the formation of foreign policy, it is the minority view that the President must have the ability to negotiate agreements with other governments without undue Congressional second guessing. (54:17)

Nonetheless, we are left to judge the effectiveness of this sale based on the merits which were most often echoed by the White House during the earlier months leading up to the vote. The next three subsections of this chapter will measure the effectiveness of the Saudi AWACS sale.

Southwest Asia Defense. Recall that the administration was convinced that the Gulf Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, were highly unlikely to ever offer permanent basing rights for U.S. aircraft. The political climate in the Middle East simply would twist such an American 'right' or presence into another sign that the 'Great Satan' was attempting to dominate the Arabs while all the time protecting Israel. Consequently, in order to have any realistic hopes of countering a Soviet military move into the region, some form of alternative strategy was required.

The United States has negotiated 'contingency access agreements,' whereby certain nations have agreed, time and circumstances permitting, to provide the United States with access to certain facilities in the event of an emergency. (4:14)

Since the Saudis accepted delivery of their five AWACS in 1986, U.S. AWACS planners can be assured that facilities for conducting sustained AWACS operations at least exist in the Kingdom. Fuel, some spare parts, aircraft ground equipment, and technical personnel exist and should be capable of supporting a few U.S. AWACS should a crisis force the King to request help. 'Nonetheless, the Saudi government has refused to consider negotiating contingency access agreements with the United States' (4:16).

To grant these, the host state has to possess the political will to act before an emergency and to stake its political life on a close relationship with the United States. Dependable and durable commitments are required. There may now be no country in the Gulf with high enough confidence in the political and military staying power of the United States to make possible an early decision to accommodate U.S. forces. (7:60)

One must presume that should such an agreement exist today with Saudi Arabia, it is likely that it be classified. However, based upon the eight-year Elf-One operation, it seems likely that the Saudis would support U.S. AWACS and other USCENTCOM forces should a major crisis develop. Therefore, on this aspect of the President's rationale, one would have to say that the AWACS sale was a success. The United States Air Force is much more capable of making a rapid and sustained move into the region based upon existing facilities and the commonness of equipment.

Saudi Security and Self-Defense. Now that the Royal Saudi Air Force has five AWACS of its own, it seems logical to assume that Saudi air defenses are much better off than prior to the first aircraft delivery in mid-1986. However, learning to effectively operate and maintain such a complex system is going to take time. It takes many months even for U.S. crews, perhaps more educated in the ways of such technology than their Saudi counterparts, to graduate from the basic courses in piloting the aircraft and operating the mission systems. Following graduation, it takes a lot of experience at simulated combat exercises like Red Flag before a U.S. AWACS crew is really sharp and combat ready. The literature available suggests that the Saudis are still in the early training stages, with perhaps only a few crews fully trained (26:863; 32:1052). On a broader scale, the Saudi AWACS potential in conjunction with the Peace Shield program, is forcing the Saudis to consider becoming the key member of any coalition air defense force that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) might agree on. However, 'problems of a political nature, as well as technical barriers, stand in the way of a GCC-wide integrated system' (46:39):

Major suppliers of air defense equipment to GCC countries include the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the USSR (to Kuwait). The diversity of sellers and equipment is in itself a barrier to interoperability and efficient joint use. (46:31)

The complexity of the systems involved is not the only barrier to the Saudis becoming more self-sufficient in defense. With the Iran-Iraq war now over, there is less incentive to work at solving defense problems and less need to "cooperate militarily with the United States" (36:105). However, the Saudis have taken the necessary first steps in being able to defend themselves until outside help arrives, and are much more able to defend themselves against lesser regional threats (35:89-90). As far as Saudi AWACS is concerned, it appears to be too early to tell if it will ever be as militarily effective as hoped for by President Reagan or the Saudis.

