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Statement by Senator Edmund S. Muskie on the United Nations Resolution on the Middle East

Edmund S. Muskie

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MIDDLE EAST
STATEMENT BY:
SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE
FEBRUARY 17, 1970

After the war in June, 1967, President Johnson spoke movingly of the need for a final peace settlement between the Arabs and Israel. At the moment, however, the prospects of a settlement appear remote as the cycle of violence and reprisals intensifies against a background of Arab intransigence and Russian opportunism.

The situation is of concern to Americans for several reasons: first, the United States has valued long-standing ties of friendship with Israel and the Arab states of the region. Throughout the area, moreover, we have important strategic and economic interest to consider. None of these policy objects can be secure in the absence of peace between the Arabs and Israel.

I support the diplomatic efforts that have been made to promote a solution on the basis of the United Nation's Resolution of November 22, 1967. At the same time, it must be made clear that no solution can be imposed, and that at some point Arab and Israel must work out, face to face, the details of their future relationships.

A continuation of the present arms balance, in my opinion, is important to promoting peace-making dispositions on the Arab side. I consider that the capabilities of the Israeli Defense Forces are presently adequate to any challenge the Arabs may offer, but would recommend compensatory action on our part if it appeared that the military equation might become unbalanced to Israel's disadvantage.

I am apprehensive that the U.S.S.R.'s apparent reluctance to use its influence with its Arab clients on behalf of a peace settlement may narrow the time frame in which moves toward such a settlement may proceed.

Finally, I regret the complications that the administration has introduced into what is already one of the most complex issues of our time. The recent statements of Secretary Rogers and President Nixon, which sought to reassure the Arabs and the Israelis respectively, may have left both our friends and our critics in some uncertainty as to our true goals and intentions.
