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AIR 8/3531


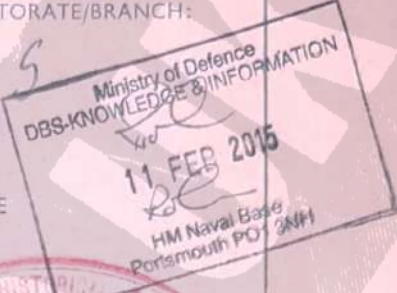

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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AIR 8/

BRANCH FOLDER

AHB

NUMBER 414/1 PT T  DATE OPENED 23 MAR 83		DIVISION/DIRECTORATE/BRANCH: CAS RELEVANT REGISTERED FILE  	
SUBJECT: ISRAEL RI			
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No.

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19 Sep 83  
4 Nov 83

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414/1  
432/32  
NEW R.S.



PSO/CAS

VISIT TO CAS BY THE ISRAELI DA

To provide background information for CAS to use during Col Lotan's visit, I attach:

- |                                 | <u>FLAG</u> |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| a. Career brief - Col Y Lotan   | R           |
| b. Defence Relations            | S           |
| c. The Israeli Defence Forces   | T           |
| d. Command Structure of the IDF | U           |
| e. Naval and Ground Forces      | V           |
| f. Israeli Air Force            | W           |
| g. Defence Sales (Air)          | X           |
| h. Training in FY 82/83         | Y           |
| j. Career brief - AA Tel Aviv   | Z           |

(J. MITCHELL)  
Wing Commander  
ASB 1

4th March 1983

Att:

DECLASSIFIED

## THE ISRAELI DEFENCE FORCES (IDF)

### Defence Policy

1. Israel is too small for defence in depth and she has insufficient manpower for a large standing Army. Her successful strategy has been by forward defence, pre-empting hostile attacks where possible and inflicting severe reprisals when taken unaware. She is out-numbered but hopes that by adopting a position of strength she can deter attack whilst seeking a permanent political settlement. Deterrence is enhanced by the widely-accepted belief that Israel has developed a nuclear weapon. Her French-built research reactor became critical in 1964 and probably produces enough plutonium for one nuclear weapon per year. Thus she may now have a stock of about twenty.

### Command Structure and Organisation

2. The IDF number about 138,000, including about 28,000 regulars. In addition there are about 460,000 reservists between the ages of 31 and 55 (of whom at least 100,000 can be mobilised within 24 hours and the rest within 5 days). Command is vested in the government which exercises authority through the civilian minister of defence (usually a retired soldier) and a lieutenant general who is the chief of staff. There is no single commander of the ground forces, the three area commanders of the Northern, Central and Southern Regions, and the Commander of the Sharm-el Sheikh Military District (with HQs at Nazareth, Jerusalem, Beersheva and Ophira) share equal responsibilities. A diagram of the command structure is at Flag U.

### Manpower

3. Conscription is mandatory for all Jews and Druzes from the age of 18. About 90% of all males are accepted for service, but up to 50% women are exempted. Basic national service is three years for men and two years for women. Moslems and Christian Arabs are excused national service, but many volunteer. Men remain in the reservist pool until the age of 55, women until they are 38.

Training commitments are:

1985

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FILE No. **NF** R 083/1 (Part *W*)

*W*  
*381*

TITLE: *Israel's Nuclear Capability*

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FCO 93/4274

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Return by (25/04/2023 13:37:24)

*[Redacted]* (Mr Philip Miller)

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DJ

CONFIDENTIAL

British Embassy  
TEL AVIV

12 September 1985

A Charlton Esq  
NENAD  
FCO

Mr Makepeace 16/9.  
Mr Nixon  
AC 15/9

A/G cc: Mr Speller NED  
Mr Fuller Research  
DJ Mr Rickson, Cabinet Office

Dear Alan,

PA AC 16/9

ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR CAPABILITY

1. In view of the correspondence between Richard Makepeace and Alan Goulty on this subject during your absence on leave I should perhaps report that when Rabin saw the Royal College of Defence Studies visitors on 8 September, he said

"Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons, but she will keep the option in case the Arabs get the bomb".

The first part of this is a restatement of the familiar Israeli position; the second part seems as close as we are ever likely to come to an explicit confirmation that Israel has a nuclear capability.

