



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

SENSITIVE

2 June 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: The President

General Meir Amit, Chief of the Israeli Intelligence Service, held discussions on 1 June 1967 with me and some of my senior experts, pursuant to your agreement in this regard with Israeli Foreign Minister Eban. This memorandum summarizes the main points of General Amit's presentation. I have also attached a memorandum of my private conversation with him.

Amit thinks the Israelis' decision will be to strike. Regarding the outcome of a war, Amit said he sees an Israeli victory in three to four weeks, with Israeli losses of about 4,000 military personnel. There would be damage to Israel from Egyptian air strikes and from the Egyptians' missile boats, but, Amit said, Israel had "some surprises" of its own.

Again, Amit said Israel wants nothing from the U. S. -- except to continue to supply weapons already arranged for, to give diplomatic

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support, and to keep the USSR out of the ring. He indicated they have everything they need.

After learning today of his and Ambassador Harman's orders to return, Amit told one of our senior officers this morning that he felt this must mean the time of decision has come for the Israeli Government. He stated there would have to be a decision in a matter of days. He said that Eban's mission was seen by him and the Israeli nation as a failure. Here Amit almost certainly shares the views of General Dayan, who is Israel's new defense minister, since Amit and Dayan have been very close for many years. Both are Sabras -- men born in Israel -- and their past careers have been closely connected.

It seems clear from Amit's remarks that the "tough" Israelis, who have never forgotten that they are surrounded by hostile Arabs, are driving hard for a forceful solution, with us and with their own government. Dayan's appointment, combined with Amit's and Harman's recall, can be interpreted as an ominous portent, considering the Israelis' military capability to strike with little or no warning at a time of their choosing. Amit opined, however, that Israel had lost the

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"moment of surprise" by its failure to strike early last week. He indicated that this was a very important element, implying that the Israelis may engage in some kind of deception to lull the Arabs.

(Signed) Richard Helms

Richard Helms
Director

Attachment - 1

SUBJECT: Views of General Meir Amit, Head of the
Israel Intelligence Service, on the Crisis
in the Middle East

cc: The Honorable Dean Rusk
The Honorable Robert S. McNamara ✓
The Honorable Walt W. Rostow

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SUBJECT: Views of General Meir Amit, Head of the Israel Intelligence Service, on the Crisis in the Middle East

1. The success of Egyptian President Nasser in manipulating the current crisis in the Middle East will, if left unimpeded, result in the loss of the area to the United States. The first sign of the domino reaction was Jordan's forced accommodation with Egypt. Saudi Arabia and Lebanon will be next, after which it will be the turn of Turkey and Iran. Even Tunisia and Morocco will eventually topple to Nasser.

2. It is a mistake on the part of Israel and of the United States to treat passage through the Straits of Tiran as the real issue. It is only a pretext to Nasser's moves to dominate the Middle East. Nasser himself made a mistake when he declared a blockage of the Straits, for he could have produced the same result by just moving his military forces into the Sinai. This alone, without any act of aggression, would ruin Israel's economy by forcing Israel to keep its reserves mobilized.

3. Nasser will not attack Israel on the ground for the moment; however, if Israel continues to do nothing, a surprise Egyptian air strike against Dimona or airfields is very possible. Israel knows the details on bombing instructions and targets that have been issued to Egyptian tactical air units. But Nasser would prefer to provoke Israel so that he could point to Israel as the aggressor.

4. Israel erred in not striking against Egypt a week or ten days ago, when it could have created chaos by attacking the Egyptian Army while it was on the move. The Egyptians are now entrenched in the Sinai, and the price of Israel action in terms of casualties will probably be doubled. But Israel is being forced to act because of the inaction of others, and it cannot wait longer than a few days or a week.

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5. Israel does not want collusion with the United States in any action it might undertake against Egypt nor does it want the United States to fight for Israel. What Israel does want from the United States is the assurance of rapid supply of arms, preventing the Soviets from intervening, and understanding and political support. Israel can then handle its own case. It is as much, if not more, in the interests of the United States than of Israel that Nasser be defeated.

6. Internal pressures are at work against the present Israel Government. Claims are being made that the government's decision not to react quickly to the Egyptian moves was based on false political assumptions. The lives that will be lost in any action by Israel will be placed against the account of those who urged Israel not to react earlier. Efforts by the United States in the United Nations and elsewhere have not born fruit, and it was a mistake on the part of the United States to hold Israel back.

7. Israel's economy is suffering with each additional day of crisis. There are no workers in the fields, and the harvest is still standing, but so long as 82,000 Egyptian troops remain in the Sinai, Israel cannot demobilize its reserves and send them back to their homes and fields. It is better to die fighting than from starving.

8. The commitments of the United States in the Middle East are no less than those in Vietnam, but the Middle East offers the United States a chance to demonstrate its commitment at a much lower price than in Vietnam. In Israel, the United States has people on whom it can rely.

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