

Small files: Tunisia: Small files: Tunisia - 27

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FRENCH OFFICIAL SOURCES IN PARIS

DENY ACCUSATIONS BROUGHT AGAINST FRANCE

DURING THE JULY 28 MEETING OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

ON THE SUBJECT OF BIZERTE

"With regard to the alleged atrocities or looting committed by the French forces in Bizerte, and which were brought up again during the July 28 meeting of the Security Council, it is stated in authorized circles that these allegations have already been categorically denied. Each time a specific case has been reported, the investigation immediately carried out has shown these accusations to be completely unfounded. During the same meeting, a delegate asserted that the French forces had extended their lines after the cease-fire.

"This statement is formally contested. It is recalled that there are distances of from six to twelve miles between the different installations of the base. The French forces have simply maintained control posts at the points which they held at the time of the cease-fire in order to ensure the freedom of their communications, in particular those leading to the hospital in Menzel Bourguiba.

"It has also been alleged that reinforcements were brought to the base after the cease-fire. This allegation is also formally denied: no new troops have been brought into Bizerte since July 23.

"As to the accusation of aggression brought against France by the Tunisian delegate, suffice it to recall that Tunisia took the initiative of blocking the base and that President Bourguiba himself admitted that Tunisian troops had opened fire.

"It should also be recalled that in the Sahara, Tunisian forces actually invaded French territory and attacked the French forces on the other side of the border.

"Finally, the patently tendentious interpretation of the agreement of June 17, 1958 given by Mr. Mongi Slim is pointed out. In fact, he quoted only the first part of this agreement. He completely omitted the second paragraph of this text, which provides that negotiations will be opened between France and Tunisia for the conclusion of an agreement concerning the strategic base of Bizerte."