

ביום 11 מרץ 2013 התקיים בארה"ב יום עיון (סיעור מוחות) בנושא :

**THE 1973 YOM KIPPUR WAR
STRATEGIC ALERTS AND STRATEGIC SIGNALING**

זומנתי להשתתף ביום

שאורגן ע"י **GLOBAL STRATEGIC AFFAIRS - CNA**.

העיון אך ביקשתי לא להשתתף (נסיעה ליום אחד לארה"ב נראה לי מוגזם), אך אשלח להם חומר עם התייחסותי לשאלות שהועלו לדיון וביקשתי מדר' אבנר כהן (המשתתף ביום עיון זה) שיציג עמדתי ביום העיון. הנושא עניין גם את דר' א. בן יוסף מאוניברסיטה חיפה.

החומר המצורף להלן מציג הנושא, בצורה חלקית.

**THE 1973 YOM KIPPUR WAR
STRATEGIC ALERTS AND STRATEGIC SIGNALING:**

**CNA
4825 Mark Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22311
Monday, March 11, 2013**

Agenda

Continental Breakfast 8:00-8:30

Greetings 8:30-8:35
CNA President Robert Murray

Project and Workshop Background and Objectives 8:35-9:00
Elbridge Colby and Avner Cohen

Session I – The Road to War: Background and Context 9:00-10:00
Discussants/Presentations:
Yigal Kipnis, Arnaud de Borchgrave, Amir Oren
Chair: Avner Cohen

Break 10:00-10:15

Session II – The Strategic Alert: What happened? What did the Israelis do? What did the Americans see? 10:15-12:00
Discussants/Presentations:
BG Oded Erez (IDF, Ret.), William Quandt; Yuval Ne’eman (video), Azarayahu Arnan “Sini” (video), MG Herzl Shafir (IDF, Ret.) (memo to be distributed)
Chair: Elbridge Colby

Lunch 12:00 – 1:00

Session III – What impact did the alert have? What impact did it have on American decisions on the airlift? How did it affect the war and/or its aftermath? 1:00-2:45
Discussants/Presentations:
Amir Oren, William Quandt, Michael Wheeler, MG Herzl Shafir

Chair: Avner Cohen

Break 2:45-3:00

**Session IV –Implications for the Future: Strategic Signaling? Role in the
Iran Situation? Impact on U.S.-Israeli Relations?** 3:00-4:00

Open Discussion
Chair: Elbridge Colby

Conclusions 4:00-4:30

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המסמך שהוצג לבאים לכנס בארה"ב

Strategic/Nuclear Alerts in the 1973 Yom Kippur War: New Evidence, New Perspectives

Introduction

2013 is the 40th anniversary of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the most traumatic war in Israel's history as an independent state.

At this historical junction, virtually all aspects of that war have been well studied and researched by historians. There is little to discover afresh about the war. And yet I say “virtually” because there is one distinct historical exception—the nuclear (or more broadly, the unconventional) dimension of the war. This subject has remained in obscurity to this day.

By that subject we mean the full array of questions on the role and the status of Israel's nuclear capabilities in the war, or what is still being referred to in Israel by the euphemism “strategic weapons” or “doomsday weapons.” In essence, at stake is the historical question of what Israel did (or did not do) with its presumed nuclear capabilities (and possibly with other unconventional capabilities it might have had then) as well as with its strategic delivery means.

Simply put, did Israel make, directly or indirectly, a nuclear (or nuclear- related) threat? If not, how close was Israel to making such a threat, given that there were those in Israel,

e.g., Minister of Defense, Moshe Dayan, who thought that Israel in the first few days of the war was indeed very close to the brink? Was Israel using its nuclear capability as strategic leverage to “remind” the United States that Israel must not be left in the corner and the U.S. must start to deliver the necessary ordinance and supplies to prevent Israel's annihilation? Or was Israel using its capabilities directly to attempt to deter further Arab attacks?

