

REMARKS BY CONGRESSMAN LES AuCOIN
October 14, 1981

Mr. Speaker, I rise in total opposition to this arms sale to Saudi Arabia and I urge my colleagues to vote for the resolution of disapproval.

It has not been shown that this sale serves intrinsic security interests of Saudi Arabia or the United States.

Saudi Arabia has AWACS protection today! There are, and have been, at least four AWACS stationed in Saudi Arabia for some time. They are providing 100 percent of the defensive data that Saudi Arabia has asked for and requires.

But these are American airplanes, under American command and the Saudis are not satisfied. They insist on owning the planes and ultimately having them under their command.

Mr. Speaker, these are our most sophisticated intelligence-gathering and surveillance aircraft. AWACS are so sensitive, so advanced, we do not even allow our NATO allies in Europe the exclusive control over the planes that Saudi Arabia seeks!

The Saudis can want these airplanes, then, only for reasons of prestige. And fundamentally, this Congress is being asked to approve the sale so as not to displease the Saudi government.

And what has Saudi Arabia done to earn such fawning acquiescence?

It boycotted and attempted to destroy the Camp David peace process.

It joined Arab hard-line states in an economic boycott of Egypt for joining in the peace accord.

It helped isolate Egyptian President Anwar Sadat -- the greatest peacemaker in the Mideast -- and thus encouraged the climate of hostility toward him that in the end took his life.

This is our friend? This record should be rewarded?

Mr. Speaker, it is true that AWACS can be used for defensive purposes -- for the early detection of an enemy attack. But the planes are more than that. They are a flying command post with devastating offensive potential -- especially when it is used to direct aircraft such as the F-15. AWACS computers can track 400 planes at one time and flash that information to various airborne and ground stations. They can pick up the movement of any object moving at more than 80 miles an hour within a 250-mile radius. It can even detect automobiles moving on highways at those speeds.

Thus, AWACS computers and radar could pick up Israeli jets and direct long-range jet fighter strikes against them -- before those jets had even left the runway. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger agreed that AWACS flying inside Saudi borders would be able to see nearly every Israeli aircraft as it rose from its base, track the planes, and radio that information to Syria or other adversaries of Israel.

If AWACS are placed in Saudi hands, an Arab surprise attack, in coordination with Syria, Jordan and Iraq, will be possible with these planes being deployed to cover all of Israel's airspace.

I ask my colleagues -- does anyone here believe that the raid on Entebbe could have been done if the Saudis had had AWACS monitoring those Israeli rescue planes? And what about the Yom Kippur War in 1973? There were over 2,500 Israelis killed and 7,500 wounded in a war Israel almost lost.

Who, here, is confident Israel would have been able to finally pull it out if AWACS and retrofitted F-15s had been used in a coordinated Arab attack as Israeli forces, stretched thin across a broad eastern border, tried to defend against pinpoint strikes by heavily armed, long-range F-15s?

Mr. Speaker, this sale does not increase the chance for peace. This sale jeopardizes the peace. I ask my colleagues to disapprove this dangerous sale by approving the committee resolution.