2. For what it is worth, "Israel's Nuclear Capability" by Peter Pry (Croom Helm, 1984) struck me when I read it recently as a pretty well-researched and balanced treatment of the subject. It is available from the FCO library.

Yours ever,  
T M Dowse

T M Dowse

cc: A F Goulty Esq WASHINGTON  
CONFIDENTIAL





25 February 1992

The Earl of Arran

Dear Tommy,

Reflecting on your words in the House on the 12th of this month: "We have no firm evidence, either to confirm or deny the rumours that Israel may have nuclear weapons", I thought I would send you a copy of the book which I referred to in the same debate: The Samson Option by Seymour Hersh. I expect it has somehow escaped your notice and that of your officials until now.

Yours

Wayland

Lord Kennet.

CONFIDENTIAL

LOOSE MINUTE

D/Pol&Nuc D/200/3/1

31 March 1992

APS/US of S(AF) - Mr Richards

Copy to:

DACU - Mr Mathewson

DI(Sec)

FCO - NPDD (Mr Bateman)

*Mr Fraser SF*  
*Mr P. Bedford 6/4*  
*We haven't heard the last of this, I fear.*  
*P. Butler*  
*PA NPD 083/4 PB 214*

(B)

REGISTRY	APR 1 1992	HY
Action Taken		

**THE SAMSON OPTION**

1. Your minute (D/US of S(AF)ADG 10/1/1) of 23 March requested advice and a draft reply to the attached letter from Lord Kennet.
2. We and the FCO do not believe that we can go any further than in Lord Arran's reply to Lord Kennet's previous letter (copies attached for convenience) on the question of the possible existence of an Israeli nuclear weapons programme. Although we believe there is such a programme, the fact remains that we do not have firm evidence for this.
3. If we were to go beyond the standard line, we would risk being pressed to divulge the evidence we have - which we cannot do, given the nature of our sources. We also have to take wider considerations into account (although I think we cannot allude to these without provoking further questions): openly admitting our suspicions (of which we did give a hint in the previous exchange of correspondence) would do more to undermine the credibility of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty than does the current ambiguity surrounding the status of Israel's nuclear programme. It would also create pressure for action against Israel which would be difficult to satisfy, and which would risk jeopardising the already precarious Middle East peace process.
4. In view of all this - and of the fact that Mr Hersh, his publishers and Mr Kaufman have all now been brought into the correspondence by Lord Kennet - we believe the best course would be to stand by our previous reply whilst firmly repudiating the accusation of complacency. I attach a draft along these lines.

*D G Johnson*

D G Johnson  
Nuc Pol 1  
MB7348 86544MB

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(A)



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

Telephone 071-21 ..... (Direct Dialling)  
071-21 89000 (Switchboard)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR DEFENCE FOR THE ARMED FORCES

D/US of S(AF) ADG 10/1/1

12 March 1992

*Dear Hayland*

Thank you for your letter of 25 February and the copy of Seymour Hersh's book which you very kindly sent me.

The Government was already aware of Mr Hersh's allegations, and his book had been read with great interest. It does, of course, represent one man's views. For our part, as I said in the debate on 12 February, we have no firm evidence either to confirm or to deny that Israel may have a nuclear weapons programme. I am, therefore, unable to comment on the detailed claims which Mr Hersh has made.

In the absence of a comprehensive safeguards regime, Israel's possession of a sophisticated nuclear infrastructure inevitably invites speculation concerning its purpose. We therefore continue to hope that Israel will accede to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and accept IAEA safeguards.

I hope this is helpful.

*[Handwritten signature]*  
*[Handwritten signature]*

The Earl of Arran

The Lord Kennet

1993

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FILE No. NPD 083/4 (Part S 1814)

TITLE: NON PROLIFERATION MATTERS  
ISRAEL

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*Pre type letter - final*  
*DOUGLAS*  
*25/1*

FROM: P SPOOR  
 NPDD  
 DATE: 18 January 1993  
 CC: Mr Elliott  
 Mr Lever  
 Mr Fuller, NENAD  
 Mr Nixon, MED  
 Hd News Dept

*Minister*

Mr Donnelly ✓ *Minute*  
 Sir M Burton  
 PS / Mr Hogg

*I see no real difficulty with the line proposed, either for Arabs or Israelis.*  
*25/1*

OUR LINE ON ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME

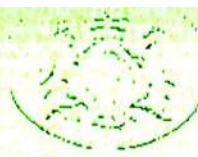
Problem

1. Lord Kennet has recently asked a series of questions on Israel's nuclear programme, and wrote to Mr Hogg on 10 January saying that the answers have been unsatisfactory. (a) How should Mr Hogg reply to the letter; and (b) should we change our PQ response?

