March 17, 1969
Memorandum from Secretary of Defense Laird to Secretary of State, 'Stopping the Introduction of Nuclear Weapons into the Middle East'

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Summary:
Colonel Robert P. Pursley, discussed the Israeli nuclear issue with other senior officials at the Pentagon, and drafted a memorandum that the Defense Secretary sent to Rogers, Kissinger, and Helms on 14 March 1969. Believing it is necessary to convey “a sense of urgency,” the memorandum restated the earlier [Warnke’s] points about the need for a meeting and included new intelligence about Israeli efforts to acquire high speed computers for use in a weapons program.

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

March 17, 1969

MEMO FOR MR. LAIRD

Attached is a memorandum for your signature which I believe conveys the sense of urgency you feel about the Israeli/Nuclear issue. I have shown the memorandum to Dr. Foster, Dr. Tucker and Mr. Earle. All agree with it completely.

The suggestion of a Saturday morning meeting may not be optimum, but it is about the only time this week that is available and helps convey the sense of urgency. The meeting, in any event, should only take about half an hour, I should think. Perhaps that will not be too inordinate in terms of a Saturday meeting.

Ref
Robert E. Pursley
Colonel, USAF
Military Assistant

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Authority: EO 12958 as amended
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS

1356
Sec Def Con't Mr. K
MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary of State
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Director, Central Intelligence Agency

SUBJECT: Stopping the Introduction of Nuclear Weapons into the Middle East

On February 27, 1969, I sent you a memorandum advising you I was persuaded that at a rapid pace and may have both this year. I suggested that such developments are not in the United States' interests and should, if at all possible, be stopped. Furthermore, I suggested we meet at the earliest opportunity to consider measures which the United States could take to preclude further Israeli nuclear missile development. Finally, I recommended we meet with the President, following our meeting, to discuss the difficult and dangerous issues posed by the possibility of nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

Since February 27 I have seen additional evidence of activity that would enhance Israel's capability in developing nuclear weapons. I refer to the granting, last June and October, of export licenses for two CDC 6400 computers and one IBM 360/65 computer for Israel. As Dave Packard indicated in his March 14, 1969, memorandum to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Commerce, we believe the CDC 6400, in particular, could be a critical tool in nuclear weapons development. Although I understand one of the two CDC 6400s has been shipped, I strongly endorse Dave Packard's recommendation that shipment of the second CDC 6400 be withheld until we have had the opportunity to discuss this whole problem area.

I wish to repeat my request, moreover, that we meet at the earliest possible opportunity to exchange views on the possible introduction of nuclear weapons into the Middle East and that we maintain the closest possible consultation on all matters which could affect such an eventuality. I would like to suggest a meeting in my office at 10:00 a.m., Saturday, March 22. If that time is not convenient, would you please suggest alternative times that would be preferable.