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## **Press Release - Muskie Urges More Military Assistance for Israel**

Edmund S. Muskie

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# MUSKIE

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FOR RELEASE

MONDAY A.M.'s  
August 2, 1971

## MUSKIE URGES MORE MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR ISRAEL

Senator Edmund S. Muskie (D-Me.) issued the following statement today:

"Several days ago, Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco arrived in Israel for consultations with the Israeli government on the Middle East situation. The political stalemate in that part of the world has now reached a critical stage. Frustrations are growing on both sides, and in a situation of such great tension there is always the possibility of another tragic conflict.

"Since the founding of Israel, our foreign policy with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict has rested on two fundamental positions: first, there is our commitment to Israel's survival. We have stood unalterably opposed to the position that the Arabs took for many years that Israel has no right to exist. This position persists even today in the political rhetoric of the Arab world -- despite three costly wars which have served only to divert the efforts of the Middle Eastern peoples from more urgent tasks of national development.

"Secondly -- and partly as a means of implementing our basic goal of protecting Israel's security -- we have attempted to preserve a balance of power in the Middle East. We have hoped thereby to deter war in the area and preserve stability in a situation of high tension and great emotion. At the same time, we have also tried to do everything possible to prevent a senseless and dangerous arms race between Israel and her Arab neighbors.

"For some time, Israel has been requesting from the United States additional shipments of Phantom jet fighter-bombers. Our government has not fulfilled this latest request, apparently on the assumption that such actions might render a political settlement more difficult.

"In view of recent evidence of increased Soviet shipments of fighter aircraft to Egypt and Syria, I do not agree with the Administration's apparent position that delivery of Phantom jets to Israel must still be delayed. Two weeks ago it was reported in the New York Times that U.S. intelligence specialists had revealed that since last September the Soviet Union had shipped nearly 100 MIG-21's to Egypt, including eight delivered in June. This total was said to compare with only 90 MIG-21's delivered to Egypt from the end of the 1967 war to the middle of 1970.

"Moreover, it was reported that Syria had received from the Soviet Union in the last three months 21 all-weather MIG-21 fighters, probably of the latest model, 9 older-model MIG-17's, 5 Sukhoi-7 fighter-bombers and 22 MI-8 helicopters. Especially significant are the high number of the most up-to-date MIG-21's and the first known delivery of the big MI-8 helicopters, which are designed to carry combat troops. These deliveries have apparently resulted from the Syrian-Soviet military pact signed last February.

"I wish to express my own view in the strongest possible terms that Israel must have the arms she needs to defend herself and to maintain a balance of power with her adversaries. I hope that we will respond positively to the Israeli request for more assistance. We are committed to Israel's survival, and we are pledged to maintain a balance of military power in the Middle East. By either measure, it is imperative that we delay no longer in shipping the additional aircraft she requires.

"We all pray for a political settlement in the Middle East that will leave Israel secure and will permit our friends in the Arab world to turn to the great task of national development. But prospects for a political settlement are surely not advanced by a military balance that shifts dangerously in favor of the Arabs. Neither are these prospects increased by a zig-zag diplomacy on the part of the U.S. which, on the theory of gaining political leverage over Israel by delaying needed military assistance, serves only to raise doubts among all parties to the conflict that the United States is truly committed to preserving Israel's security. Such doubts will encourage the

Arabs not to negotiate seriously with Israel, and make Israel more reluctant to negotiate territorial questions bearing upon her security.

"Now is the time to reemphasize our commitment to Israel's security, and to restore the balance of power in the Middle East as the best means of furthering the goal of a negotiated settlement."

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