American Influence and Saudi Cooperation. One of the major goals of the AWACS proposal was the preservation of U.S. diplomatic and military influence with the Saudis. The most obvious advantage to the AWACS sale is that the Saudis are learning how to defend the Kingdom with a Boeing airframe instead of a Nimrod. President Bush can be confident that the Saudis will learn to operate these aircraft using U.S. doctrine as a guide and that the Saudis will respect Israel's borders when operating the AWACS during training or on routine surveillance missions. The Saudis have fulfilled written security agreements to insure that U.S. advanced technology is safeguarded, and it is virtually certain that American personnel will assist the Saudis with their AWACS program for the life of the system (11:1390).

There has been no evidence in the literature to suggest that the Saudis are using, or are training to use, the aircraft for anything other than defense of the oil resources in the Eastern Province. Therefore, U.S. influence with the Saudis in the development of their air defense network has been enhanced by the AWACS sale while the potential for misuse against Israel is minimal. In this area one must rate the sale as highly effective.

In terms of Saudi initiatives and cooperation for Middle East peace, it appears from the literature that only a minority feel that the Saudis have been unwilling to work with the U.S. in searching for peace alternatives. As early as November 1981, the Saudis advanced the Fahd proposal and then worked for 10 months to achieve a new Arab consensus that would permit negotiation in the Arab-Israeli dispute (11:1390; 31:24):

It turned the discussion from a rejection of peace to a debate on how to achieve peace. It is the largest step toward peace that the Arabs have taken as a group. (31:24)

The Fahd plan was followed by the Fez communique in 1982 in which most of the Arab countries attending the summit meeting in Morocco endorsed the Fahd plan (11:1390; 31:24). The Saudis have also been helpful in trying to restore order in the embattled country of Lebanon. Israel invaded Lebanon in the summer of 1982, and the Saudis continued to work with the United States for peaceful solutions (50:156).

The Saudis have also been helpful by "negotiating at least two cease-fires in 1983 and 1984 among warring factions" (11:1390) in that war-torn country. The Saudis also cooperated with the United States in other areas to include funneling millions of dollars in aid to Afghan rebels and with funding for President Reagan's aid to the Nicaraguan Contras (50:155-156; 32:1049). Also, according to news articles in The New York Times, the San Francisco Chronicle and the San Francisco Examiner, as reported by Marshall:

The Saudi royal family reportedly turned over \$32 million to the rebels in Honduras and Costa Rica in gratitude for the administration's success in overcoming the Israeli lobby's resistance to the \$8.5 billion AWACS sale. (28:13)

The 1987 article in The New York Times used as a source by Marshall links Saudi financial aid to the contras as part of a deal to secure the AWACS planes:

King Fahd and other top Saudi Arabian officials agreed in 1981 to aid anti-Communist resistance groups around the world as part of the arrangement allowing them to buy sophisticated American AWACS radar planes, according to United States officials and others familiar with the deal. (12:1)

The article goes on to describe how Richard V. Secord, a retired Air Force major general, was involved in the transfer of funds as part of the covert operation to transfer Saudi aid to the Nicaraguan rebels. Further, "General Secord also handled the sale of AWACS radar planes to the Saudis in 1981, before he retired" (12:1). One should note that the information used to write this article for the Times was obtained from "present and former United States

officials' who 'agreed to discuss the matter only if their names were not published' (12:A6). Major General Secord testified along side Mr. Robert C. McFarlane during Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings in mid-October, 1981. General Secord was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Near Eastern, African and South Asian Affairs. Robert McFarlane's official title was Counselor, Department of State (56:III,29). These two officials provided the Senate committee with many details about the AWACS package, however, none of the senators asked them any questions about possible Saudi "kickbacks," and they offered no such information of their own accord (56:29-85).

Another prominent author on Third World security issues, Stephanie G. Neuman, writes:

According to published reports, Saudi Arabia has been secretly financing the contras as part of an informal arrangement for buying arms. Aid to the contras was tied to Saudi Arabia's 1981 AWACS purchase from the United States, which intelligence sources termed a 'kickback by the Saudis to get AWACS.' (32:1062)

Ms. Neuman's source for this statement was an article in the San Francisco Examiner, July 27, 1986 titled 'Saudis Secretly Funding Contras, U.S. Sources Say' (32:1062).