Official Israel, under the nation's long-held nuclear opacity policy, has neither acknowledged nor denied anything. Still, over those forty years a full-blown “mythology” has been built up over the subject. Rumors were spread soon after the war that Israel was close to the abyss. In 1976 *Time Magazine* was perhaps the first to come up with some concrete factual claims. According to *Time*, sometime in the early phases of the war Prime Minister Golda Meir ordered the assembly and arm 13 nuclear bombs. Indeed, it was that specter of nuclear escalation, according to the *Time* story, that led U.S Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to act firm and fast to provide Israel with the most massive weapons airlift in history. Years later American play writer William Gibson used this alleged episode in developing his 1988 play *Golda's Balcony*.

Over the years more authors have testified to an Israeli “alert” or some sort of activity/event of similar nature, including Seymour Hersh in *The Samson Option*, Martin van Creveld, American Yom Kippur War historian Walter Boyne, Kissinger biographer Walter Isaacson, and many other writers. Lending particular credence has been William Quandt, who served as the NSC point man for Middle East issues during the 1973 War. As he reported in a 1991 *Washington Post* review of Hersh's *Samson Option*: “We did know, around this time, however, that Israel had placed its Jericho missiles on alert. I did not know what kind of warheads they had, but it did not make much sense to me that they would be equipped with conventional ordnance. I assume others agreed.”

To our knowledge, there has never been a full study of this issue using all of the available sources. There are claims, rumors, allegations, but no effort to explore the issue systematically. Yet the issue is important for both understanding the past as well as thinking about the future. After all, how states manipulate their nuclear forces, especially in crisis, is of immense importance, especially as we face the possibility of a more proliferated world. It is particularly instructive given today's complex strategic dynamics among the United States, Israel, and Iran.

This project, under the leadership of the Center of Naval Analysis (CNA), is to our knowledge the first effort to undertake an in-depth study on these aspects of the 1973 Yom Kippur War and their implications for our understanding of strategic signaling in crises. In particular the project seeks to address—and hopefully to answer--the following research questions:

- Did Israel alert/deploy/check its strategic [nuclear] forces? If so, how did it do so and how many times? What kind of activity actually happened and when? Who made the decisions? What is the appropriate way to describe the alleged activity conceptually?
- What were the strategic purposes behind those acts of [alleged] alert/deployment/check? Who was the primary target of the alert? Was it done to deter a foe or to signal a friend or ally?
- Did the United States perceive those alleged alert/deployment/check? How did it perceive its implications? What did it understand Israel to be trying to accomplish or to signal?

- Did Israel's strategic alert actually affect American calculations and behavior, in particular in reference to the airlift? If so, how did it manifest itself?
- Were any of those acts of alert directed at others, say the Soviets and/or the Arabs? Did those parties perceive those activities? What, if any, were their reactions?
- What broader implications about strategic signaling in crises and related topics does this history suggest?

To this end, the CNA team has dedicated a great deal of archival research in the United States and conducted oral interviews in the United States and Israel to uncovering more information about these events, including at the Nixon Library in California, with a number of U.S. Government agencies, former government officials, and other sources. This small closed roundtable of senior U.S. and Israeli participants and experts is an effort to present and discuss some ideas about those 1973 events and to reflect upon the implications.

The project team is composed of a group of strategic, regional, and historical experts with decades of academic, think tank, and government experience. The project is led by Elbridge Colby and the team is composed of Avner Cohen of the Monterrey Institute of International Studies (MIIS), a nuclear historian who studied Israel's nuclear history William McCants, an expert on the Middle East; and William Rosenau, an expert on Cold War history.

The purpose of this pre-workshop memo is to compile a summary of the relevant background information and testimonies on this research project.

The Israeli Nuclear Program and the United States

On September 26, 1969, at the end of a most sensitive meeting between U.S. President Richard Nixon and Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, a new bargain was struck between the two over the Israeli nuclear program. That meeting marked an end of era and the beginning of a new one. It ended a decade in which the United States government had struggled with—and at times even confronted—the Israeli government over the nuclear issue.

