



HON. WILLIAM M. BRODHEAD (Michigan) — Chairman

RICHARD P. CONLON — Executive Director

# FACT SHEET

No. 97-12

October 9, 1981

## AWACS SALE

This DSG Fact Sheet deals with H.Con.Res. 194, Disapproval of Aircraft Sales to Saudi Arabia, which is scheduled for consideration on Wednesday, October 14.

The resolution disapproves the proposed sales of \$8.5 BILLION in aircraft to Saudi Arabia, including AWACS (airborne warning and control system) aircraft, upgraded fuel tanks for F-15 aircraft, Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, and aerial refueling aircraft.

The Administration strongly opposes the resolution, as do the National Association of Arab-Americans, American Businessmen in Riyadh, Reserve Officers Association, and several oil and multinational companies. The resolution is supported by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, AFL-CIO, AFSCME, UAW, International Association of Machinists, American Jewish Committee, AIPAC, and the National Education Association.

This DSG Fact Sheet contains the following sections:

	<u>page</u>
I. Background and Summary . . . . .	3
II. Basic Provisions . . . . .	5
III. Arguments For and Against . . . . .	7

Note: See evaluation form at end of Fact Sheet.

## Section I

### BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

The 1974 Arms Export Control Act granted Congress veto power over proposed arms sales of more than \$25 million. Under the act, the House and Senate have 30 calendar days from the time they are officially notified of the sale to adopt concurrent resolutions of disapproval. Both chambers must vote to disapprove an arms sale for the veto to take effect.

While Congress has never vetoed an arms sale, disputes between the White House and Congress over prospective arms package deals have resulted in significant concessions by past Administrations. In 1975, Congress approved sales of antiaircraft missiles to Jordan only after the Administration agreed to sell the weapons as stationary rather than mobile weapons. In 1977, Congress agreed to the sale of 7 AWACS to Iran only after then-President Carter assured Members that the planes had been modified to remove secret communications equipment. Eighteen months after the sale, the Shah of Iran was overthrown, and the Administration cancelled delivery of the surveillance planes.

#### F-15 SALE TO SAUDI ARABIA

In April of 1978, President Carter formally notified Congress of his plan to sell 60 F-15 fighter planes to Saudi Arabia. At the time, Administration officials stated that the armaments sale would allow greater cooperation between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia in furthering the Camp David peace process, moderating oil prices, and defending Saudi Arabia from the growing Soviet presence in surrounding Arab states.

Responding to critics who questioned Administration assurances that the F-15's would be used for defense purposes only, President Carter and then-Defense Secretary Brown assured them that the Saudis would not be sold any additional systems or armaments "that would increase the range or enhance the ground attack capability of the F-15's." The Senate defeated the disapproval resolution (44-54), thus permitting the sale of the armaments, with the understanding that no future attempts would be made to upgrade the F-15's. The first six F-15's are scheduled to be delivered in January of 1982.

#### REAGAN ADMINISTRATION PROPOSED ARMS PACKAGE

On March 6 of this year, the Reagan Administration announced its intention to sell "air defense enhancement items" to Saudi Arabia, a sale that many Members argued was a violation of the understanding the Senate had reached with the Carter Administration. The arms package would consist of auxiliary fuel tanks and Sidewinder air-to-air missiles for the F-15's, an unspecified type of surveillance plane, and mid-air refueling apparatus.



Controversy over the sale erupted immediately, and centered on the surveillance aircraft, which was assumed to be the AWACS plane. In an attempt to defuse arguments that the AWACS would be used to coordinate F-15's in an attack against Israel, the Administration, in late September, attempted to persuade the Saudis to allow U.S. technicians to operate the surveillance equipment on the planes beyond the initial training period. The Saudis rejected the request as unacceptable and an infringement of Saudi sovereignty. Secretary of State Haig has testified, however, that there is an "understanding" between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia that U.S. personnel will be on the AWACS into the 1990's due to the need for U.S. technical expertise in the planes' operation and the training of crews.

The Administration has presented the AWACS sales as a litmus test of U.S.-Saudi friendship upon which hinges the major foreign policy objective of a "strategic consensus" of moderate Arab nations banded against Soviet-influenced nations in the Mideast. It has mounted an intense lobbying effort in Congress, particularly in the Senate, where the vote is expected to be very close. The disapproval resolution has widespread bipartisan support in the House, with 255 cosponsors, 78 of whom are Republicans.

