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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

#1302

For Immediate Release

October 5, 1981

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT,
DR. HENRY KISSINGER AND MR. HAROLD BROWN
FOLLOWING LUNCHEON WITH
FORMER NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISORS

North Portico

1:10 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: This distinguished bipartisan group of former national security officials have agreed to the following statement of support for the sale of AWACS and other air defense equipment to Saudi Arabia. After reading this statement, both Harold Brown and Henry Kissinger would like to make a further statement of their own.

The statement is: The sale of AWACS and other air defense equipment to Saudi Arabia would make a substantial contribution to the national security interests of the United States in a vital part of the world. The rejection of this sale would damage the ability of the United States to conduct a credible and effective foreign policy, not only in the Gulf region, but across a broad range of issues.

I want to thank each one of these gentlemen who are here for their recognition that this sale is in the national security interests of the nation. Their public appearance at this time is an indication of the broad bipartisan support this sale has among knowledgeable former national security officials from both Republican and Democratic administrations, going all the way back to the Eisenhower administration.

And we believe, as I've said before, that not only is what we're talking about in the interest of our national security, but it is in the best interests of the national security of our friend and ally, Israel.

Now, Henry -- Dr. Kissinger.

DR. KISSINGER: Mr. President, I'm aware of the intense debate that is going on on this issue and I can sympathize with many of the concerns that have been expressed. It is my strong conviction, however, that these concerns cannot be met by objecting to the sale of AWACS. I believe the sale is in the national interests of the United States. It is compatible with the security of Israel. It is essential for the peace process in the Middle East. And it is important for the President's ability to conduct an effective and credible foreign policy. And so, I would urge those who have legitimate concerns, to meet them in conversation with the administration and to vote for the AWACS package without attaching conditions -- that are incompatible with the dignity of Saudi Arabia and with the effective conduct of our foreign policy.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. And now, former Secretary Brown.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. President. I believe that American national security depends very strongly on the preservation of peace and of a favorable situation in Southwest Asia. One can understand the arguments that well-meaning opponents of the AWACS transfer make. I believe that when these are weighed against the advantages that this sale brings to U.S. national security, that the conclusion is that it would not help U.S. security, it would not help Israeli security, to have this sale rejected.

I think that both from a military point of view and from a diplomatic point of view the transfer is advantageous to the U.S. From a military point of view in terms of the ability it gives us to have information on air movements in the area and from a diplomatic point of view because the United States needs, if it is to continue to

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contribute to the peace process, to have close relations with Israel, with Saudi Arabia, and with other countries in the region.

I think that would be severely damaged if this sale were overturned. I hope that the members of Congress who are going to consider this matter take into full consideration these facets of the issue. And when they do, I believe that they should come out in favor of it. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: This concludes, but I think you can all see that there's a who's who roster here of men who have served this country over a great many years and have proven today they continue to serve any time they're needed.

And on behalf of all the people of this country, I just want to express my heartfelt thanks to all of you for being here today and doing this. Thank you very much.

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