There are indications that already prior to the meeting President Nixon recognized, as a matter of fact, that the United States had lost its battle against Israeli nuclear determination, and that Israel had already either nuclear weapons or the full capability to produce them. Furthermore, Nixon had apparently reservations of his own on the political wisdom of his senior administration officials [NSSM 40] who wanted to continue with the battle. Whether America liked it or not, Israel had already acquired the capability and the question to address was how the two countries should handle this sensitive situation, given the new reality. The meeting with PM Meir was a way to address that problem.

To this day we do not know with certainty what exactly was said in that summit meeting. We know, however, that it was a very private meeting; part of it was apparently not at the Oval Office but rather as the two leaders walked on the White House lawn. No note takers attended the meeting, and it is even unclear whether the written record that each leader wrote after the meeting has survived. So all we can do is to reconstruct what might

have spoken based on the limited record that is now declassified and available. This summary is based on a larger reconstruction of the conversation that Dr. Avner Cohen made in chapter 1 of his book *The Worst Kept Secret: Israel's Bargain with the Bomb* [Columbia University Press, 2010, pp. 23-33].

It appears that PM Meir told President Nixon candidly either that Israel already had a nuclear weapons capability or that it had actually already weaponized. She also reiterated that despite the new situation Israel's political commitment not to nuclearize the region by "introduction" of nuclear weapons has remained intact. One may think that the PM would remind the President why Israel found itself compelled to develop that capability, reminding him the lessons of the Holocaust, but pledging to him that under no conceivable scenarios would those weapons ever be used.

This allowed the two leaders to frame a new secret deal over the nuclear issue along the following parameters. The United States would no longer be engaged in an active effort to deny Israel's nuclear weapons capability. Practically speaking, that meant that the Nixon administration would no longer put a political pressure on Israel to sign the NPT and would also end its request for the annual American visits to Dimona.

On the Israeli side, PM Meir probably pledged that Israel would continue to exercise the same old policy and practice of extreme caution and constraint in its nuclear behavior as it had exhibited in the past. Israel would not test. Despite the new technological reality PM Meir reportedly reassured President Nixon that Israel would not change an iota in its declaratory policy as well as in its overall commitment to nuclear constraint. In fact, Israel did not see a strategic need to do so.

Indeed, within a week after the meeting, Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin delivered to National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, the long awaited replies to all three semi-factual questions which he had been formally asked in a late July meeting by senior administration officials. Here are the exact questions and answers:

1. Q: Would the Israelis assure us that they would not "possess" nuclear weapons? A: Israel will not become a nuclear power.
2. Q: Would they be willing to affirm that they would not deploy strategic missiles? They would not deploy strategic missiles until at least 1972.
3. Q: Would they be willing to sign the NPT? The NPT will be considered by the new Government. [Avner Cohen, *The Worst-Kept Secret*, 28]

This exchange of Q & A reflects the more practical aspect of the deal. While Israel may have been firmly committed to acquire nuclear weapons capability, perhaps it even have all the components of actual weapons, yet Israel would not be a "nuclear power," nor does she have a strategic need or incentive to become one. One way to understand the practical meaning of this commitment is by seeing it as a pledge that Israel would not move militarily to become a "nuclear power."

One should think about this issue against the strategic context of Greater Israel of the post-1967 era. This was a period when Israel enjoyed having "strategic depth" in the form of the Sinai Peninsula (three times larger than the territory of Israel proper) and the Golan Heights. Given the sense of military invincibility that dominated Israeli strategic thinking in that period, it was commonsensical that Israel had no military need whatsoever to become a nuclear power in the military sense. The whole talk about

nuclear weapons as weapons of existential “last resort,” talk that made some sense in the pre-1967 period, made very little sense in the period 1967-73.

This sense of strategic comfort—“our strategic situation has never been better,” was a common cliché in those days—fits well with the nature of PM Meir’s presumed commitment to President Nixon that Israel would never use those weapons and the formal pledge not to be a “nuclear power.”

