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Press Release - Military Assistance for Israel

Edmund S. Muskie

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FOR RELEASE

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Immediately
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MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR ISRAEL

Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Me.) today announced his support for the amendment to provide \$500,000,000 for military sales and credits to Israel. The full text of the Senate statement follows:

I strongly support the amendment to provide \$500,000,000 for military sales and credits to Israel. I do so because I believe that additional assistance to Israel at this time is required to maintain the balance of power and peace in the Middle East.

In recent days there has been an atmosphere of intensified rhetoric combined with growing discouragement over prospects for a peaceful settlement. In such circumstances, continued stability depends more than ever on a secure balance of power between rival groups. Yet, because of the Administration's strategy of attempting to gain political leverage over Israel by withholding shipments of Phantom jet aircraft, the military balance has been shifting during the last year against Israel. There is a growing threat that Egypt might perceive, in an intense crisis, a margin of military strength that could tip the balance of decision in favor of war. We must not permit that to occur.

While we continue to withhold needed aircraft from Israel, the State Department can only issue protests to the Russians over the latest shipment of aircraft to Egypt -- up to ten additional subsonic TU-16 Badgers which may be capable of firing sophisticated air-to-ground missiles. The Soviets show no signs of stopping the flow of arms into the Middle East.

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In these circumstances, I think we must act to reinforce Israeli military strength. The \$300,000,000 in credit sales contained in the military assistance bill may not be adequate -- and even this authorization may be facing great difficulty before it can be enacted into law.

I therefore support this amendment to appropriate \$500,000,000 , including \$250,000,000 for F-4 Phantom aircraft, under the previous authorization contained in section 501 of the Defense Procurement Act of 1970. I believe we must act to redress the balance of power -- and save the peace -- in the Middle East.

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