Recommendation

2. On (a) I submit a draft reply from Mr Hogg. On (b) we should slightly toughen the tone of our reply to PQs, but continue to avoid a statement that Israel possesses nuclear weapons. *NENAD agree.*

SECRET



Background and Argument

3. In answering Lord Kennet's past questions we have said that, although we are aware of reports suggesting that Israel has nuclear weapons, we have no evidence either to confirm or deny this. Strictly speaking this is true, since we have no direct evidence. But it is slightly disingenuous; there is a wealth of circumstantial evidence in the public domain and we work on the assumption that Israel has a nuclear capability. Criticism of our line is inevitable; in his letter Lord Kennet accuses us of a "build-up of mendacity".

4. There are, however, good reasons for refusing to acknowledge the existence of an Israeli nuclear weapons programme.

[Redacted]

Even if we were in possession of firm, usable evidence, there would be drawbacks. If Israel were to be announced/to announce herself as a nuclear weapon state, the inability of the international community to agree on an effective response would raise a political storm and help legitimise proliferation by other states.

5. Adapting our line at all presents problems, since Lord Kennet and others may be encouraged to press ever harder, and may seek explanations of the reasons for the change. Nevertheless, we can afford to take a slightly less equivocal line, which implies greater credence for reports that Israel has nuclear weapons. I suggest the following amended line:

"We have no direct evidence that Israel has developed a nuclear weapons programme. However, we are concerned by reports that Israel has such a programme, and have called on

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PUBLIC RECORDS ACT 1958

the Israeli government to allay suspicions categorically by acceding to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon-state. We also call on Israel to work with her neighbours to create a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East."

6. At the same time we should, as the draft reply to Lord Kennet does, make the most of recent positive shifts in Israel's public comment on regional security agreements and eventual accession to the NPT. This will have the dual advantages of giving recognition to the cautious movement of the Rabin government on these issues, while reinforcing international expectations that Israel should live up to her word.

Peter Spoor

P Spoor

Lord Kennet's letter does not come as a surprise. He has tabled a series of questions over recent weeks which we have played with a very straight bat. And our line is not a comfortable one. But Lord Kennet's motives are mixed. Of course he wants to increase the pressure on Israel - a reasonable enough objective in the case of nuclear weapons. But I suspect he also wants to make mischief by exposing (para 4 of submission) our inability (as well as that of others) to take any very effective action. While it is reasonable therefore to modify our line slightly as suggested (though I doubt he will appreciate it) we should not concede more.

2. I discussed our line last week with the Egyptian Ambassador, who is an authority on proliferation matters. He was very clear & firm: any more to acknowledge Israeli possession of nuclear weapons would make it more difficult for his Government, & others in the region, to maintain their support for the NPT.

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FROM: P January  
NPDD  
DATE: 6 August 1993  
cc: Mr Lever  
Mr Richmond, (NENAD)

*McKaywell*  
*Ms Beeson*

*DR*

Mr Elliott

*8/8*

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**MEETING WITH ISRAELI DELEGATION TO DISCUSS NUCLEAR ISSUES -  
9 AUGUST**

A B

1. Thank you for agreeing to step into Mr Lever's shoes at the last moment to participate in this meeting. I submit briefing together with a copy of the Israeli paper which will be the basis for discussion.

2. The Israeli paper is very similar to a non-paper we received at the same time last year. Our position on the issues raised has not changed, namely: (a) We still continue to support Israel in voting against resolutions introduced at the UN and in the IAEA which condemn the Israeli nuclear threat. We consider that a political resolution of the kind proposed does not lie within the IAEA's ambit; (b) However, we cannot support Israel's request to vote against an IAEA resolution which reports on the implementation of safeguards in the Middle East. Israel believes that this resolution

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Background

1. We have no hard evidence but we believe that Israel possesses nuclear weapons. Publicly Israel maintains a stance of ambiguity and refuses to deny or to confirm the suspicions about her nuclear infrastructure. The official Israeli line is that they will not be the first to "introduce such weapons into the region". The meaning of this is unclear. In view of the overwhelming Arab numerical superiority and fear of Arab WMD programmes, Israel has resisted attempts to persuade her to accede to the NPT and thereby formally to forego nuclear weapons.