This also fits well with the official Israeli reply on its strategic missile, the Jericho 1 missile, which by that time was transported from France to Israel (due to the French embargo). The Israeli pledge that strategic missiles would not be deployed for at least 3 years, that is until late 1972, reflects the technological reality that missiles’ technical systems were still highly problematic, and the strategic and financial reality that the project was not viewed as urgent or pressing. .

Hersh’s “Nuclear Blackmail” Narrative

Seymour Hersh is probably the author that provided this nuclear mythology its strongest voice. In his 1991 book *The Samson Option*, he tells a detailed account of this mythology as a full chapter [17] entitled “Nuclear Blackmail.” According to Hersh’s account, Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan’s well known “doom and gloom” state of mind—Dayan’s extremely pessimistic comments in the first two days of the war about the imminent demise of the “Third Temple” [a Biblical reference to the modern State of Israel] are well documented—was turned into in a most dramatic war cabinet meeting on Monday, October 8, at Golda Meir’s office in Tel Aviv.

“...resolved to implement three critical decisions: it would rally its collapsing forces for a major counterattack; it would arms and target its nuclear arsenal in the event of total collapse and subsequent need for Samson Option; and, finally it would inform Washington of its unprecedented nuclear action—and unprecedented peril—and demand that the United States begin an emergency airlift of replacement arms and ammunition needed to sustain an extended all-out war effort.”

“The kitchen cabinet agreed that the nuclear missile launchers at Hirbat Zachariah, as many as were ready, would be made operational, along with eight specially marked F-4s that were on twenty-four-hour alert at Tel Nof, the air force base near Rehovot. The initial target list included the Egyptian and Syrian military headquarters near Cairo and Damascus.” [Hersh, 225]

Then, a few lines later, Hersh cites an Israeli official who “was in the prime minister’s office that night” claiming that “the basic decision to arm the weapons of last resort was reached easily...; [but] there were far more complicated discussions of how many warheads to arm and where they were to be targeted. There was a separate, preliminary briefing by technical experts from Dimona, led by Shalheveth Freier, who described the weapons and targets that were available for immediate assembly.” [Hersh, 225-26]

According to Hersh, the reasoning behind the nuclear arming was a twofold signaling: First, to tell the Egyptians and the Syrians [via the Soviet intelligence] “to limit the offensive and not attempt to advance beyond the pre-1967 borders.” Hersh adds that the information was transmitted to General Mohammed el-Gamasy, the Egyptian chief

of staff. Second, to force the United States to begin an immediate and massive resupply of the Israeli military.” [Hersh, 227] This is the seed of what Hersh call Israel’s “nuclear blackmail.”

Hersh claims also that the word of the Israeli nuclear arming came from the Soviets. According to his Israeli intelligence source, Israel Signet unit 8200, the Israeli communications intelligence agency, picked up both the Soviet warning to Cairo about the Israeli nuclear arming as well on the morning of October 9 the Soviet warning to Washington. [Hersh, 229].

Hersh adds that some days later, the US intelligence community got its own look, via the KH-11, at the Israeli missile launchers by the site he referred to as Hirbat Zachariah. According to Hersh, “the launchers were left in the open, perhaps deliberately, making it much easier for American photo interpreters to spot them. (The Soviets also had satellite coverage in the Middle East, and presumably saw the same missile field.)” [Hersh, 231]

Sale’s Narrative

Another American journalist, Richard Sale, in a 2002 UPI news story titled “Yom Kippur: Israel’s 1973 Nuclear Alert” reiterates some of Hersh’s factual claims while adds a few others, and like Hersh attributing those claims to unidentified “knowledgeable” US government sources.

Rehashing Hersh’s basic claim that Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan secured PM Golda Meir’s authorization to arm 13 nuclear weapons [no exact date is given], and that those “arming” involved the Jericho missiles [at a site he refers to ,like Hersh, as “Hirbat Zakariah”] and eight F-4 fighters [at Tel Nof air force base]. Furthermore, according to Sale, the state of the alert lasted three full days but he does not specify which days. In this context Sale adds a few more factual details that do not appear in Hersh’s account. He writes:

“At that time, the Jerichos were deployed inside caves, inside Israeli military air bases that had "huge blast doors," a former senior CIA official recalled.... The missile-launchers were set up on the back of railway cars and could be rolled out, fired, then rolled back and the blast doors closed, this official said.”

