

WASHINGTON DATELINE

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IN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW:

*Secretary Haig Spells
Out Mideast Policy*

Does the United States have a Middle East policy?

Critics maintain that the Reagan Administration merely lurches from one crisis to another -- arming the Saudis, angering the Israelis, encouraging the Jordanians, ignoring the Palestinians and puzzling the Egyptians.

But the chief architect of American foreign policy, Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig, Jr. asserts that our country has a sound and consistent approach to the tangled Middle East.

In an interview in his state department office, Haig expressed confidence that the Administration has chartered a steady course through troubled waters. While underscoring the importance of current efforts to make security arrangements with Moslem states from Tunisia to Pakistan, he voiced empathy and understanding for Israel's security and insisted that the United States remained firmly wedded to the Camp David peace process.

Secretary Haig said that any sale of American sophisticated military equipment to Saudi Arabia and Jordan must inevitably worry the Israelis, but he declared that President Reagan is dedicated to maintaining the current military balance in the Middle East, "both quantitatively and qualitatively."

The Secretary described United States policy as a continuation of the Camp David peace process which led to a treaty signed by President Carter, Egyptian President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Begin three years ago.

"Our policy in the Middle East involves a close and historic relationship with Israel and its people, based on our firm commitment to their existence and well-being," Haig emphasized. "Our policy also involves, as it has in the past, the broadening and strengthening of our relations with moderate Arab regimes."

The only modification -- as "distinct from redirection" -- of that policy, was in the development of a "strategic consensus and strategic planning relationships with an arc of Middle East countries running from Morocco to Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and Oman, together with our new military relationship with Pakistan," Haig added.

"These relationships are important in providing necessary strategic defenses, self-help and coordinated action with the United States against external threats from the Soviet Union or internal threats mounted by Soviet agents.

"But, in no way, should this be viewed as a threat to our 'special relationship' with, and abiding commitment to Israel. As a matter of fact, these are not mutually exclusive concepts but rather mutually reinforcing concepts."

Haig went on to explain that general progress on peace in the Mideast reinforces the aim of strengthening the strategic consensus. "A setback to the peace process," he said, "complicates the development of a strategic consensus. Similarly, improvements in the strategic consensus also create an environment which can enhance the kind of mutual trust that is necessary to conclude the final stages of the Camp David accords."

Conceding that questions have arisen about the increased military assistance to some Arab states, Haig observed that when he visited the Middle East in April of 1981, there was a sense among moderate Arab states in favor of peace and stability and a perception of threat from the Soviet Union and its proxies. "Subsequently, and despite the skeptics," he said, "we have now set in place military coordinating mechanisms with the moderate Arab states."

The Secretary also defended Egyptian arms requests when asked about a reported American program to modernize Egypt's armed forces. "Any objective observer recognizes that when the Soviet Union left Egypt, its arms relationship was terminated, and a vacuum was created that had to be filled," he said. "I think it is in the interest of the United States, the western world, and Israel as well -- especially in view

of the peace treaty between Cairo and Jerusalem -- to have a strong, sovereign and defense-capable Egypt."

Questioned about recently stepped-up efforts by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger to persuade Saudi Arabia to accept closer military relations with the United States and Haig's own similar efforts with King Hassan of Morocco -- the Secretary of State replied: "These were not selling jobs as they were portrayed in the press. The on-going discussions with respect to both of these countries have been underway for a number of months. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the talks began during the Carter Administration. They were merely the culmination of on-going talks between our governments. When viewed in the context of other arrangements that were made with Pakistan, with Oman, with Tunisia and with Egypt, you can begin to see a pattern of mutually-reinforcing security arrangements which serve the strategic interest not only of the nations of the Western industrialized world, but the American people as well."

The new United States interest in military cooperation with Arab states, Haig said, has been made necessary by the increase in Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, in Africa, in Southern and Northern Yemen. The new radicalism that has emerged within Islamic theology also threatens Arab states with internal revolution.

As for Lebanon, Haig said the situation has become further complicated by recent events. "The original problem was posed by the Syrian missiles in the Bekaa Valley," he said. "But now we see the rearming of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This requires that we strengthen the United Nations peace-keeping force, and demilitarize Southern Lebanon, not only to cut off the flow of weapons into that area, but to eliminate or reduce terrorists actions in the region."

Turning again to United States - Israeli relations, Haig conceded that they have been "jolted" by the world response to the Israeli raid on the Iraqi reactor; the bombing of Beirut, and annexation of the Golan Heights.

As for Israel's annexing the Golan, Secretary Haig told me he disapproved of the step

taken by Prime Minister Begin,

"I felt it was a disruption of the peace effort, even though I understand Israel's concern about the defense significance of the Golan Heights, given the vulnerability of civilian settlements to attacks from that elevation.

"But," Haig added, "the Golan issue was to have been determined under the provisions of United Nations Resolution 242 and would have been resolved in the final stages of negotiations in accordance with that resolution. It is our position that Mr. Begin's actions now represented a violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of Resolution 242."

The Secretary also believes that Egypt will not turn its back on the peace treaty or renounce the treaty after Israel does return the last portion of the Sinai by April 25. "It would be impossible for any Egyptian leader to depart from the process to which his country, his people and his government are committed," Haig said. "If such action were taken, the greater risk would be to Egypt."

"I think Israel and Egypt both took a chance on peace, for different reasons, and with different consequences for each. And I believe the United States, as a full and active partner in that peace program has a profound obligation to do everything in its power to ensure that the treaty's terms and provisions are met justly and definitively.

"I remain optimistic that the nations of the region, with all their imperfections and contradictory interests, are capable, if given an opportunity, of reaching an accommodation."

"At Camp David," Haig continued, "the parties recognized that differences did exist and agreed to put in to place interim arrangements which could lead to ultimate solutions.

"Therefore, our present policy is to continue with the Camp David accords which provide for the trouble-free turnover of the Sinai by April 25. Then, we hope to help bring about an increased tempo of autonomy negotiations with a view towards reaching agreement in principle at the earliest possible date -- but without deadlines. This is the only formula agreed upon by all the parties, and therefore this is our policy in the Middle East."


WANT A JEWISH
TEST TUBE BABY?

JERUSALEM - There are only five centers in the world where scientists are fertilizing the human egg in a test-tube with subsequent transfer of the growing embryo into the uterus of the mother -- a process that is popularly called "test tube babies."

The Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center in Jerusalem has only recently been admitted into this exclusive club, which includes centers in the United States, Australia, England and India.

Dr. Joseph Schenker, chief of the Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics at Hadassah, heads the program. He explains: "The women, for whom this process is used, have tubal damage which is usually due to infection, abortion, or previous operations on the peritoneal cavity. There are hundreds of such women in Israel, and the only possibility of their achieving pregnancy is by means of this in vitro (test tube) technique.

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