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UNEF in Gaza, by Angelo Natale

GAZA, March 15 AP by Angelo Natale

The new Egyptian rule in Gaza today began putting a squeeze on the UN emergency forces. The aim apparently is to confine UNEF troops to standing room along the 1949 armistice line adjoining Israel. Israel bars the UNEF from its territory.

After brief talks with administrators sent in from Cairo by President Nasser's regime, UN officials agreed they should move out of the modern police headquarters to make way for the Egyptians.

Egyptian sources said the question of removing UNEF troops from check points along the road from Gaza City in the North to Rafah in the South was brought up by Brig. Amin Helmy, army liaison officer.

Helmy met with UN undersecretary Ralph Bunche and Maj. Gen. E. L. M. Burns, UNEF commander.

Maj. Gen. Mohammed Hassan Abdel Latif, the new Egyptian Governor, told a news conference he assumed full authority over the strip on his arrival last night

Latif strongly implied the UNEF should operate only on the armistice line, not in the strip itself.

Helmy told reporters he had discussed with Bunche and Burns what he called the new position of UNEF in the strip after Egypt took over administration responsibilities.

"We agreed in principle on this position," Helmy said without elaboration.

It was understood that the position referred to was the demarcation line separating the strip from Israel.

Egyptian sources said Helmy also asked that the UNEF stop searching Arab refugees who fled when Israel attacked and now are returning to their homes.

There are 2,600 UN troops in the strip, Latif brought with him 50 military policemen, 10 officers and 12 civilian officials.

The big headquarters building to be vacated by UNEF serves as the Egyptian central police station for the strip under the 1949 armistice terms. It was the British Government House until Britain gave up the League of Nations mandate rule over Palestine in 1948.

Helmy and UNEF representatives were picking out another site for the UN headquarters in Gaza city.

Latif told his news conference he planned to move into police headquarters within a few days.

Asked about his relations with UNEF Latif replied:

"UNEF knows where they are going to be, General Burns and Dr. Bunche have said before that's where they're going to be (implying the Armistice line), you all know where they're going to be."

Latif emphasized that everything concerning administration of the Gaza strip "will be done by us and the Egyptian Government."

Latif appointed two Egyptian officers as sub-governors of two major parts of the strip, the City of Gaza and Deir el Ballah in the North and Khan Yunes-Rafah in the South.

The Governor said he had instructed all parties concerned to begin work at once in all fields of administration and to get such facilities as communications back into operation.

Earlier, Cairo radio had broadcast a message from Latif to the residents of the strip telling them to cooperate with UNEF.

"I ask all of you to be calm and to concentrate on your work," the message said.

"I also urge that we all cooperate with the UNEF and give them every help and support to make their job, entrusted to them by the United Nations, successful so that tension along the border may come to an end.

"I should like to draw your attention to the fact that those on the other side of the border (Israelis) are trying to distort the fact of what is happening inside the Gaza strip.

"The only way to foil their efforts is for all of us to resort to work, thereby enabling the United Nations Emergency Force to fulfill its mission."

About 10,000 strip residents staged a peaceful demonstration when Latif went to pray at a mosque on this Moslem sabbath.

"You must realize UNEF is present in Gaza according to permission of the Egyptian Government," Latif told the crowd. "We should consider these forces as our guests."