

Behind the General's Outburst

Behind the outrageously overblown sturs on American Jews by Gen. George Brown is sober, well-justified concern at the Pentagon over the drain of ever more costly military aid to Israel at a time of growing congressional resistance to defense spending.

Accordingly, the general's blunt warning at Duke University last month that Israel's influence in Congress is "so strong you wouldn't believe it" had a solid foundation. Leaving aside his gratuitous, untrue and grossly offensive crack about American Jews owning "the banks in this country, the newspapers," Brown's warning about Israel's control over Congress is reflected in the vast transfer of scarce military supplies to Israel.

Pentagon concern reached a peak just after the \$2.2 billion U.S. airlift of desperately needed military equipment to Israel during and after the fourth Arab-Israeli war in October 1973.

One result of that resupply line for Israel is this shocking fact: late model M60 tanks airlifted out of U.S. military depots in West Germany and flown to the Mideast battlefield have still not been replaced in the American arsenal a full year later.

All told, some 600 American tanks — both M60s and M48s — were rushed to Israel. That was almost 10 per cent of the entire American tank force. With a production line running then at a mere 30 a month, thanks to congressionally-imposed budget restraints, that draw-down of the American arsenal to aid Israel ate up nearly two years of capacity production.

Potentially more damaging for the United States was the airlift of nearly one-half the entire supply of the highly sophisticated TOW anti-tank missile, the famous wire-guided tank killer. Although precise numbers are shrouded in military secrecy, it is known that approximately 100 of these miracle missile-launchers were rushed to Israel.

Highly qualified military officials told us privately that this drain of the newest U.S. anti-tank weapon threat-



ened "training problems" in the U.S. Army by causing shortages of the missile launcher. But when we asked for an official statement on the alleged shortfall, the Pentagon's official spokesman hedged, saying only there had been "no apparent adverse impact on individual training conducted by our Army schools . . . that we can tie directly to the sending of TOW systems to Israel last year."

Along with half the supply of TOW launchers, Israel also obtained 2,000 actual TOW warheads, about 25 per cent of the entire U.S. stock. But warheads are far easier to produce than the launcher itself.

There are other examples of the dangerous draw-down of American military capabilities forced on the Pentagon by the October War. For instance, the Air Force today is short of the small percentage of F4 fighter aircraft — the mainstay of Israel's air force — that is equipped with extremely costly electronic counter measures (ECM). "A high percentage of the very small number of these aircraft we had went to Israel," a Pentagon official told us.

By far the most dangerous shortfall is the M60 tank. The Army is now desperately trying to boost production to 100 a month from the present rate of 40 (up from 30 a year ago) but cannot find suppliers of turrets. The Army

has not yet replenished the tanks flown out of Germany to Israel; indeed, it was 2,000 tanks short when the Israelis made their October war demand. The Army's tank arsenal is so depleted that M60s pledged to Morocco and some other countries have had to be replaced by old-model tanks.

But there is a deeper reason for Brown's outburst against Jewish influence in American politics, going beyond military aid: Israel's political allies here so dominate the debate over the Middle East that the Arab case remains somewhat obscure.

In short, the emotional preoccupation in Congress with defense of Israel short-circuits Pentagon fears about U.S. influence throughout the vast Moslem world, particularly in the Arab oil states. It is a little-known fact that Air Force pilots today are restricted to extremely short flight-time to conserve fuel. Likewise, the Navy's "steaming days" for front-line warships have been drastically reduced.

All this lay behind Brown's ham-handed assault on the power of the American Jewish community. Quite apart from the general's inexcusable rhetoric, the Pentagon views the Middle East in terms of long-range U.S. strategic interests — a view that does not always parallel those of Israel.