2. It is our policy to press all non-states parties to accede to the NPT in order to make it truly universal. While recognising Israel's legitimate security concerns, we have argued that suspicion of Israel's capabilities and intentions is one motive for the desire of Arab states to acquire WMD capabilities. In view of Israel's particular circumstances and in view of American reluctance to exercise pressure, she is unlikely to respond.

3. The Israeli delegation has forwarded a note (attached) which outlines the area for discussion for the meeting on Monday 9 August. The paper concentrates on nuclear issues the IAEA General Conference to be held in September.

4. The note has a two page preamble, which affirms Israel's commitment to the creation of a NWFZ in the Middle East once the Peace Process 'has been consummated'. The Israelis feel that progress towards the NWFZ is being hampered by the Arab States attempts to persuade the IAEA and UN to pass resolutions which are designed to put international pressure on Israel. The Arab states have in the past been determined to keep the issue of Israel's nuclear capability on the agenda

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Mr Fuller  
NENAD

NFR 83/2

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Handwritten notes: *Haswell*, *Fraser*, *21/1*, *22/1*

*R & R with reference please*  
*22/1*

ISRAEL : NON-PROLIFERATION

1. Your minute to Mr Haswell of 15 January.
2. We should be cautious about congratulating the Israelis too warmly on aspects of their non-proliferation policy. They are, after all, probably the world's greatest proliferators, and I think we need to maintain a fairly crisp tone of voice with them. Furthermore, Israeli accession to the CWC, while desirable, is hardly a sacrifice on their part. In the calculus of regional security the CWC is likely to work to their advantage - unlike the NPT.
3. With this caveat I think your briefing could:
  - (a) express satisfaction that the Israelis signed the CWC;
  - (b) welcome Mr Peres' radio interview of 13 January in which he said that Israel would be ready to sign the NPT once peace was established in the region;
  - (c) welcome the positive tone of recent Israeli Government statements, reiterated in Mr Peres' speech at the CWC signing ceremony, on proposals to create a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East;
  - (c) welcome Israel's participation in the multilateral Arms Control and Regional Security Group, and implicit acceptance that nuclear questions should be on the agenda of that Group if not at the top of it.

*S Fraser*

S Fraser  
Non-Proliferation and Defence Department  
K424 270 3143  
20 January 1993

CC: Mr Donnelly  
Mr Nichols, ACDD

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19

British Embassy  
Tel Aviv

192 Havarkon Street  
Tel Aviv 63405

Telephone: 5249171/8

Telex: 33559 (a/b 33559 PRODR IL)

Facsimile: 291699

*14/9*  
*Mr Warrington B.*  
*14/9*

6 September 1993

D S Gordon-MacLeod Esq  
Non-Proliferation and Defence Department  
FCO

*Could I see with better  
under ref. please.*  
*17*  
*13/9*

*NFR 83/2*

Dear David,

MTCR: ISRAEL

*17*

1. Thank you for your letter of 13 August.
2. I am sorry to return to the charge yet again on this issue but I am concerned that as you describe them, our arguments against Israeli membership of the MTCR will not convince our likely interlocutors on the subject.
3. You say that the basic reason for our opposition to Israeli membership of the MTCR is that Israel's "overall non-proliferation credentials are suspect". But to whom exactly is she suspected of having passed MTCR relevant technology or equipment? Is there perhaps any off-the-shelf analysis by the defence intelligence experts in the MOD, or others, which you could let us have on this? Why this assertion frankly surprises us is because so much of our time here is spent reporting Israeli efforts to stop missile sales to her neighbours in the region, not least by the Chinese who, ironically are MTCR members. If there is good evidence that Israel has been breaching the letter or the spirit of the MTCR then it is important that we here are brought into the picture.
4. You say that our MTCR partners share our view that Israel is not yet fit to join the MTCR. Yet I note from Ewan Buchanan's recent letter about the Arrow missile project that his US interlocutors see no reason for the project not to continue provided "Israel continues to adhere to the MTCR guidelines". Should we not infer from this that the US at least would be prepared to countenance Israeli membership of the MTCR? Ewan Buchanan's further advice on this would be welcome, unless of course US views are already well known to you.
5. Lastly, you cite Israel's refusal to accede to the NPT as an example of her ambivalent attitude towards proliferation issues in general. As I have commented

