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Press Release

Statement by the Sec. Gen. before the Security Council

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Press Release SG/703
15 July 1958

TEXT OF STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
BEFORE THE SECURITY COUNCIL, 15 JULY 1958

When the Security Council today resumes the consideration of the complaint of Lebanon, I consider that I owe it to the Council, at this first meeting after 11 June, to give it an account of how I have acted under the mandate given to me in the resolution passed that date. I find an added reason for doing so at this time in the references of the distinguished delegate of the United States to the present efforts of the United Nations in Lebanon. I shall naturally leave aside all questions of substance and also the question of the future role and status of the observation operation.

Having heard the charges of the representative of Lebanon concerning interference by the UAR in the internal affairs of Lebanon and the reply of the representative of the UAR, the Security Council passed, on 11 June 1958, a resolution in which it decided to "dispatch urgently an observation group to proceed to Lebanon" and authorized the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps for implementation of the resolution.

In the resolution, the Security Council stated that the aim of the step it was taking was "to ensure that there is no illegal infiltration of personnel or supply of arms or other materiel across the Lebanese borders." I have, in my actions regarding the Lebanese case, acted solely with that purpose in view.

I have used the tool created for this purpose in the resolution. I have also relied on the authority that the Secretary-General is recognized as having under the Charter.

My actions have had no relation to developments which must be considered as the internal affairs of Lebanon. Nor have I, in my implementation of the resolution, or acting under the Charter, concerned myself with wider international aspects of the problem than those mentioned in the resolution. The Secretary-General, in this situation, obviously is neither an arbiter nor a mediator. However, even with these important restrictions, there has been wide scope for action for the purpose of the resolution, strictly in keeping with UN principles and rules.

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The Security Council, in deciding to dispatch to Lebanon an "observation group," defined not only the character of the operation but also its scope. It did so by linking the observation to illegal traffic in arms and infiltration, requesting the group to keep the Council currently informed of its findings. In taking this stand the Council defined the limits for the authority delegated to the Secretary-General in this case.

I have, in the light of the decision, considered myself free to take all steps necessary for an operation, covering illegal traffic in arms and infiltration, as effective as it could be made as a tool toward ensuring against such traffic or infiltration with its basic character of "observation" maintained. I have had a free hand as to the structure and organization of the operation, but considered myself as barred from an interpretation of the authority granted which would have implied that I changed the policy laid down by the Council by my decisions on the scope of the operation or on the authority of the observers.

In fact, had I, by going beyond the reasonable limits of a "group," charged with observation, or by deciding on terms of reference exceeding "observation," changed the observation operation into some kind of police operation, I would not only have overstepped the resolution but I would also have faced a conflict with principles laid down in the Charter. In a police operation the participants would in this case need the right, if necessary, to take initiative in the use of force. Such use of force would, however, have belonged to the sphere of Chapter VII of the Charter and could only have been granted by the Security Council itself, directly or by explicit delegation, under the conditions spelled out in that Chapter.

As to the structure and organization of the Observation Group and its activities I have at the initial stage acted in close consultation with members of the Security Council and the Representative of Lebanon. My interpretation of the resolution, as presented to them before any action was taken, met with their full approval including that of the Representative of Lebanon. At later stages I have naturally, to a decisive extent, depended on the judgment of the highly qualified military, political and diplomatic experts of the UN who are in the field. The present arrangements are in accordance with their suggestions and meet with their full approval.

I have said before that I have acted solely for the purpose mentioned in the resolution of the Security Council, using the instrument created by the resolution, but using also my authority under the Charter. This means that the efforts I have

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made, of a diplomatic nature, have been guided by the desire to get the necessary support for the Observation operation so as to make it possible for it to succeed as a measure against any infiltration or smuggling of arms. It would be premature to give here a detailed account of the activities to which I refer. Their value for the purpose mentioned can be judged only in the light of the practical experience in the observation operation and of developments, as registered by our observers or by other reliable means.

What I have to stress here is that, whatever weight might finally, in the light of the tests to which I have referred, be given to the special efforts in which I have had to engage, it has been a matter of course that I have striven to give to the Observation operation the highest possible efficiency. The diplomatic efforts in support of the observation operation, or their outcome, have been in no way permitted to influence my judgment as to the size, scope or mandate of the Observation Group. Thus, my stand on these last-mentioned questions has been determined exclusively by the attitude taken by the Group itself. As I have already said in public, the Observation Group has got and will have as many Observers as they have asked or might ask for. On the other hand, I have found it very difficult to provide them with observers before they have considered themselves ready to absorb them in useful current work. If there would be any impression that restraint has been shown in the build-up of the Observation Group, the explanation of this impression, therefore, is the stand taken by the Group itself regarding its needs and possibilities and in no way any political considerations, least of all any considerations caused by anticipations of the outcome of any diplomatic efforts in support of the observation operation.

It has already been reported to the Council how the observers have managed to operate within areas which are outside of Government control. From previous published accounts it has appeared that the Group has been meeting with difficulties north of Tripoli and in the northern Bekaa region. I can now report to the Council that throughout the northern border areas north of Tripoli arrangements have been made for full freedom of movement and access and that agreement has been reached on the establishment of outstations in that area. In the region north of Bekaa the Group has this very morning, in a meeting between General Bull and the leader of the opposition forces in that region, formalized its previous requests for full freedom of access.

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