THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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Fri. 6/9/67 - 10:30 AM

Mr. President:

Here are some first thoughts on the way we should react now to all the noises about who did and who did not help Israel. When you have a minute we should probably talk about this.

McG. B.

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6/9/67

Possible ~~statement or~~ background comment on present U. S. attitudes toward Middle East crisis

1. The U. S. continues to take very seriously the careless and destructive attack on the USS Liberty. There is no excuse for repeated attacks on a plainly marked U. S. naval vessel and while in the President's language the prompt Israeli acknowledgment and apology was "to their credit," these acknowledgments do not change the fact that this most unfortunate attack occurred. (Probably for more use in the Middle East than in the United States.)

2. The U. S. is strongly opposed to any further military action by either side (this position will be developed undoubtedly by Ambassador Goldberg in the course of the day and does not need backgrounding here at the moment.)

3. PrimeMinister Eshkol has said that President Johnson "promised great things" but in the end Israel stood virtually alone. In the view of the United States this is a complete misreading of the situation. The U. S. never faltered for a moment in its determination to sustain the principle of innocent passage through the Straits of Tiran and friendly access to Israel through the Gulf of Aqaba. The U. S. and Israel had a very clear understanding that this effort would be continued and this understanding was ended by the outbreak of hostilities on Monday.

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4. The estimate of the USG from the very beginning was that in a showdown Israel would certainly and decisively prevail against any or all of her immediate neighbors. For this reason the conviction of the U. S. was and is that the territorial integrity and political independence of Israel were in no immediate danger from the Arab States alone. The real danger to Israel was that some other power might give active support to the Arabs. Without any threat or warning, or any kind, but simply because of here presence as a world power and here whole policy toward Israel, the US stood between Israel and any such action by any other power. This is what the Government of Israel wanted and needed. What the US Government should say directly to Israel about the Eshkol statement is another matter. The simplest and most important response would be to remind Eshkol of what he asked in his message to the President on June 5 -- that message asked for protection against the Soviet Union and this protection has been forthcoming at every level of meaning, from the negotiations in the Security Council to the realities and power which are noted above.