#### NOTIFICATION

On August 24, 1981, the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations Committees received informal notification of the proposed Saudi arms sale. That notification stipulated that the 20-day informal period for congressional consideration would begin September 9. On October 1, the committees received formal notification of the sale. Under the 1974 Arms Control Export Act, Congress has until October 31 to pass concurrent resolutions disapproving the sale.

#### COMMITTEE ACTION & SUMMARY

The Foreign Affairs Committee reported the concurrent resolution of disapproval with supplemental, additional, and dissenting views by a vote of 28 to 8 (H.Rept. 97-268). The resolution disapproves the proposed sale to Saudi Arabia of 5 AWACS, 22 ground control systems, 1,177 Sidewinder missiles, 8 aerial refueling tankers, and 202 conformal fuel tanks.

Under the terms of the Arms Export Control Act, the resolution is highly privileged. A unanimous consent request will be made for 3 hours of general debate. A motion to recommit is in order.

\*

\*

\*

## Section II

### BASIC PROVISIONS

This section summarizes the provisions of H.Con.Res. 194, Disapproval of Aircraft Sale to Saudi Arabia.

This resolution would disapprove the \$8.5 BILLION sale of aircraft to Saudi Arabia. The Administration has proposed that the following items be sold:

- \* 5 AWACS (airborne warning and control system) aircraft. Spare parts, and support and training equipment and personnel are included. The AWACS would be equipped with advanced radar and computer equipment to allow long-range tracking and identification of enemy aircraft operating at speeds of more than 80 miles per hour during all kinds of weather and over all types of terrain. The aircraft are designed to coordinate communications between ground stations and aircraft for optimal deployment of fighters against enemy forces.
- \* 1,177 AIM-9L Sidewinder air-to-air missiles to enhance the combat capabilities of the F-15's ordered by the Saudis. The AIM-9L missile has an advanced heat-seeking guidance system that allows the missile to be fired at enemy aircraft from any angle. Spare parts and special support and test equipment are included in the sale.
- \* 8 aerial refueling tanker aircraft to be used to refuel F-15's and AWACS. The refueling capacity would increase the attack range and patrol time of F-15's and AWACS. Spare parts, support equipment, and training assistance are included.
- \* 202 Conformal Fuel Tanks (CFT's), to increase the F-15's fuel capacity by 1,500 gallons and extend its range from 450 miles to over 1,000 miles. Spare parts, and support and training equipment are included.
- \* 22 ground radar stations to work in concert with the AWACS communications system by monitoring and processing data received from AWACS.

\*

\*

\*



### Section III

## ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST

This section summarizes the arguments being made by proponents and opponents of H.Con.Res. 194, Disapproval of Aircraft Sales to Saudi Arabia. (See note at end of section.)

### ARGUMENTS FOR THE RESOLUTION (Opposing AWACS Sale)

Supporters of the resolution argue that the decision to provide sophisticated weapons to such an unstable government is misguided, increases the possibility of secret technology falling into unfriendly hands, endangers the security of Israel -- the only stable U.S. ally in the region -- will not increase Saudi Arabia's security or improve U.S. credibility as an ally, and would further escalate the Mideast arms race.

The sale of sophisticated equipment to a government as unstable as Saudi Arabia could endanger, rather than promote, U.S. interests in the Mideast. Sadat's assassination by religious extremists, the Iranian revolution, and Shiite uprisings in Saudi Arabia itself underscore the instability in the area in general and in Saudi Arabia in particular. As a result of its rapid modernization program, the country is experiencing the same religious and political polarization that occurred in Iran before the overthrow of the Shah. It would be both shortsighted and foolhardy to sell sophisticated weaponry to a nation experiencing internal stress that could topple the government and cause advanced U.S. weapons and technology to fall into the hands of anti-American extremists.

