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Authority NN0959006

Handwritten initials: RMR

TELEGRAM Department of State

SECRET

Control: 2236
Rec'd: March 4, 1964
7:30 a.m.

JS
Info

FROM: Tel Aviv

ACTION: Secstate 919 IMMEDIATE

INFO: Cairo 149 IMMEDIATE

DATE: March 4, Midnight (SECTION ONE OF THREE)

LIMDIS

EMBTEL 916 and DEPTTEL 757.

When I called on Levavi March 3 to receive Prime Minister's reply, he informed me that Prime Minister had come to conclusion our (Israeli and US) objectives not now best served by reassurance to Nasser about Dimona. Said Prime Minister had reached this decision after "heart-searching" and despite fact he anxious not to differ with President Johnson. Levavi read and then handed me aide memoire, substance of which as follows:

Prime Minister has considered suggestion that USG reassure Nasser on Dimona. After careful consideration he finds no grounds to depart from viewpoint he conveyed to Ambassador Barbour on August 19, 1963 (i.e., desirable that Nasser not be completely reassured Israel not working toward nuclear weapons production, that this could have useful deterrent effect against Egyptian adventures: EMBTEL 204, August 19, 1963) and which was previously expressed by Ben Gurion on May 14, 1963 (EMBTEL 894). Prime Minister's position derived from two considerations: 1. Does not appear advisable to release Nasser from any apprehension he may have as to Israel's military capacities since he loses no opportunity public to emphasize war with Israel inevitable as soon as his military preparations sufficiently advanced, e.g., on February 22, 1964, Nasser declared publicly "the Palestine people must return to its homeland and have its full rights restored. The prospect for the future is war against Israel. We shall determine its time and place." Information reaching us from Egypt confirms this

Section 273 attached

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-2- 919, March 4, Midnight (SECTION ONE OF THREE) from Tel Aviv

public posture represents true direction and objective Nasser's policy. Prime Minister holds view that removal from Nasser's mind of uncertainty regarding Israel's deterrent capacity contrary to best interests of both US and Israel. 2. It would appear highly imprudent apprise Nasser of nature US-Israel contacts on this as on other matters. In view past experience, Prime Minister considers Nasser cannot be relied on not to exploit such information either publicly or through diplomatic channels. If such information became known harmful consequences and repercussions would ensue. Prime Minister wishes assure President Johnson above viewpoint reached only after careful consideration all aspects of matter.

By way of elaboration, Levavi went on Israelis have reached conclusion Egyptians going all out militarily and economically to prepare for war and that progress made by Egyptians this direction impressive and worrying. He noted also that Nasser has long history breaking his word when it suits him, that he might easily reveal US-Israeli contacts in speech attacking US, and that such information could get to Soviet bloc and be used for its purposes.

GP-3.

BARBOUR

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Note: Advance copy to S/S-0 at 8:50 a.m. 3/4/64
Passed White House at 9:08 a.m. 3/4/64

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TELEGRAM Department of State

RMK

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on
SS
InfoControl: 2438
Rec'd: March 4, 1964
10:59 a.m.FROM: ⁽²¹⁾ Tel Aviv

ACTION: Secstate 919 IMMEDIATE

INFO: Cairo 149 IMMEDIATE

DATE: March 4, Midnight (SECTION TWO OF THREE)

LIMDIS

In the circumstances and despite fact Levavi sure Prime Minister would not change his mind, I requested earliest possible appointment with Prime Minister. Levavi tried arrange this at once by telephone. This turned out to be impossible as Prime Minister, unbeknown to us, then making arrangements get married early afternoon. However, he agreed see me 1630 hours.

I conveyed to Prime Minister substance six points contained DEPTTEL 757, which I indicated had been received since previous demarche. However, obvious Prime Minister was not going change mind. As different tack, I inquired, noting that this not contain my instructions, how Prime Minister would feel about our reassurance Nasser peaceful intent Dimona without stating how we are certain of this. Prime Minister responded by saying he had better idea, noting that he was thinking aloud. He asked how it would be if Talbot told Nasser Israel prepared give solemn public undertaking not to attack any Arab country and Nasser should make similar statement re Israel.

I replied that this not same problem. Problem is to assure Nasser Israel has no nuclear capability. To this Prime Minister, who in fine fettle, responded somewhat emotionally and volubly that Nasser constantly reiterating his desire destroy Israel, that "he is thirsting for our blood"; therefore why allay his fears? Would this not encourage him to attack Israel? Israel is like a lamb among 12 or 13 wolves. Surely President Johnson would

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understand our fears. The President should visit Israel (although he realizes this not feasible), even if for only 24 hours, so that he could sense the atmosphere of this small country surrounded by enemies. The Israeli approach is an emotional one and necessary. This remnant of a people and its children have a right to live in peace.

I noted that comparison of Israel to a lamb not exactly accurate and repeated familiar arguments about the danger of preventive war by Nasser which would ensue should Nasser rightly or wrongly come to conclusion that Israel making atomic weapons.

Prime Minister asked why it should not be possible to convince Nasser that Israel is not preparing aggressive war and why US did not put more pressure on Nasser. He noted that if Israeli talked as aggressively as Nasser, US would be angry and bring heavy pressure to bear on Israelis. To this I rejoined that we can talk to Nasser and that we do try to influence him toward peaceful policies.

GP-3.

BARBOUR

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R.M.C.

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Control: 2385
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(21)

FROM: Tel Aviv

ACTION: Secstate 919 IMMEDIATE

INFO: Cairo 149 IMMEDIATE

DATE: March 4, Midnight (SECTION THREE OF THREE)

LIMDIS

At this point Prime Minister reiterated his views that Talbot should try to convince Nasser of Israel's peaceful intentions, that the time is inopportune to reassure Nasser about Dimona, that it is good for Nasser to worry about Israel's military capabilities. He also wondered about whether US would really step in quickly, and if it would, would it be quick enough in event Nasser should launch sudden massive rocket and air attack against Israel. Prime Minister was plainly worried that US would not respond soon enough; he noted at this juncture that he had not yet received any definite word on the question of US supplying tanks to Israel. As further worries, he mentioned Arab summit meetings and Ben Bella threats.

DEF

I again endeavored reassure Prime Minister regarding reliability and timeliness of US support in event of attack by Nasser. Also commented that others (in Europe) had expressed similar doubts but, referring to McCloy's recent speech in London, said I though record our intermention in two European wars confirmed we could be depended upon to take necessary steps in righteous causes despite cost to ourselves.

Upshot all foregoing is, of course, unhelpful to our objective of allaying Nasser's fears as step to area stability. Aside from genuine conviction Prime Minister displays that Nasser determined acquire maximum arsenal regardless Israeli development and that consequently it desirable, as deterrent, that he be

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allowed worry about Israeli nuclear equation, I believe a principal concern of Eshkol is threat of Nasser's public exploitation
any assurances passed to him. This concern is understandable in light present political situation here. Public revelation US visits Dimona, especially any idea of US "inspection" that installation would subject Prime Minister to wide criticism not only from right wing HERUT adherents but in broader circles, including sections of his own Mapai party which are sensitive to any appearance of derogation from Israel's position as sovereign power. In such event, Prime Minister's ability to carry out his promises of further US visits Dimona could also be prejudiced.

GP-3.

BARBOUR

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