The author reviewed the Tower Commission Report on the Iran-Contra affair and found no mention of any "kickback" in connection with Saudi Arabia and the activities of Richard Secord or Lt Col Oliver North. However, whether or not one believes this Saudi AWACS-contras connection, it is most assured that the President's success in winning the Saudi

AWACS battle gave him tremendous influence with the Saudis by enhancing their prestige in the Arab world. Before the Senate voted on the arms sale, former President Nixon made the following observation:

'Because Reagan has laid his own prestige on the line, and will have paid a high political price for approval, if he wins the Saudis will owe him one.' (3:10)

In 1985 some members of Congress still felt that the Saudis had not been very constructive in the search for Middle East peace. However, the President was able to assure Congress that the Saudis had contributed substantially enough to allow delivery of the AWACS to go forward in 1986 (11:1389-1390). During the Reagan years the tough Palestinian problem remained at an impasse but, at least the Saudis helped to make progress in reuniting the Arab nations with Egypt. In 1987, following the Amman summit, Saudi Arabia finally restored formal diplomatic relations with Egypt, and the Saudis used their influence to persuade other Arab countries to allow Egypt to resume membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (11:1390; 50:155).

In general, one could confidently say that the AWACS sale can be judged as an effective foreign policy decision which allowed the President to retain influence and leverage with the important government of Saudi Arabia.

Conclusions

The analysis thus far has shown that the AWACS sale has been effective in the ways in which the President predicted it would be. Only the actual military effectiveness remains a question mark at this point. Recent trends in Saudi arms purchases, however, are showing that their experience with the highly charged political battle over AWACS was something the Saudis would just as soon avoid in the future. It is possible that President Reagan may have won the "battle" in 1981 but lost the "war" of the future.

Before expressing some final thoughts on the overall effectiveness of the AWACS sale, a look at what has transpired with recent Saudi arms deals may shed some light on the ramifications of the debate process which the Saudis found so disturbing.

Recent Trends. In the last few years the Saudis have purchased some tactical and strategic weapons systems from other countries. Some of these weapons seem to go beyond the bounds of being defensive in nature (30:111; 35:68).

The Gulf Cooperation Council countries - including the often-spurned Saudis - are deeply aware of U.S. inconstancy in arms supply and will not hesitate to look elsewhere - including, in some cases, the Soviet Union. (52:10)

In fact, according to several sources, the Saudis announced in March 1988 that they have purchased perhaps up to 20 Chinese CSS-2 surface-to-surface missiles (20:151; 30:100,112; 36:106). Recall the Iranian missile attacks on

Kuwait near the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988 to appreciate the capability of these type weapons. These Chinese 'East Wind' intermediate-range missiles 'may be able to reach targets up to 1,800 miles away--putting Iran, Israel, India and the southern Soviet Union within range' (20:151). This arms deal reportedly came as a total surprise to both the U.S. and Israel:

The missile sale was the predictable result of congressional refusal to sell sophisticated weaponry to Saudi Arabia. The Saudis have now found a supplier who will not subject them to public humiliation. (30:100)

Congress was naturally outraged by the Saudi missile deal, and some members immediately began demanding suspensions of all Saudi arms sales, including a proposed \$450 million AWACS support package, until the missiles are removed (30:112). The Saudi government, equally outraged by the U.S. reaction to the missiles, declared the American ambassador persona non grata (36:106). Apparently either the executive or legislative branch demanded to inspect the missiles for intelligence value:

The Saudi response to the American reaction to the discovery was the assertion that they would no more let the United States inspect the Chinese missiles than they would let the Chinese inspect the American-built AWACS. (36:106)

This missile deal, however, was just one of the latest episodes of the Saudis shopping for major weapons outside the United States. In 1985 the Saudis attempted to purchase 40 more F-15s to allow the RSAF to maintain a 24-hour fighter capability over important areas, something their original

fleet of 60 F-15s could not accomplish. As this proposal began to bog down in Washington, the Saudis simply announced that they had decided to buy '48 Tornado interdictor/strike aircraft from the British-German-Italian Panavia consortium instead' (35:68).