As the only stable country in the area, Israel is America's most valuable ally there. The threat the package poses to Israel is real, not imagined. The sale raises serious doubts about U.S. commitment to Israel's security. The AWACS and the other equipment in the arms package are part of a system that, when integrated with the F-15's, forms a formidable offensive unit. The AWACS is central to that unit. It can dispatch enhanced F-15's at a moment's notice and coordinate an attack on all fronts, from land, sea, and air. Should technology on ground stations and communications equipment being sold to the Saudis fall into the hands of the Soviets, it could be used to create a communications link-up with other Arab nations, all of whom could join in a concerted attack on Israel. Further, the sale of equipment which would extend the attack range of Saudi F-15's to Israel, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, and Ethiopia violates the Carter Administration's guarantee to Congress that the F-15's would not be given offensive capabilities.

Saudi Arabia has repeatedly called upon other Arab nations to join in a holy war against Israel. Its contempt for the Camp David peace process is well known. The Saudis led the Arab boycott of Egypt because of its peace treaty with Israel and continues to finance PLO terrorist activities against Israel and Jews around the world. It is impossible to believe, as the Administration would like, that further arms sales would cause Saudi Arabia to moderate its anti-Israel and anti-Egypt stance. The 1978 sale of F-15's did not moderate Saudi attitudes toward Israel or the Camp David accord. If anything, anti-Israel attitudes have hardened.

Arguments that the sale would ensure that Saudi Arabia continues to hold the line on oil prices are specious. Since 1978, when the U.S. agreed to sell the F-15's, oil prices have climbed from \$12 to \$32 a barrel. The Saudis have always acted in their own economic interest, producing enough oil at high enough prices to cover their increasing expenses.

Selling the arms package will not reduce Soviet influence in the region, increase the security of Saudi Arabia, or improve U.S. credibility as an ally. The main threat to Saudi security is internal, not external. If there were a Soviet attack or a Soviet-inspired attack by one of Saudi Arabia's neighbors, the AWACS package would be of little use. The Saudi army, for all of its advanced weaponry, is small and undertrained. Moreover, the sale could endanger the Saudi regime by over-identifying it with U.S. interests.

It is unlikely that the sale would cause Saudi Arabia to change its opposition to U.S. military presence within its territory. Not only have the Saudis repeatedly rejected U.S. requests to use their facilities or establish military bases, they will not even allow U.S. technicians on AWACS once training of Saudi personnel is completed. Administration assurances that U.S. personnel will be operating the AWACS past 1990 are speculative and assume that the Saudis will not be able to train their own personnel quickly. A leasing or shared arrangement with the Saudis would be far preferable to the present deal. The presence of U.S. personnel would be a deterrent to a leak of AWACS technology. Not even NATO allies can operate AWACS without joint command with the U.S.

The sale would only escalate the arms race in the Middle East. If Israel is threatened by the AWACS sale, the Administration could feel obligated, as some have reported, to offset the threat by providing Israel with F-16's or access to a spy satellite. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, could be encouraged to request more weapons, including the multiple ejection bomber racks for the F-15's. No one disagrees with the need to protect Persian Gulf oil supplies or counter the increasing Soviet presence in the Gulf. It is unreasonable, however, to assert that by pumping more and more arms into an unstable Arab state, we will more effectively defend against further upheavals. The sale could eventually embroil the superpowers in a war. Saudi Arabia has shown no inclination to moderate its anti-Israel and anti-peace policies, so there is no compelling rationale for rewarding it with sophisticated weaponry. Congress should not rubberstamp an arms package with such dangerous implications.

#### ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE RESOLUTION (Supporting AWACS Sale)

Opponents of the resolution argue that failure to approve the sale would severely hamper U.S. efforts to forge a strategic consensus among moderate Arab countries, jeopardize continued U.S. access to Persian Gulf oil, promote the spread of Soviet influence in the area, and undermine the security of Arab nations friendly to the U.S. Moreover, it could result in the loss of Saudi Arabia as a valuable ally. The decision to sell the enhancement items is in direct response to recent developments in the Mideast, including the revolution in Iran, the Iran-Iraq war, and the increased Soviet presence in Afghanistan, South Yemen, Ethiopia, Syria, and Libya. The recent assassination of Anwar Sadat serves to make good relations with Saudi Arabia even more imperative.