/before

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before I think here we are in danger of confusing the concepts of proliferation and possession. Israel is almost certainly a nuclear weapons possessor, but I would hazard a guess that she would be one of the last countries in the world to pass nuclear secrets or technology to those countries with current nuclear ambitions (eg the Iranians, Iraqis etc) ie to proliferate as opposed to possessing herself. Moreover those who would press Israel to join the NPT should take into account the effect on the Middle Eastern security balance. Our colleagues at the American Embassy here point out that the current ambivalent situation really suits all parties rather well. If Israel were to join the NPT and therefore declare her (strongly suspected) possession of nuclear weapons this would almost certainly galvanise the Iranians, Syrians and some others to re-double their own efforts to acquire nuclear weapons, if only to re-assure their own domestic constituents that they were not hopelessly outgunned by the Israelis. At first sight a somewhat strange argument perhaps, but nevertheless one which has a great many adherents amongst the community of Middle Eastern security experts.

Yours ever,

Andy Pearce

A J Pearce  
First Secretary

cc: ✓ Ms J Beeson, NENAD, FCO  
ACDD, FCO  
A Noble Esq, The Hague  
E Buchanan Esq, Washington

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*Handwritten initials in a circle*

*Mr Gortals*  
Foreign & Commonwealth  
Office OCT 1993

DECY  
London SW1A 2AH  
Telephone: 071- 270 2283

NPN 087/31

19 October 1993

Mr A J Pearce  
Tel Aviv

*Mr Warrington Li.*  
*PA*  
*2/10*

*Dear Andy*

*19*

**ISRAEL: MTCR**

1. Thank you for your letter of 6 September.
2. There is an element of circularity in your arguments, partly stemming from a degree of misconception. I should like to re-emphasise at the outset that NPDD employs the acquisitive/possessive concept of proliferation. On this basis therefore Israel remains a proliferator.
3. The question of Israel and the MTCR is not a subject of active discussion, but as I have indicated before it will be on the agenda of the forthcoming MTCR Plenary in Interlaken (29 November/2 December). We are of course aware that were Israel to join the NPT this could encourage some Middle East states to seek to acquire the very weapons Israel would then declare to be in her possession. The ambiguity of this position is further complicated by the refusal of other Arab states to sign the NPT until Israel does so. This is clearly something of a catch 22 scenario. But we do not find it a strange argument; it is merely one of the complexities of proliferation. Israel's suspected possession of nuclear weapons and fear that she could use them at will, continues to encourage proliferation in the region. On this basis Israel's non-proliferation credentials are far from ideal.
4. Admitting Israel to the MTCR is not simply a question of ensuring that she adheres to MTCR guidelines, or that she has the necessary export controls and mechanisms for their effective enforcement. The whole question has to be considered in the wider context of Middle East stability and proliferation. You will be aware for example, from reporting in recent months, of the number of Arab states in the region that have declared that they will only sign the CWC if Israel denounces its nuclear weapons capability.

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5. As you will know the US lead on the question of Israel and the MTCR. We have noted Ewan Buchanan's comment in his teletype of 23 September that the US have urged the Israelis to abide by the MTCR guidelines to ensure that Israel does not get caught by US missile sanctions. My contacts with the Americans do not suggest that they are about to support Israel's imminent admission to the MTCR. The subject is clearly a delicate one in Washington, and we do not anticipate that the US will be forthcoming the discussion on Israel's possible admission in Interlaken. If your Israeli inter-locutors raise the subject in the near future I would suggest you merely point out that we look forward to discussing the subject with our MTCR partners in Interlaken.

6. Finally you will wish to note that China is not an MTCR member. In March 1992, under US pressure, China agreed to adhere to the then MTCR guidelines. But the subsequent transfer to Pakistan of M-11 missile components and related technology, put her in breach of her own commitment. As you well know, the US under Congressional legislation applied category 2 sanctions against China from 24 August 1993.

*Yours ever*  
*D S Gordon-MacLeod*

D S Gordon-MacLeod  
Non-Proliferation and Defence Dept

cc: E Buchanan, Washington  
Miss B Beeson, NENAD, FCO  
A Noble, The Hague

ps: You may be interested in the enclosed cutting from the Washington Post.

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