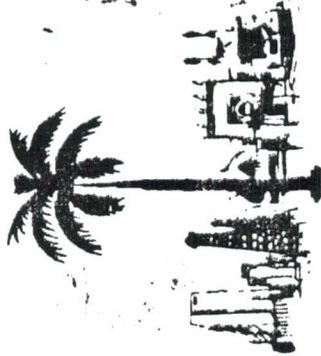


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Planes deal looks set for Congress approval

By Mark Bruzonsky
in Washington

EXPECTATIONS have shifted in Washington over the past week over the Mid-east planes deal.

There is now a general belief that the Carter Administration's arms package to Egypt, Israel and Saudi Arabia will be allowed to go forward by Congress without major changes.

There will probably be some compromising involving a larger

number of planes to Israel and some restrictions regarding the planes to be sold to the Kingdom. But Israel and the American Jewish lobby appear chastened by their increasing awareness that their highly visible attempts to entirely block the F-15 sale are failing.

Over the weekend, Senator James Abourezk told me on a return flight to Washington that he was sure there were about 60 votes in the Senate for the sale. "I keep calling the president every day just to make sure he doesn't compromise too much," the

Senator told me. When questioned about his Senate nose-count, he indicated that the best proof of what he was saying was that the "lobby is now trying to delay the sale, no longer to prevent it, because it knows it doesn't have the votes."

At a Press conference on Saturday, Senate Majority leader Robert Byrd, a previous pessimist regarding the sale, indicated his new belief that "there is ample support in the Senate to reject any disapproval resolution."

A White House victory will have greater importance than simply allowing the sale of warplanes to go forward. For the first time, it appears the infamous Jewish lobby is about to loose a major test of strength with the Congress.