

# Middle East conflict - Lebanon. Security Council documents: Middle East con...

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Middle East conflict [1958] - Aug. 1

SECCO documents

Letter from Dwight D. Eisenhower -

- to Sec. Gen.

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LETTER DATED 1 AUGUST 1958 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES  
OF AMERICA ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Enclosed herewith are copies of the letters of the President of the United States of America to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics dated 22 July 1958, 25 July 1958 and 1 August 1958 concerning a special meeting of the United Nations Security Council.

In accordance with the letter of 1 August, the United States requests that a special meeting of the United Nations Security Council be convened on or about 12 August pursuant to Article 28, paragraph 2 of the Charter, to consider certain problems of the Middle East, in accordance with an agenda item to be formulated.

In the meantime, the United States is prepared to participate in informal consultations with a view to making appropriate arrangements for the meeting.

It would be appreciated if the enclosed texts would be circulated as United Nations documents.

Accept, Excellency, etc.

(Signed) Henry Cabot LODGE

22 July 1958

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I have received your communication of 19 July.

May I assure you that the establishment and maintenance of a just peace is the dominant influence in American policy. I cannot agree that the United States has acted in Lebanon in a manner calculated to disturb the peace. Rather it is motivated by the purpose of helping stop acts of violence, fomented from without, designed to destroy the genuine independence and integrity of that small nation. Such a process, if unchecked, would have grave implications for all small nations everywhere.

The manner in which you have chosen to express yourself is hardly calculated to promote the atmosphere of calm reasonableness which, you correctly say, should replace the presently overheated atmosphere.

I am not aware of any factual basis for your extravagantly expressed fear of the danger of general war.

What has happened in regard to Lebanon is this:

On Monday, 14 July, the lawful Government of Iraq was violently overthrown. On the same day a comparable plot against the Kingdom of Jordan was discovered and barely thwarted. The Government of Lebanon, which had already for some months been subjected to indirect aggression from without, appealed to the United States for instant assistance. In the light of the developments in neighboring Iraq and Jordan, it felt that nothing less than immediate help would make it possible to preserve the independence and integrity of Lebanon. The United States responded to this appeal. We knew that the plea was based upon solid facts that showed that Lebanon was gravely menaced.

Surely, it is not "aggression" thus to help a small nation maintain its independence.

You speak of "armed conflict in the Near or Middle East". There has been the bloody coup in Iraq, the plot to assassinate those who compose the Government of Jordan, and the civil strife in Lebanon fomented from without. Otherwise, I know of no "armed conflict". Unless those of aggressive disposition are far gone in folly, they would not start war because Lebanon, with a population of

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about 1-1/2 million, is helped to maintain its integrity and independence. The real danger of war would come if one small nation after another were to be engulfed by expansionist and aggressive forces supported by the Soviet Union.

We do not want to see a repetition of the progressive destruction of the independence of small nations which occurred during the 1930s and which led to the Second World War. To be acquiescent in aggression, be it direct or indirect, is not the road to peace.

This does not mean that the United States is dedicated to a perpetuation of the status quo in the Arab world. The United States recognizes and sympathizes with the yearning of the Arab peoples for a greater nationalistic unity. For example, the United States promptly recognized the United Arab Republic, bringing together Egypt and Syria, as soon as it was apparent that the change was accepted by the people concerned and after the new Government had undertaken to meet the normally applied international standards.

But it is one thing to change the international status quo by orderly and peaceful processes, and another thing to change it by indirect aggression. Such processes cannot be reconciled with a peaceful world or with the ideals of the United Nations which recognizes the equal rights of nations large and small and the dignity and worth of the human person.

The action of the United States in relation to Lebanon was fully in accord with the accepted principles of international law and with the Charter of the United Nations. The Government of Lebanon was one which had been chosen by freely held, peaceful, nationwide elections only a little over a year ago. The appeal to the United States was made by the President of Lebanon with the full approval of the Cabinet. When last week the Soviet Union introduced in the United Nations Security Council a resolution condemning our action in Lebanon, that resolution received only one vote - that of the Soviet Union itself. I also note that efforts were made within the Security Council to provide Lebanon with increased protection from the United Nations so as to preserve its integrity and independence, thus permitting United States forces promptly to be withdrawn. There were two such proposals, each defeated by the one vetoing vote of the Soviet Union.

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How does the Soviet Union reconcile its allegation that United States forces in Lebanon endanger world peace with the veto of these two proposals?

