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A DISPUTE FLARES ON MIDEAST LEAKS

Some U.S. Aides Say Secret Documents Were Modified to Trace Disclosure

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 1—High Administration officials said today that the State Department, before giving Congress secret documents about United States assurances to Israel, had made stylistic changes to be able to trace future leaks to the press.

The officials said the documents, as published by various newspapers two weeks ago, had a numbering system and a style that were unique to the copies that had been confidentially provided to Congressional committees. Therefore the leak must have been on Capitol Hill, they contended.

The charge was promptly denied by Jack Anderson, the columnist, who first obtained the documents.

"The documents did not come from Capitol Hill," he said in a telephone interview. "They came from the State Department."

Intent Is in Dispute

Two officials said that, before the documents were transmitted to Congress, they were re-typed to change the numbering of various sections and to make stylistic changes. The purpose was to be able to trace leaks, they said.

"The documents that Anderson obtained could only have come from the Hill because that was the only place the documents existed in that form," one of the officials said.

When asked about this today, a high State Department official acknowledged that the documents, as leaked, were unique to Congress, but he insisted that the alterations were inadvertent and no effort had been made to trap Congress.

He said that because of a clerical error, one sentence had been omitted from one document titled "Memorandum of Agreement Between Israel and the United States." He said a secretary, in typing the document, had left out one point of agreement and this, in turn, led to the renumbering of the sections.

Several Papers Altered

He said the missing point was subsequently provided to Congress. But the other Administration officials insisted that changes had been made in more than one document.

A Senate aide said the documents published by Mr. Anderson could not have been unique to Congress since the State Department typed these documents in the first place and must have retained copies.

"They could have leaked their own doctored version," he added.

Senator Dick Clark, an Iowa Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, commented:

"If it is true that the documents were intentionally altered, I can't imagine that it will do too much to restore a cooperative spirit between the two branches.

"It will only exaggerate the present situation because it reveals distrust."

The State Department official who denied that the alterations had been intentional said it had never been the practice of Secretary of State Kissinger to play this kind of game with Congress.

A former Under Secretary of State, George W. Ball, said of State, George W. Ball, said Democratic administrations had never coded documents sent to Congress.

"I can't recall any time we ever did this and I doubt we did," he said. "And I had two presidents who were concerned about leaks. Our problem was leaks within the Administration, not on Capitol Hill."

The documents in question are the memorandum of agreement between the United States and Israel, assurances from the United States Government to Israel, assurances from the United States Government to Egypt, and a memorandum of agreement between the United States and Israel on the Geneva peace conference.