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*Note du sous-secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures
pour le secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures*

*Memorandum from Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs
to Secretary of State for External Affairs*

CONFIDENTIAL

[Ottawa], March 6, 1956

EXPORT OF 25 POUNDER AMMUNITION FOR ISRAEL

The Israeli Embassy has enquired several times recently about the order for 1754 rounds of 25 pounder shot. They are concerned, as a result of your announcement in the House that the Government had deferred a decision pending the outcome of the tripartite talks in Washington, lest what is described as a deferred decision on this and by implication on other items should in fact be a policy to impose a complete embargo by administrative delay. We have explained that there is no such decision on the part of the Government, either on this order or on the various others which are also outstanding.

You directed us to seek the views of the U.K. and U.S. governments concerning the proposed release of this ammunition. I attach copies of the replies† which have been received from Washington and London. You will notice that the U.K. authorities freely assent to the proposed release, while the U.S. authorities have had certain misgivings (which appear to us to relate more to U.S. domestic politics than to the merits of the case). The U.S. authorities have finally stated, however, that while in their present circumstances they would not themselves release this ammunition they see no objection to Canada's doing so.

It has been our own view throughout, and there is support for it in the U.K. and U.S. comments, that the proposed shipment is not of military importance. While the U.K. and U.S. are seeking to apply some "squeeze" on the Israelis in the matter of arms shipments, we have been informed that this does not extend to limited shipments of spares and maintenance and replacement parts. As a shipment of this size can properly be regarded as replacement for reasonable training needs, it would not appear to fall within the scope of the "squeeze".

To withhold this shipment would appear in Israeli eyes to imply a policy of almost complete embargo. This particular shipment has already been cleared once, and the Israelis so informed; to continue to withhold it now would be regarded by them as something like a breach of faith. For these various reasons, I recommend that you approve the release of this order, or alternatively that you seek the approval of Cabinet for its release. Should you decide to discuss the matter in Cabinet, it would be convenient if you could take up at the same time the other cases mentioned in my memorandum of February 22 and the criteria suggested in my memorandum of February 13. New applications continue to come in, and we are holding some six new cases in suspense pending an indication of your views on those two memoranda.