Am I to conclude, Mr. Chairman, that the Soviet Union seeks by imputing to others war motives and itself boasting of its nuclear and ballistic missile power, to divert attention from the steady erosion of the independence of small nations? Are we, as civilized peoples, to accept the increasing use of violence, murder and terrorism as instruments of international policy? If so, this constitutes the real danger to peace. The United States will steadfastly oppose that danger and seek to strengthen the established processes of international law and order.

The Soviet Union, by its constant abuse of its veto power in the Security Council - its veto of today was the 85th - would tear down, and not strengthen, the orderly processes which the nations have established for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Your present proposal seems further calculated to derogate from the authority and prestige of the United Nations. What you propose amounts in effect to five nations, without sanction of the United Nations and without conformity with its Charter, reaching what you call "recommendations" regarding the Near and Middle East which would then be submitted to the United Nations Security Council. But in reality such so-called "recommendations" would be decisions and the process would in effect make the United Nations into a "rubber stamp" for a few great Powers.

Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, when procedures are sought to be improvised to meet what is alleged to be a situation of great urgency, this can scarcely be expected to save time. It raises a whole series of new problems which must be considered by the various nations that might consult together, and by others which might feel that they were improperly omitted and which are deeply concerned with the Near and Middle East.

If, indeed, the Soviet Union seriously believes that there is an imminent threat to world peace, it is bound by the United Nations Charter to take the matter to the Security Council. By Article 24 of the United Nations Charter, the Soviet Union, with other Members of the United Nations, has conferred on the

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Security Council "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security", and all the Members have agreed that, in these matters, it "acts on their behalf". It is also agreed that that Council has the responsibility to "determine the existence of any threat to the peace" and to "decide what measures shall be taken ... to maintain or restore international peace and security". Surely this solemn undertaking ought to be respected.

The Security Council is already dealing with certain phases of the problem alluded to by your note. If you or we believe that other aspects of this problem or other problems should be urgently dealt with in the interest of peace, then it lies open to any of us to enlarge the scope of the Security Council consideration. Furthermore, under the Charter, members of government, including Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers, may represent a Member nation at the Security Council. If such a meeting were generally desired, the United States would join in following that orderly procedure.

I do not, of course, exclude the discussion, outside the United Nations, of world or regional problems, not posing alleged imminent threats to the peace. I cannot but deplore the persistent refusal of your Government for so many months to agree to the adequate preparation of a "summit" meeting at which we could exchange considered views on the great problems which confront the world. The Ambassadors of France, the United Kingdom and the United States were negotiating at Moscow with your Foreign Minister to develop a list of topics which might lend themselves to considered and useful discussion at a summit meeting. These negotiations were broken off by your Government on 16 June.

In conclusion, I venture to express in most earnest terms my hope that the Soviet Government will unite with us for real peace. The longing of mankind for peace is too precious to be used for ulterior purposes. I hope that ways can be found to act for peace in accordance with the standards prescribed by the Charter of the United Nations. All the world, I believe, knows that peace with justice is the dedication of the American nation. We have in the past sacrificed

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greatly for that devotion. We have loyally complied with the pledge we made, by the United Nations Declaration of 1 January 1942, to renounce any aggrandizement for ourselves. Just as we shall resist any efforts to use love of peace to mask aggression, so we shall equally never fail to take any step, at any sacrifice, which will genuinely promote the cause of peace and justice in the world.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Dwight D. EISENHOWER

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25 July 1958

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I have studied your letter of 23 July. I find in it apparent misunderstandings of the views expressed in my letter of 22 July, which I would request you to read again more carefully.

I then said that if, despite the facts established in the recent meetings of the Security Council, your Government still desires to allege that the situation in Lebanon constitutes an imminent danger to peace in the Middle East, the proper forum for appropriate discussion is the United Nations Security Council. I am glad that you now recognize the responsibility of the United Nations and have withdrawn your original proposal which would have gravely undermined the prestige and authority of the United Nations.

My letter pointed out that the Charter of the United Nations authorizes members of government, and that of course includes Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers, to represent a Member nation at the Security Council and that if such a meeting were generally desired, the United States would join in following that orderly procedure. It is, of course, not yet certain that such a meeting is in fact "generally desired", although that may prove to be the case.

You now make specific suggestions dealing with the composition of the Security Council and the conditions under which nations other than members of the Council may participate in discussions of the Council. My letter to you of 22 July urged that one of the advantages of proceedings in the Security Council is that there are established rules on these matters and it is accordingly not necessary to rely on improvising. I pointed out that when rules of this kind are sought to be improvised, there is raised a whole series of new problems, notably as to the participation and non-participation of various States. The United States will adhere, in these respects, to the Charter, which lays down the conditions under which nations which are not members of the Council may participate in the discussions of the Council.