Israel's concerns that the sale poses a threat to its security are unfounded. The package is a defensive, not offensive, one. It is highly unlikely that Saudi Arabia would take aggressive action against the superior Israeli air force. Moreover, the AWACS will not be equipped with advanced anti-jamming equipment, so it would be relatively simple for Israel to jam communication between AWACS, F-15's, and Saudi ground stations. Further, AWACS can only gather information that is temporary in nature, and is useless in formulating long-term strategy. Data compiled by the AWACS on reconnaissance missions could not be readily used for a pan-Arab attack against Israel, as opponents of the sale contend. Such a combined front would require similar sophisticated computerized ground communications centers to be stationed in other Arab countries, equipment that could only be provided by the U.S. If the AWACS were to become a threat, the U.S. could provide compensatory military assistance to Israel to maintain a balance between the two nations. It is unreasonable, however, to give any nation a preemptive strike capability over another, as Israel has been given.

The AWACS provides an important defense against possible attacks on Saudi oil fields from other Persian Gulf states. With five AWACS planes to rotate, the Saudis would have time to respond to an attack conceivably launched by its enemies in Iran, Iraq, Ethiopia, or South Yemen. The AWACS would also provide the U.S. with a strong and visible presence in the Gulf region to counter Russian and Warsaw Pact forces which are stationed in Ethiopia, Yemen, Syria, and Libya. The arms sale allows U.S.-Saudi cooperation without a more formal arrangement, such as the placement of U.S. bases in Saudi Arabia, which would be unacceptable to almost any Arab nation. In the event of a Mideast war, though, the U.S. would have ready access to advanced weapons in the Gulf.

Misuse of the AWACS and other equipment provided by the sale would be precluded by the necessary presence of U.S. technicians to operate the complex aircraft. Since Saudi air force personnel are largely unskilled, it is likely that U.S. personnel would have to control the AWACS into the 1990's. Should the Saudis misuse the aircraft, U.S. technical support and access to spare parts could be withdrawn and the AWACS rendered nonoperational in a very short period of time.

Contrary to statements that Saudi Arabia is teetering on the brink of a revolution, many Mideast analysts view the monarchy as stable and not in jeopardy of a military coup or overthrow by religious fundamentalists. A congressional veto of the sale at this juncture would alienate Saudi Arabia and could cause it to end its moderate and pro-West oil policy. Moreover, the Saudis would only turn to other nations, such as France or Britain, to buy similar equipment. By rejecting the sale, Congress would be restricting the President's ability to carry out his foreign policy objectives, and would sacrifice important political leverage for the U.S. in the volatile Gulf region. Finally, the arguments that U.S. technology could be compromised are bogus. AWACS is primarily a 1960's technology from which secret equipment has been removed, and the AIM-9L missiles are no longer even in production. There is, therefore, little risk that sensitive technology and designs would be endangered even if the equipment were to fall into enemy hands.

\*

\*

\*

Note: The arguments presented in this section are not DSG's arguments nor do they represent a DSG evaluation of the resolution. As indicated, they are the arguments which supporters are making on behalf of the resolution and which opponents are making against it. DSG attempts to summarize the arguments on both sides as strongly and cogently as possible.

## DSG FACT SHEET EVALUATION

IF WE DON'T MEET OUR STANDARDS, LET US KNOW

DSG Fact Sheets are designed to be comprehensive reports on major legislation scheduled for House Floor action. They are intended to brief -- not lobby -- Members on legislation on which they must vote. As such, they should be as accurate, clear, detailed, balanced and as objective as possible. Unlike DSG Special Reports which analyze issues and, therefore, may reflect a point of view, Fact Sheets should not reflect a position either for or against the legislation involved.

Please use this form to make any comments or criticisms if you think this DSG Fact Sheet falls short of the above standards. Specifically you might want to comment on the following:

ACCURACY (If you think you've found an error, don't write, CALL DSG so that we can issue a correction as quickly as possible.)

USEFULNESS/RELEVANCE ETC. \_\_\_\_\_

BALANCE & OBJECTIVITY \_\_\_\_\_

COMPREHENSIVENESS \_\_\_\_\_

CLARITY OF INFORMATION \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF DETAIL \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER COMMENTS \_\_\_\_\_

Fact Sheet No. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name and Office

Please return to DSG, 1422 Longworth.