“Somehow, an agent in place in Israel alerted the United States of the arming of the Jerichos and on Oct. 12, an SR-71 Blackbird reconnaissance aircraft based at Beale Air Force Base in California took off, refueled off of Rota, Spain, and then flew over Syria, Jordan and Israel. The plane, able to survey 100,000 square miles of land an hour, spotted the radiation from the missiles, according to a former Pentagon official and others familiar with the incident. According to this Pentagon source, Israel ordered their F-4s to down the plane, but the Blackbird soared to 85,000 feet, beyond the range of the Israeli fighters.” [Sale, 2002]

Sale cites American sources in saying that the predominant view today is that Israel’s first nuclear alert was a “bluff,” what he also calls a “saber rattling,” but he qualifies it as "an extremely dangerous one." As Sale notes, “Saber-rattling or not, that same day, the United States began a huge airlift to Israel including ammunition, tanks and aircraft.”

Israeli Counter Testimonies: Freier, Ne'eman, "Sini" and Others

While the details of Hersh's and Sale's accounts have remained unconfirmed and controversial, the common narrative of the 1973 war appears to have incorporated the view that "something" with a "nuclear/missile" nexus did happen on the Israeli side during the 1973 war. Along this line, most contemporary non-Israeli accounts of the war include a reference to an unconfirmed nuclear related event(s). Details may remain obscure, but the core recognition is that some sort of "deployment" or "alert" or "check out" of Israel's strategic capabilities did take place.

Furthermore, along with this loose recognition the common narrative also assumes that the prime purpose of that activity was not final preparation towards actual use but rather an effort to signal or convey a message to the to the United States of Israel's perception about its military predicament, in particular about the major losses it suffered in the air, and therefore Israel's need to be immediately resupplied.

As noted, official Israel has said nothing about this episode. The Israeli narrative of the war commonly mentions the anecdote but—in compliance with Israel's censor's conventions—attributes the anecdote to "foreign sources." And yet, over the years, some Israelis who were in the know and had first-person knowledge did refer, obliquely somewhat, to those claims.

First was the late Shalheveth Freier, Israel's Atomic Energy Commission chief during the 1973 that was mentioned by name in Hersh's account. Freier vigorously and publicly sought to discredit Hersh's "nuclear blackmail" account, especially those claims about himself. While Freier did not provide his own positive account, he was adamant that Hersh's account involving himself was false.

The first Israeli "in the know" to provide a positive narrative was the late Professor Yuval Ne'eman, a former Israeli Minister of Science and Acting Chair of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission (both under PM Menachem Begin in the early 80s), who served during the war as Moshe Dayan's personal liaison in communication with the United States. In an article titled "The USA-Israel Connection in the Yom Kippur War" that was published in a small CNSN Occasional Paper (based on a lecture that Ne'eman gave in a small meeting in Washington DC in February 1996), Ne'eman provides his own (partial) account of the nuclear dimension of the 1973 war.

Like Freier, Ne'eman also discredits Hersh's "nuclear blackmail" story. He explicitly denies the nuclear component in Hersh's story about the war cabinet session on the morning of October 8:

"This session of the War Cabinet did not make a decision to deploy "the nuclear arsenal." Neither did the session on the next morning. ... An appeal to the USA for ammunition and weapons was first presented on the 9 (late afternoon Israeli time) and the airlift was begun on the 14 October. Thus I completely deny Hersh story." [Ne'eman, p.5]

On the positive side, Ne'eman refers to two points in time where Israel appeared to "explore" or to "check out" its strategic or unconventional options. On the first episode it is apparent that Ne'eman must have known much more than he chose to say, so he chose to speak in a semi- hypothetical and opaque language:

"Note that it would be normal, for whoever is responsible for anything relating to strategic missiles—even if their warheads are just filled with

ordinary explosives—to advance their state of preparedness, in a time of war. This might explain Mr. Qunadt’s information, in this meeting, about signals which were traced by the USA intelligence. set up.” [Ne’eman, p.5]

Similarly, for whoever might be responsible for the nuclear infrastructure and the processing of further nuclear steps—whether it be development, production or the enhancement of the level of preparedness—to come to the Prime Minister at the beginning of a war and enquire whether such circumstances might indeed be expected, etc. Such a consultation should have taken place between 6 and 8 October. As I explained above, the Prime Minister’s answer could not have implied deployment. It might and should have indicated a need for some degree of preparedness for the strategic missiles, whatever their actual warheads, and some protective steps in the nuclear domain, such as shutting down the reactors throughout the war, to minimize risks from bombardments. “ (pp. 5-6)

As to the second occasion, here Ne’eman is more precise in his account:

“The Israeli [strategic] alarm [was] built up gradually. In his victory speech on the 16, with Kosygin next to him, Sadat mentioned the presence in Egypt of strategic missiles which would retaliate against Tel Aviv, should the Israelis dare to bomb Egyptian cities. The missiles were mentioned as “Zafir,” the name of the defunct missile project developed by Nasser, with the help of German scientists in 1961-67, not as Soviet Scud missile. The next day, American satellite photographs showed a deployment of two brigades of Scud missiles, positioned in the Delta area, apparently with uncamouflaged nuclear warheads, manned by Soviet troops. This information (see *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, November 5, 1973, p. 13), relayed to Israeli Defense Intelligence, made General Elazar order the deployment of a Jericho missile battery. *General Elazar instructions were not to camouflage the site, assuming that the message of a counter-deployment would be read by the Soviet Satellites and relayed to Sadat.* [italics in originals]. It was left to them to guess the nature of the Israeli warheads. Re the Soviet satellites, starting October 3, the Soviets launched an observation satellite of the Cosmos type every third day throughout the conflict, each time also recovering the previous one, within another two days.

The next installment in this story came from Moscow radio. The Israeli Air Force was pounding at the missile belt’s left flank at Port-Said. This city in fact “fills” a small island and the bombing was causing large destruction. Radio Moscow described it as “a murderous attack on an innocent city,” and threatened with Soviet retaliation against Tel Aviv. Consulted, Kissinger suggested disregarding threats announced by radio, but this added to the intent behind the Israeli missile deployment.” [Ne’eman, p. 15}

Perhaps the most intriguing testimony on the subject was made by the late Azarayahu Arnan (nicknamed “Sini”), the faithful aide to Minister Yisrael Galil who was PM Golda Meir’s closest political ally. Sini had a recollection of himself at the porch of the PM office in Tel Aviv, late in the morning of October 9, as he was waiting for his boss, Minister Galili who attended the meeting inside. Along with him waiting on the porch was Shalheveth Freier, the director general of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission. The two knew each other for years, but the body language of Freier was that this was not time for a chat. So both were waiting, each of the other side of the porch, without exchanging a word beyond a brief head nod.

Around noon, as the war cabinet adjourned, Minister Galili shared with Sini the extraordinary way that the war cabinet came to its end. As the formal discussion seemed to reach closure, and some of the senior military officers and senior civil servants started to leave the room, Minister Dayan asked the PM if he could bring in IAEC DG Freier to “brainstorm” her and the three ministers about possible “options.” At that point Ministers Galili and Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon jumped at PM Meir, opposing Dayan’s move and saying it is too premature to consider any option of that nature in that forum. The PM military aide, General Israel Lior, supported also the two senior ministers. In response the PM [and one must assume that the PM had already seen Shalheveth Freier—her direct subordinate—in a one-on-one meeting earlier during the war] that this was not the time to discuss such options.