As to the agenda, we agree that it should be limited to a discussion of the problems of the Middle East, including the causes of those problems. I would, however, be lacking in candor if I did not make clear that to put peace and

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security on a more stable basis in the Middle East requires far more than merely a consideration of Lebanon and Jordan. These situations are but isolated manifestations of far broader problems. In my opinion the instability of peace and security is in large measure due to the jeopardy in which small nations are placed. It would be the purpose of the United States to deal with the specific incidents you raise within that broad context. To do otherwise would be to be blind to the teaching of history.

You will recall, Mr. Chairman, that World War II was brought about by a series of acts of direct and indirect aggression against small nations. In March 1939 the then head of the Soviet Communist Party pointed out that the failure of non-aggressive nations, among which he named Britain and France, to check direct or indirect aggression against small countries meant "giving free rein to war and, consequently, transforming the war into a world war". That forecast unhappily proved true.

You will also recall the 1950 "Peace Through Deeds" resolution of the General Assembly which condemns the "fomenting of civil strife in the interest of a foreign Power" as among "the gravest of all crimes".

It is my earnest hope that through the United Nations Security Council steps can be taken in regard to the Middle East which by making peace more secure there, will help promote it elsewhere.

In conclusion, I suggest that the Permanent Representatives of the members of the United Nations Security Council in New York should exchange views, under arrangements made by the Secretary-General, to ascertain that a meeting of the kind and under conditions I suggest is generally acceptable. If so they should also agree upon a date which would be generally satisfactory. The date of 28 July would be too early for us.

I am today authorizing our own Permanent Representative to act in this sense.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Dwight D. EISENHOWER

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1 August 1958

Dear Mr. Chairman:

For several centuries personal correspondence between Heads of Government and Heads of State has been an extremely valuable channel of communication when the normal diplomatic channels seemed unable to carry the full burden. However, it has always been recognized - not just as a matter of diplomatic form but as a requirement of efficacy - that the essential ingredient in such correspondence, whether confidential or public, was a tone of serious purpose and an absence of invective.

It is in this tradition that I reply to your letter of 28 July.

I consider it quite inaccurate for you, both implicitly and explicitly, to convey the impression that the Government of the United States has embarked on a policy of delay based on niggling procedural argument. The fact is that the differences between us are not procedural but basic.

Very simply, the two basic points which the United States has stated many times in the past, and which I repeat now, are: (A) Do all of us, the Charter Members of the United Nations, agree that the United Nations Security Council has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security; and (B) shall small nations as well as a few so-called "great Powers" have a part in the making of decisions which inevitably involve them?

As to my first point - what of the United Nations? It was created out of the travail of World War II to establish a world of order and of justice. It embodied and still embodies the hopes of mankind. At this juncture, when you claim peace is endangered, you would push it aside - we would invoke its processes.

This leads to my second point - what of the smaller Powers of this world? Shall they be ignored or shall the small nations be represented in the making of decisions which inevitably involve them? History has certainly given us ample proof that a nation's capacity to contribute to the advancement of mankind is not to be measured by the number of divisions it can put in the field. You must be aware, as I am, of the many very specific proposals made these last years by the so-called smaller Powers which have been of great value to all of us.

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This stated assumption in your letter that the decisions of five great Powers will be happily accepted by all other interested Powers seems to indicate an attitude on your part which could have dangerous consequences in the future for the smaller Powers of this world.

Your position, which means that the desires, the dignity, in fact the security, of the smaller nations should be disregarded, is one which the United States has consistently opposed and continues to oppose today. Essentially you are proposing that we should join you in a policy reminiscent of the system of political domination you imposed in Eastern Europe. The United States cannot accept that point of view.

The problem of the Middle East is not one of a threat of aggression by the United States but rather the threat, by others, of further indirect aggression against independent States. This problem is clearly the responsibility of the United Nations Security Council.

I am therefore instructing the United States Permanent Representative to the Security Council to seek a special meeting on or about 12 August of the Security Council under Article 28(2), which would permit direct discussions among Heads of Governments and Foreign Ministers. I would hope that you would similarly instruct your Permanent Representative. Such a meeting will make it possible for the Council to discharge its responsibilities in the manner contemplated by the Charter.

As for the place of the meeting, the United States agrees to a meeting held elsewhere than New York City, but we could not agree to the meeting being held in Moscow. The memory of the well-organized mass demonstration and serious damage to the United States Embassy in Moscow is too fresh in the minds of the American people.

If such a meeting is arranged, I expect to attend and participate and I hope that you would do likewise.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Dwight D. EISENHOWER

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