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Edmund S. Muskie

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COMMENTS BY SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE
ON HIS RECENT TRIP TO THE MIDDLE EAST
JANUARY 21, 1971

I have returned from the Middle East with a deeper understanding of the concerns of both sides in the Arab-Israeli dispute. In Israel, I saw that nation's basic concern for its security, both now and under any agreement. In my discussions in the U.A.R., I saw the concern of the Arabs for the return of the territories they lost in 1967. In both countries, I gained a better understanding of the positions of each side on such complex issues as the refugees, freedom of navigation in international waterways, and possible international guarantees.

This was an unofficial, fact finding trip. I took no public position myself on what the specific nature of a settlement should be, including the question of future borders. In any case, this is a question for the parties themselves to negotiate.

On a number of occasions during my trip, I reaffirmed my support for the American pledge to Israel's security, one of the basic elements of U.S. foreign policy since the birth of Israel. I continue to believe that maintenance of this pledge is important both to the future of Israel and to the prospects for peace in the area.
