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duced by the opposition after a prolonged, stormy Knesset debate Dec. 2 - 3. The vote was 57-53 with two abstentions. At the same time, coalition and opposition members in the Knesset joined forces Dec. 3 in a move to compel the government to submit the memorandum to the Knesset for ratification.

Nevertheless the memorandum was praised by members of the Begin - led coalition government. Deputy Premier Simcha Ehrlich praised the memo as "another stage on the friendly relations between the two countries. I hope this is only the beginning" he said. The Prime Minister's office, in a statement called the memorandum an important achievement as it would "strengthen Israel's ties with the United States and improve her international status."

But on the other hand, Labor Party leaders appeared genuinely alarmed by the new tie. Former Foreign Minister Abba Eban, Labor's foreign policy spokesman stressed that no previous international document signed by the U.S. states specifically that it is directed against the Soviet Union.

Eban first noted that a previous memorandum of understanding between the two countries in 1975 stated that the U.S. would assist Israel against threats by any "world power" without naming any. He said that the NATO treaty is defined as directed against possible attack from all directions. Eban added that in the history of the American alliance only the Eisenhower doctrine of the 1950's made a more specific reference to a possible enemy by stating that the U.S. would protect Israel against "aggression by any country ruled by Communism." The fact is he continued, Israel is the first country in the history of modern diplomacy to tie itself in a formal agreement with the U.S. specifically directed against the Soviet Union.

Former Premier Yitzhak Rabin criticized the memorandum because "one understands from that document that Israel has given her 'a

priori' agreement that the Israel Defense Force will be operated in the Middle East under circumstances so far unknown for purposes that are not directly for the defense of Israel. In return we did not get anything. Furthermore, the U.S. cannot under its constitution act militarily unless this action is for the purpose of defending America or American citizens" Rabin said.

It was further pointed out by opposition spokesmen that the new agreement is not a mutual security pact such as the U.S. has signed with many countries though not with Israel, and does not commit the U.S. to protect Israel but only to cooperate with it against Soviet and Soviet controlled forces posing a threat to the region.

Before leaving Washington, Sharon explained that the memorandum of understanding implements the strategic cooperation agreement worked out between Begin and President Reagan when the Israeli Premier visited Washington last September. According to Sharon, Israel faces "two circles of threats."

One is from the Arab countries which have not signed a peace agreement with Israel as Egypt has done. Begin said during his Washington visit that "Israel is capable of defending itself" and has never asked for and never will ask for American troops to fight in its defense, Sharon recalled.

The second "circle of threat" comes from the Soviet Union and "forces controlled by the Soviet Union" he said, adding that Israel considers this a threat to the region and the entire "free world." Sharon stressed that the memorandum signed by him and Weinberger is "unclassified" but the working groups and coordinating councils which will hammer out the details may decide on some that will be classified.

Department spokesman Dean Fischer stressed that the U.S. Israeli strategic cooperation which the memorandum implements is "not aimed at any country or group of countries in the Middle East" but at a threat to the "region" from the Soviet Union or "Soviet - supported forces from outside the region. "Region"

rather than "Middle East" is the term used in the memorandum. Fischer refused to define the "region" nor would he name any Soviet-supported forces outside the region that are considered a threat.

He specifically would not comment on a suggestion that such forces might be Cubans in South Yemen or Soviet troops in Afghanistan. However, Pentagon spokesman Henry Catto said Dec 3 that the memorandum was referring to Cuba and East Germany among other countries considered a threat to the region.

The memorandum doesn't list any specific joint Israeli - U.S. activities except for naval and air exercises in the eastern Mediterranean. Fischer noted that it is "an overall agreement within which certain specific details will be worked out" by working groups that will begin meeting next month. He pointed out further that the agreement is not a treaty and does not need the approval of Congress although the Administration will probably discuss the details when they appear before Congressional committees during the next few months. Strategic cooperation is "wholly consistent with the U.S. policy of preserving Israel's security." Fischer said and insisted there was no attempt to play down the agreement by not allowing photographers to take pictures of Weinberger and Sharon signing the document.

The functions of the joint working groups set forth in the agreement include "access to main-

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