The United Kingdom registered a substantial increase in its share of Third World arms transfer agreements between 1984 and 1985. This increase was attributable principally to a multibillion dollar aircraft contract with Saudi Arabia. The value of the United Kingdom's agreements with the Third World rose to \$6.5 billion in 1985, from \$559 million in 1984 (in constant 1985 dollars). (18:82)

It is interesting to note that the Saudis would actually have preferred additional F-15s but reluctantly chose the 'long-range Tornado fighter aircraft' (31:23). This is understandable considering existing F-15 facilities and experience already in place in the Kingdom. Also, had the Saudis been able to purchase the F-15s, Israel would probably have less cause to worry about Saudi intent. The Tornado is designed to fly a long-range strike mission and 'unlike the F-15s, there are no restrictive understandings on basing Tornados close to Israel's borders' (31:23). In July 1988, the Saudis again went to Britain and came away announcing a \$30 billion deal which included more Tornado aircraft and a long-term commitment.

Saudi officials in talking with the press made it quite clear that the shift toward the United Kingdom as leading arms supplier is related to difficulties in obtaining certain sophisticated weapons from the United States. (50:153)

There are several other examples of this type which could be cited, but the point is perfectly clear--the Saudis no longer consider the United States a reliable source of arms (30:108-110; 51:117).

The Future. No matter what external threats the Saudis may face in the future, their willingness to ask the United States for security assistance will ultimately depend upon their perception of the probability that the Congress will cooperate. AIPAC will never change or fail to lobby against major sales. The American political process will always fall back on emotional tactics when the issues are heated and the stakes are high. However, the laws of the United States do change and "in February 1986, the House approved a Senate-passed amendment to the Arms Export Control Act which got around a 1983 ruling by the Supreme Court that a legislative veto was unconstitutional" (30:108).

The new procedure required a joint resolution of both houses of Congress to disapprove an arms sale, which could be vetoed by the President; but a vote to override the veto would stop the sale. (30:108-109)

Had this law been in effect in 1981, the President would have had no problem had the Senate voted against the sale on October 28. He simply would have vetoed the resolution, and the Senate would never have been able to come up with the 67 votes needed to override the veto. This scenario actually occurred in June 1986 when the Senate came up one vote short (66-34) to override President Reagan's veto of

the Senate's rejection of a Saudi deal which included air-to-air Sidewinder, anti-ship Harpoon, and ground-to-air Stinger missiles (30:109). Unless the law is somehow changed to favor congressional control, it appears for now that arms sales are more of a presidential prerogative. It is up to the President to set before Congress an arms sale that makes enough sense, and does not offend a two-thirds majority of the Senate at worst, in order to be successful.

Thesis Summary

"The executive branch and Congress have different views on the wisdom of supplying certain types of advanced weapons to Arab countries that also face serious threats to their security" (20:155). One author often quoted in this thesis was a diplomat with a quarter century's experience shaping America's relations with the Gulf Arabs - Ambassador Joseph Wright Twinam. Referring to President Carter's decision to sell the Saudis F-15 fighters and President Reagan's cooperation with AWACS, Ambassador Twinam writes:

Both decisions were controversial in America. Both sales were in the American national interest. Both illustrate that the important security assistance relationships with Gulf states require careful management, to assure that they make appropriate contribution to real defense needs and are handled in a way that strengthens overall relations. (51:117)

Another author cited throughout this thesis was William B. Quandt. According to former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, William Quandt was a "gifted and imaginative

Middle East expert' (59:165) on President Carter's National Security Council Staff. This thesis will conclude with three observations by Quandt which relate to the previous quote by Ambassador Twinam and offer sage advice to any public official or military officer dealing with Saudi arms sales. Referring to the 1981 AWACS sale Quandt writes:

Be careful with arms sales. Somehow the United States has to break the pattern of whetting the Saudi appetite for state-of-the-art technology and then, because of U.S. domestic political considerations, dragging its heels in responding to Saudi requests. (40:156)

The first order of business is to try to reach agreement on a military force posture that makes sense for the Saudis and that the United States in good conscience can defend before Congress and the American public as meeting legitimate security needs. (40:156)

If the United States cannot justify the sale of equipment in military terms, it should not make the sale, since other justifications are often ill-considered, misleading, and can leave a residue of bitterness. (40:156)

To date, history shows that the sale of five Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft to Saudi Arabia has been an effective foreign policy instrument. Given the potential for trouble in the Gulf region, the Saudis may have ample opportunity to someday put their AWACS to the test. At best their AWACS will be a deterrent to outside aggression and will demonstrate to the Arab world that Saudi Arabia tries to stand on its own militarily. In the long run, whether Saudi satisfaction with AWACS helps to compensate for the bitterness fostered by the turbulent nature of the American approval process, only time will tell.

Appendix A: Facsimile of Presidential Letter to Congress,
Dated October 28, 1981 (41:1-5)

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 28, 1981

Dear Senator Baker,

On October 1, 1981, I formally notified the Congress of our intention to sell AWACS aircraft and F-15 enhancement items to Saudi Arabia. This sale will enhance our vital national security interests by contributing directly to the stability and security of the critical area from the Persian Gulf through the Middle East to North Africa. It will improve significantly the capability of Saudi Arabia and the United States to defend the oilfields and facilities on which the security of the Free World depends, and it will pose no realistic threat to Israel.

When this proposed sale was first announced last spring, the Congress expressed concerns about certain aspects of the sale. After analyzing these concerns in detail, we entered into a series of discussions with the Government of Saudi Arabia over the summer.

The Government of Saudi Arabia has agreed, and I am convinced welcomes the fact, that the United States will have an important, long-term role and will maintain direct involvement in the development of the Saudi air defense

system, including the AWACS. We also have reached agreement with the Saudi Government on a number of specific arrangements that go well beyond their firm agreement to abide fully by all the standard terms of the normal Letter of Offer and Acceptance as required by the Arms Export Control Act.

Transfer of the AWACS will take place only on terms and conditions consistent with the Act and only after the Congress has received in writing a Presidential certification, containing agreements with Saudi Arabia, that the following conditions have been met:

1. Security of Technology

A. That a detailed plan for the security of equipment, technology, information, and supporting documentation has been agreed to by the United States and Saudi Arabia and is in place; and

B. The security provisions are no less stringent than measures employed by the U.S. for protection and control of its equipment of like kind outside the continental U.S.; and

C. The U.S. has the right of continual on-site inspection and surveillance by U.S. personnel of security arrangements for all operations during the useful life of the AWACS. It is further provided that security arrangements will be supplemented by additional U.S. personnel if it is deemed necessary by the two parties; and

D. Saudi Arabia will not permit citizens of third nations either to perform maintenance on the AWACS or to modify any such equipment without prior, explicit mutual consent of the two governments; and

E. Computer software, as designated by the U.S. Government, will remain the property of the USG.

2. Access to Information

That Saudi Arabia has agreed to share with the United States continuously and completely the information that it acquires from use of the AWACS.

3. Control Over Third-Country Participation

A. That Saudi Arabia has agreed not to share access to AWACS equipment, technology, documentation, or any information developed from such equipment or technology with any nation other than the U.S. without the prior, explicit mutual consent of both governments; and

B. There are in place adequate and effective procedures requiring the screening and security clearance of citizens of Saudi Arabia and that only cleared Saudi citizens and cleared U.S. nationals will have access to AWACS equipment, technology, or documentation, or information derived therefrom, without the prior, explicit mutual consent of the two governments.

4. AWACS Flight Operations

That the Saudi AWACS will be operated solely within the boundaries of Saudi Arabia, except with the prior, explicit mutual consent of the two governments, and solely for defensive purposes as defined by the United States, in order to maintain security and regional stability.