Yuval Ne’eman’s comments, as well as Sini’s testimony, support and are consistent with what we have learned recently—as part of the research for this meeting—from both Major General (ret) Eli Zeira (who served as the Military Intelligence chief during the 1973 war), and Major General (ret) Herzl Shafir (who served during the war as HR and Training chief). The two of them, who were interviewed in January and March 2013, assert decisively that the nuclear issue was never discussed, indeed was never even mentioned, in any of the top senior staff meetings that they attended during the war. They are convinced that at the level of the top IDF senior staff officers—not including the Chief of Staff himself or the Israeli Air Force (IAF) headquarters—the nuclear issue was never dealt with during the war. Indeed, General Zeira pointed out that he recalls Minister of Defense Dayan telling the top commanders of the IDF more than once that the nuclear issue is not their business and they should not even think about it.

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Appendix 1

How Israel Got the Bomb: Special Report (*Time Magazine*, 12 April 1976)

For years there has been widespread speculation about Israel's nuclear potential—speculation that has now been confirmed. At a briefing for a group of American space experts in Washington recently, an official of the Central Intelligence Agency estimated that Israel had between ten and 20 nuclear weapons "available for use." In fact, TIME has learned, Israel possesses a nuclear arsenal of 13 atomic bombs, assembled, stored and ready to be dropped on enemy forces from specially equipped Kfir and Phantom fighters or Jericho missiles. These weapons have a 20-kiloton yield, roughly as powerful as those that obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Israel has thus joined a nuclear club that includes, of course, the U.S. and Soviet Union, both of which have so much megatonnage that it is difficult to measure. France and Britain have several hundred nuclear warheads; India and China are estimated to be in Israel's class as fledgling atomic powers.

Israel's 13 bombs, TIME has also learned, were hastily assembled at a secret underground tunnel during a 78-hr. period at the start of the 1973 October War. At that time, the Egyptians had repulsed the first Israeli counterattacks along the Suez Canal, causing heavy casualties, and Israeli forces on the Golan Heights were retreating in the face of a massive Syrian tank assault. At 10 p.m. on Oct. 8, the Israeli Commander on the northern front, Major General Yitzhak Hoffi, told his superior: "I am not sure that we can hold out much longer." After midnight, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan solemnly warned Premier Golda Meir: "This is the end of the third temple." Mrs. Meir thereupon gave Dayan permission to activate Israel's Domsday weapons. As each bomb was assembled, it was rushed off to waiting air force units. Before any triggers were set, however, the battle on both fronts turned in Israel's favor. The 13 bombs were sent to desert arsenals, where they remain today, still ready for use.

Did Israel's nuclear capability play a part in the U.S. global military alert of Oct. 25, 1973? According to TIME'S sources, the Israelis were convinced that the Russians had learned of the newly acquired nuclear potential, possibly through a Soviet Cosmos spy satellite over the Middle East. What is certain is that on Oct. 13, the Russians dispatched nuclear warheads from Nikolaev—the naval base at Odessa—to Alexandria, to be fitted on Russian Scud missiles already based in Egypt. The U.S., in turn, detected the Soviet warheads as the ship carrying them passed through the Bosphorous on Oct. 15 and issued a warning to Moscow by means of a world military alert.

TIME'S sources further believe that the U.S. learned about the bombs as a result of a reconnaissance sweep of the Middle East by a spy plane. Some high officials in Washington insist that the U.S. had no knowledge of the bombs and deny that they were a factor in the alert. The plane was spotted by Israeli air defenses and two Phantom jets scrambled to intercept it. "I have it on my radar," the Israeli pilot radioed. "It is an [SR-71] American Blackbird." Back to him came a direct order from a high-ranking Israeli Air Force commander: "Down at." The SR-71, flying effortlessly at 85,000 ft., easily

outclimbed and outdistanced the Israelis and returned to its base with significant readings.

