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STATE DEPARTMENT LETTER EXPLAINS
MIDEAST DEFENSE POLICY.

WASHINGTON, MARCH 18—(USIS)— A group of U.S. Congressmen today made public a letter from the State Department explaining the Administration's policy of supporting the building of defensive strength in the Middle East.

The letter, signed by Under Secretary of State Walter B. Smith, was in response to a letter sent by the Congressional group to Secretary of State Dulles in February, voicing concern over reports of possible U.S. arms aid to Arab states.

Smith pointed out that the provisions of legislation authorizing any U.S. military aid specifically state that such aid must be for defensive purposes only. He recalled President Eisenhower's statement emphasizing this point in announcing that the United States had approved Pakistan's request for arms aid.

Smith also called attention to the tripartite (U.S.-British-French) declaration of May, 1950 concerning maintenance of peace between Israel and Arab states.

Smith said: "The United States Government reaffirms its friendship for Israel and its policy of supporting her continuation as a sovereign and independent nation, and it reasserts its determination to assist in that reduction of tensions between Israel and her neighbors which is indispensable to the conclusion of a lasting peace -- a peace which will require real concessions, not merely gestures, by both sides. The United States Government also reaffirms its equal friendship for every other state of this area. It will seek, through expressions of that friendship and through the development of confidence in its impartiality and integrity, to assist in establishing the strength necessary for our security and that of the free world as a whole.

"Freedom of action within the framework of these principles is essential to our own national security. We are confronted today by possibilities of creating strength. The voluntary steps now being taken toward mutual cooperation by certain Near and Middle Eastern states, located close to the Soviet Union, merit our support. We must make use of these historic opportunities as they occur, or see them pass by with incalculable consequences for our own security. The setting within which we must build defensive strength is unlikely ever to be perfect. Certain area disputes may well remain unsettled for many years, while the Soviet threat continues to grow. It is our conviction, furthermore, that building area defense will not obstruct the solution of these disputes but instead, by fostering internal stability and appreciation of common danger, will contribute to a reduction of tensions."

In releasing Smith's letter to the press, the Congressmen welcomed the assurances given by Smith, but reiterated their apprehension that any U.S. military aid to Arab states might be diverted to renewal of warfare against Israel. U.S. aid in the area should be economic only, they contended.

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TEXT OF SMITH LETTER.

WASHINGTON, MARCH 18 (USIS) - - Following is the text of the letter from Under Secretary of State Smith, released today by a group of Congressmen:

I refer to your letter of February 5, 1954 and to our meeting at the Capitol on March 3, regarding American policy in the Near East and, in particular, to the subject of possible extension of arms aid by the United States Government to one or more Arab states. I am summarizing below the main points which were made in our discussions:

The present dangerous weakness in the defensive capabilities of the Near East constitutes a direct threat to the security of the United States and of the free world. Authority to take steps to improve this situation was granted by the last Congress in a new authorization (Section 202-B), contained in the Mutual Security Act of 1953 and in Public Law 218, appropriating funds for military assistance to the Near East (excluding Greece, Turkey and Iran) and Africa. Provisions of Mutual Security legislation require the most definite assurances by all recipient nations against aggression. In addition to insisting upon such undertakings in every instance, the United States Government will continue to concern itself with relative military strengths in this area until such time as tensions between Israel and the Arab states have been sufficiently reduced to give promise of a lasting peace in the area. Any military aid which the United States may consider extending to states in this area will not shift the balance of strength so as to imperil the existence of any one nation.

The President has just reaffirmed in the strongest terms the attitude of this government regarding the misuse of United States material aid for aggressive purposes. This is contained in his statement of February 25, 1954 regarding American aid to Pakistan. It should also be recalled that the United States Government joined with those of the United Kingdom and France on May 25, 1950 in a declaration of policy regarding the supply of arms and war materials to the Arab states and Israel, which said:

'The three governments recognize that the Arab states and Israel all need to maintain a certain level of armed forces for the purposes of assuring their internal security and their legitimate self-defense and to permit them to play their part in the defense of the area as a whole. All applications for arms or war material for those countries will be considered in the light of these principles. In this connection the three governments wish to recall and reaffirm the terms of the statements made by their representatives on the Security Council on August 4, 1949, in which they declared their opposition to the development of an arms race between the Arab states and Israel....

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'The three governments take this opportunity of declaring their deep interest in, and their desire to promote the establishment and maintenance of, peace and stability in the area and their unalterable opposition to the use of force or threat of force between any of the states in that area. The three governments, should they find that any of these states was preparing to violate frontiers or armistice lines, would, consistently with these obligations as members of the United Nations, immediately take action, both within and outside the United Nations, to prevent such violation.'

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The Secretary of State, in his radio address to the nation of June 1, 1953, reporting on his trip to the Middle East, stated emphatically that the present Administration stands fully behind this declaration.

The United States Government, in the event of an armed aggression in the Near East, will act upon its public pledge.

The United States Government reaffirms its friendship for Israel and its policy of supporting her continuation as a sovereign and independent nation, and it reasserts its determination to assist in that reduction of tensions between Israel and her neighbors which is indispensable to the conclusion of a lasting peace -- a peace which will require real concessions, not merely gestures, by both sides. The United States Government also reaffirms its equal friendship for every other state of this area. It will seek, through expressions of that friendship and through the development of confidence in its impartiality and integrity, to assist in establishing the strength necessary for our security and that of the free world as a whole.

Freedom of action within the framework of these principles is essential to our own national security. We are confronted today by possibilities of creating strength. The voluntary steps now being taken toward mutual cooperation by certain Near and Middle Eastern states, located close to the Soviet Union, merit our support. We must make use of these historic opportunities as they occur, or see them pass by with incalculable consequences for our own security. The setting within which we must build defensive strength is unlikely ever to be perfect. Certain area disputes may well remain unsettled for many years, while the Soviet threat continues to grow. It is our conviction, furthermore, that building area defense will not obstruct the solution of these disputes but instead, by fostering internal stability and appreciation of common danger, will contribute to a reduction of tensions.

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