5. Command Structure

That agreements as they concern organizational command and control structure for the operation of AWACS are of such a nature to guarantee that the commitments above will be honored.

6. Regional Peace and Security

That the sale contributes directly to the stability and security of the area, enhances the atmosphere and prospects for progress toward peace, and that initiatives toward the peaceful resolution of disputes in the region have either been successfully completed or that significant progress toward that goal has been accomplished with the substantial assistance of Saudi Arabia.

The agreements we have reached with Saudi Arabia on security of technology, access to information, control over third-country participation, and AWACS flight operations will be incorporated into the U.S./Saudi General Security of Military Information Agreement, the Letters of Offer and Acceptance (the government-to-government sales contracts),

and related documents. These documents will stipulate that the sale will be canceled and that no equipment or services will be delivered in the event any of the agreements is breached. I will not authorize U.S. approval of any of these contracts and agreements until I am satisfied that they incorporate fully the provisions that satisfy the concerns that you and I share. I do not foresee any need for changes in these arrangements, but should circumstances arise that might require such changes, they would be made only with Congressional participation.

I believe it is important to look beyond these agreements to their practical consequences, and to the implications of U.S. security assistance and training requested by Saudi Arabia. For example, the agreement we have reached with the Saudi Government to protect the security of equipment also affects the nature, extent, and duration of the U.S. role in the AWACS program. Since skilled Saudi personnel available for this program will remain in short supply, the U.S./Saudi agreement that third-country nationals will not be permitted to operate or maintain the Saudi AWACS will, in practice, extend U.S. involvement in Saudi AWACS operations and activities well into the 1990s. U.S. military and contractor personnel will be required to provide extensive operational training for Saudi AWACS aircrews; it will be 1990 at the earliest before the eight Saudi crews needed to operate all five AWACS aircraft will be trained.

and replacement and refresher training of individual Saudi crew members will require USAF Technical Assistance Field Teams during the 1990s. Critical AWACS maintenance, logistics, and support functions, particularly radar and computer software support, will, of necessity, be performed by U.S. personnel in Saudi Arabia and in the United States, for the life of the AWACS.

The Saudi agreement not to share AWACS-gathered information with third countries also has significant practical consequences. This agreement, combined with the standard requirement that U.S.-supplied equipment be used solely for defensive purposes, as well as the agreed-to Saudi AWACS configuration, precludes any possibility that Saudi AWACS could contribute to coordinated operations with other countries' armed forces against any nation in the region without our consent and cooperation.

Concerning the agreement to operate AWACS only inside the Kingdom, it should also be noted that the Saudi Air Force will be trained to operate the AWACS in accordance with standard USAF AWACS doctrine and procedures, which call for AWACS to remain at all times a "safe distance" behind sensitive political borders -- normally 100 to 150 nautical miles -- to ensure AWACS security and survivability. Given the physical location of the oilfields AWACS is to defend, the vulnerability of AWACS should it operate near sensitive borders, and the history of Saudi observance of U.S. Air

Force tactical doctrine, we are confident that the Saudis will adopt these practices.

In a broader sense, by enhancing the perception of the United States as a reliable security partner, we improve the prospects for closer cooperation between ourselves and the Saudi Government in working toward our common goal of a just and lasting peace in the region. Since assuming the responsibilities of the Presidency, I have been impressed by the increasingly constructive policy of Saudi Arabia in advancing the prospects for peace and stability in the Middle East. The Saudi Government's critical contribution to securing a ceasefire in Lebanon is a striking example. I am persuaded that this growing Saudi influence is vital to the eventual settlement of the differences that continue to divide Israel and most of the Arab world.

