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18 Dec. 56

- Statement to the Press on Suez Canal Clearance operations.
- U.N. Salvage Fleet

STATEMENT

18 December 1956

In the report to the General Assembly on the Canal clearing it was stated that the Secretary-General, in case the General Assembly approved that the United Nations should assist in the clearing of the Canal, would negotiate the necessary arrangements with such private firms as might speedily and effectively undertake the task and intended to address himself to firms in countries outside the present conflict. The proposals by the Secretary-General were approved by the General Assembly. It follows that the General Assembly has given priority to the use of resources from private firms from countries outside the conflict.

Negotiations conducted by Lt. General Wheeler, whose great experience and competence in this field is generally recognized, have led to the building up of a United Nations salvage fleet, able to begin operations immediately and expeditiously. General Wheeler is working in close contact with Headquarters and on the basis of instructions issued in strict conformity with the position of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General trusts that all parties will co-operate with the United Nations so as to facilitate the vital task entrusted to the Organization. In due time a full report will be given on the arrangements made. The Secretary-General believes that this report will allay doubts which recently have been expressed in some quarters.

*In the Press because
of the continued Arab-
ish attacks on Wheeler.*

5) The United Nations will take whatever measures are considered necessary to insure the protection of these vessels and their crews. General Wheeler (Burns) will consult the masters of the vessels concerned about the security measures to be taken. [The arrangements set out in paragraphs 1) 2) and 3 above, are subject to the masters and crews concerned being satisfied as to the measures taken for their protection.]

Text desired by
British as UN com-
mitment on the
basis of which their
Salvage fleet might
stay.
18 Dec. -56

19 December 1956

The Secretary-General confirmed that none of our salvage vessels ~~are to~~ ^{should} leave Port Said except for any which Admiral Slater ^{and} General Wheeler may agree are no longer necessary for operations which they have actually in hand.

This is in conformity with instructions already given to General Wheeler but it will be repeated to him at once.

Agreement with the British when they come to see me because of cables from Slater in seems con-
tradiction to our published policy line. ~~AG~~.

Sent to Wheeler same day; see following cable.