The origins of the nuclear bomb project date back to Israel's birth. Atomic scientists were encouraged by Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first President and a chemist of international repute. Israeli nuclear experts produced low-grade uranium from phosphate in the Negev and developed an efficient technique for producing heavy water. In 1953, Israel, in exchange for these processes, was allowed to study France's nuclear program and participate in its Sahara tests. Four years later, France gave Israel its first nuclear reactor. Later, the French also helped with the design of Israel's Dimona Atomic Research Community in the Negev, which Premier David Ben-Gurion called nothing but a "textile factory."

The Dimona nuclear reactor went into operation in 1964. Meanwhile, an intense secret debate had begun within Israel about whether the government should also build a separation plant to produce the fissionable material necessary for an A-bomb. Ben-Gurion and Shimon Peres, then Deputy Defense Minister and currently Israel's Defense Minister, favored doing so. Others, including Mrs. Meir and Yigal Allon, now Israel's Foreign Minister, initially opposed the project. So did Ben-Gurion's successor as Premier, Levi Eshkol. The Israeli equivalent of the U.S. National Security Council vetoed the separation-plant project in early 1968. Shortly afterward, Eshkol discovered that Dayan—in the wake of the 1967 Six-Day War—had secretly ordered the start of construction on an S.P. Eshkol and his advisers felt that they could only rubber-stamp a project already under way.

Dayan believes that a nuclear capability is essential to Israel. "Israel has no choice," he recently told TIME Correspondent Marlin Levin. "With our manpower we cannot physically, financially or economically go on acquiring more and more tanks and more and more planes. Before long you will have all of us maintaining and oiling the tanks."

Some Western intelligence experts believe that Israel conducted an underground nuclear test in the Negev in 1963, and that preparation of nuclear material for assembly into A-bombs began soon thereafter. The S.P. was completed in 1969, but Israel did not immediately begin manufacturing bombs. Instead, Israeli scientists concentrated on developing new methods for shortening the time necessary to produce nuclear weapons.

The Dimona research facility and the separation plant are protected not only by Israeli troops but by highly sophisticated electronic systems and radar screens that operate around the clock. All aircraft—including Israeli military planes—are barred from flying over the areas where the nuclear plants are located. During the Six-Day War, in fact, an Israeli Mirage III—either out of control or with its communications gear in operative—inadvertently flew over Dimona. Israeli defenders shot it down with a ground-to-air missile. In 1973 a Libyan airliner flying from Benghazi to Cairo lost its way because of a navigational error and flew toward a forbidden area. Israeli fighters tried to turn it back. Then, for security reasons, they shot it down, causing the death of 108 of the 113 people aboard.

* A symbolic reference to the state of Israel. The first two temples were destroyed by invading Babylonians around 586 B.C. and by the Romans in A.D. 70

קראתי את המסמך המסכם (הטיוטה):

The Israeli Strategic Alert during the 1973 Yom-kipper War

יש לי הערות לפרקים השונים אך אינני חושב שיש לכך חשיבות עתה. לעומת זאת ברצוני לבחון ולנתח את **הגישה המתודית** לנושא שנקרא – Strategic – Alert ("S.A."). בהתייחסותי הראשונה שלי אליך (בכתב) נגעתי חלקית בנושא. עתה, אבקש להרחיב. כי להערכתך זו החולשה העיקרית של המפגש שקוים ושל טיוטת מסמך הסיכום.

באשר לנושא הגרעיני או כפי שמוצג בחומה המצורף: "Strategic Alert". התקיים בוואשינגטון ב- 11 מרץ 13, ע"י מכון CAN, יום-עיון (סיעור מוחות), כולל מוזמנים מישראל. הוזמנתי, אך לא רציתי לטוס עבור 2-3 ימים. לכן הכנתי עבורם חומר שהוצג שם, בעיקר ע"י פרופ' אבנר כהן.

אני מצרף את עיקרי החומר שבידי לידיעתך. מניח כי כדאי להעביר עותק גם לדר' דימה אדמסקי. מבחינת האקדמיה, נראה לי כי תמצאו עניין בהצעת המתודית, כיצד נכון לטפל באירועים כאלה בעתיד.

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