I am confident that the Saudi AWACS will pose no realistic threat to Israel. I remain fully committed to protecting Israel's security and to preserving Israel's ability to defend against any combination of potentially hostile forces in the region. We will continue to make available to Israel the military equipment it requires to defend its land and people, with due consideration to the presence of AWACS in Saudi Arabia. We have also embarked on a program of closer security cooperation with Israel. This proposed sale to Saudi Arabia neither casts doubt on our commitment, nor compromises Israeli security. It is my view that the

agreements we have reached with the Government of Saudi Arabia take account of the concerns raised by the Congress. I am persuaded, as I believe the Congress will be, that the proposed Saudi air defense enhancement package makes an invaluable contribution to the national security interests of the United States, by improving both our strategic posture and the prospects for peace in the Middle East. I look forward to continuing to work with you toward these vital goals."

Sincerely,

signed

Ronald Reagan

The Honorable Howard H. Baker, Jr.
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Appendix B: Facsimile of Senate Staff Report:
Appendix on AWACS Technical Details (57:60)

The E-3A is a modified Boeing 707-320B aircraft with added surveillance radar, computer and communications equipment. It provides an overall air surveillance capability with command, control, and communication functions, and can detect and track aircraft at high and low altitude, over both land and water. The E-3A airborne warning and control system provides real time and long-range target detection, identification, and tracking.

The E-3A normally operates at an altitude of 29,000 feet and a cruise speed of 0.72 MACH. The AWACS can fly up to 40,000 feet altitude, but its radar elevation angle is optimized for operations at 29,000 feet. It can fly for approximately 11 hours without inflight refueling, and up to 22 hours with refuelings and an augmented crew. The normal crew of 17 consists of 4 flight crew members and 13 mission crew members. This crew can be augmented as necessary.

The mission crew has nine multipurpose consoles which can be used for surveillance, and control of the air defense situation. Three HF, fourteen UHF, and four VHF radios provide voice and data link capability. However, the AWACS does not possess any special capability for gathering electronic or signal intelligence.

The most prominent feature of the E-3A is the large rotating radome that houses radar antennas, including a

"look down" pulse doppler radar interleaved with an F Band pulse mode radar and a maritime surveillance mode.

Radar detection range for low-flying (200 feet altitude) small fighter aircraft is 175NM from normal AWACS mission altitude (29,000 feet). Medium-size targets can be seen at 240NM if they are above the radar horizon. Detection range for high-altitude bomber-size target aircraft is 360NM. Ground targets (tanks, trucks) cannot be detected or tracked. Only airborne targets moving at speeds greater than 80 knots are seen. Small maritime targets can be detected and tracked in low-moderate seas; medium-large maritime targets can be detected and tracked in moderate-high seas.

Configuration of the RSAF AWACS will be identical to the standard USAF E-3A aircraft except that the Joint Tactical Information Distribution System (JTIDS), Electronic Counter Counter Measures (ECCM) enhancement and sensitive intelligence information, HAVE QUICK UHF communications modifications, and three additional display consoles included in the latest USAF version will not be included nor will commercial substitutes be provided for these systems. However, less advanced, "sanitized" substitutes will be provided for the U.S. Government Mode IV Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) and U.S. Government encryption systems.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the 1981 sale of five Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft to Saudi Arabia in terms of the sale's actual effectiveness in achieving the foreign policy goals which former President Reagan claimed it would achieve. President Reagan, early in his first year in office, quickly discovered that the proposed sale was not popular with Congress, despite the fact that President Carter fielded the sale request from the Saudis just prior to the November 1980 election and was generally in favor of the sale himself. Congress, then having the authority to block major arms sales by virtue of the Arms Export Control Act of 1976, forcibly challenged the President not only on his interpretation of the national interest, but also on his ability to conduct foreign policy effectively.

The thesis examines President Reagan's expressed rationale for promoting the sale. The specific areas covered deal with U.S.-Saudi security concerns as well as the concept of presidential influence and leverage in the Middle East. The thesis also looks at the intense political battle and shows that a major arms sale was sanctioned not through logic or reason, but through raw emotion and political clout.

The Saudis found the heated arguments over their reliability, stability and motives to be a bitter embarrassment. The thesis concludes by citing specific examples of how the Saudis have since avoided such embarrassment by turning to other nations for arms, most notably, perhaps ominously, to the Chinese for long-range surface-to-surface missiles.

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