

Israeli actions threaten U.S. relations

Krytrons are neither Superman accessories nor tiny shrimps. They are highly complex, delicate electronic devices essential to the proper fusing of nuclear warheads. They are made by only one company in the U. S. and their export is a federal offence.

Israel, according to American law enforcement officials, illegally acquired and smuggled out 800 of these devices. This revelation is causing serious embarrassment to U.S.-Israeli relations and confirms that Israel's secret nuclear weapons programs are far more extensive than previously believed.

These revelations come at an acutely embarrassing time for Israel and its powerful lobby in the U.S. Just last month Rep. Stephen Solarz, one of Israel's leading congressional allies, tabled new legislation calling for a cutoff of U.S. aid to any nation found stealing American technology.

Solarz's proposed law was clearly designed to punish Pakistan, whose agents were caught last year trying to illegally export 50 krytrons. The reason: Israel was fearful that Pakistan might develop nuclear weapons and sell some to its Arab enemies. Most observers consider this idea farfetched, but Israel is hypersensitive to even the most remote threat.

So Israel's potent lobby swung into action, producing, one suspects, the Solarz proposal and igniting a storm of anti-Pakistani media attention. It was thus extremely embarrassing for Israel to be caught up to the same tricks as the wicked Pakistanis, but on a far grander scale. What, one wonders, will Rep. Solarz now do?



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This case of technological espionage against the U.S. will embolden opponents of Israel within and without the government, particularly those who feel that Israeli influence over U.S. foreign policy has become excessive. Furthermore, it is again raising disturbing questions of Israeli spying against its closest ally and vital benefactor, the United States.

The krytron episode is not the first case of Israeli intelligence activities against the U.S. In 1982, the Washington Post obtained CIA documents seized by Iranian militants at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. Dated 1979, the CIA reports documented a long history of Israeli spying against the U.S. that included, according to the Post, blackmail, bribery, wiretapping and pressure against Jewish Americans to give classified data to Israel.

The CIA report also cited persistent Israeli attempts to obtain classified U.S. defence technology. It says Israel "collects intelligence, regarding western, Vatican and U.N. policies towards the Near East; promotes arms deals for the benefit of the Israel Defence Forces; and acquires data for use in silencing anti-Israeli factions in the West."

There was also the case of the massive theft of enriched, weapons-grade uranium from a nuclear plant in Apollo, Pa. by a company that appears to have been a front established by Israel intelligence. Israel reportedly stole U.S. enriched uranium and used it to build its nuclear weapons, said by the CIA to number at least 30. The Johnson administration hushed up this incident.

Illicit Israeli activities again came briefly into view when it was revealed last year that the powerful assistant defence secretary, Richard Perle, had been on the payroll of a large Israeli arms manufacturer. In addition, there were disturbing allegations that Perle had managed to quash an FBI investigation into leaking of secret U.S. defence data to Israel by one of his aides.

All of this poses grave questions for U.S.-Israeli relations and raises deep concern over the extent of Israel's nuclear arsenal. Israel is, of course, not the only nation to spy on its allies. Such activity apparently goes on routinely, yet Israel's activities have gone far beyond normal information gathering and seem either recklessly arrogant or even downright hostile. To do this against the country that is giving Israel \$4.5 billion (U.S.) in aid for 1985 is playing with fire.

Finally, one must ask, what did Israel need with 800 krytrons? This huge number suggests that Israel either has or is planning far more than the 30 nuclear devices reported in its arsenal. Israel refuses to allow international inspection of its reactors and keeps silent about its nuclear weapons programs with South Africa.

Eight hundred krytrons is probably enough for 400 nuclear weapons, enough to destroy all of the Middle East, Africa and still have a good supply left over.