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19 Dec. 56

Summary of statement by British Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, on the clearance of the Canal.

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URGENT

CANAL-SHIPS

LONDON, DEC. 19-(REUTERS)-FOREIGN SECRETARY SELWYN LLOYD ANNOUNCED
TODAY EGYPT HAS FORMALLY ASSURED THE SAFETY OF ANGLO-FRENCH SHIPS
AND CREWS ENGAGED IN SALVAGE WORK IN PORT SAID HARBOR.

(MORE) HR 1041A

FIRST ADD LONDON CANAL-SHIPS X X X HARBOR.

LLOYD ADDED: "IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO ASSURE THE MASTERS AND CREWS OF THE VESSELS ON THIS POINT. I UNDERSTAND THAT THE UNITED NATIONS AUTHORITIES ON THE SPOT WILL ENDEAVOR TO DO THIS.

"I AM AWAITING CONFIRMATION THAT THERE ARE NO FURTHER DIFFICULTIES AND THAT THE WORK CAN CONTINUE--THAT IS, THE WORK DONE BY THE ANGLO-FRENCH FLEET NOW IN PORT SAID."

LLOYD WAS ANSWERING A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS CLEARING THE SUEZ CANAL.

"THE OFFER TO WHICH I REFERRED ON MONDAY, THAT SUBJECT TO SATISFACTORY SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS THE ANGLO-FRENCH SALVAGE VESSELS NOW AT PORT SAID SHOULD CONTINUE THEIR WORK THERE, HAS BEEN FURTHER CONSIDERED BY THE U.N. SECRETARY-GENERAL.

"HE HAS GIVEN THE NECESSARY ASSURANCE WITH REGARD TO THE PROTECTION OF THE VESSELS AND THE CREWS.

"HE HAS ALSO RECEIVED A FORMAL ASSURANCE FROM THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE SAFETY OF THE SHIPS AND THEIR CREWS," LLOYD SAID.

CONSERVATIVES DESCRIBED THE SITUATION AS "ALL VERY UNSATISFACTORY."

HE SAID IT APPEARED TO MANY PEOPLE IN BRITAIN THAT HANDING THE ISSUE OVER TO THE U.N. SEEMED TO BE LEADING TO "GIVING IN TO PETTY DICTATORS" WHILE PUTTING TO SHAME THOSE, LIKE BRITAIN, WHO ACTED "THROUGH OUT IN THE INTERESTS OF PEACE."

LLOYD REFERRED TO THE STATEMENT HE MADE MONDAY IN WHICH HE SAID HE WAS DISAPPOINTED WITH PROGRESS MADE IN THE CLEARANCE OF THE CANAL.

HE ADDED: BUT SINCE THEN I THINK A LITTLE FURTHER PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE. IT DOES LOOK AS IF WE NOW HAVE A SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT FOR WORK TO CONTINUE IN PORT SAID HARBOR AND THAT IS OF SOME IMPORTANCE."

19 December 1956

NOTES on 12:00, noon, briefing by UK Press Officer, W.B. Hesmondhalgh:

He made reference to Mr. Lloyd's statement this morning, in London, on the clearance of the Canal stressing that satisfactory security assurances had been received from Egypt, through the Secretary-General, for the safety of Anglo-French ships and crews.

Asked if the assurances covered British ships to be used in the clearance of "all the Canal," he said: "No, only in Port Said. We offered to continue clearing the harbor after withdrawal is completed and satisfactory security arrangements could be received and if the crews agreed."

He said "no progress" has been made on the employment of British crews on six heavy lifting (also British) for clearance work beyond El Kap. He said Sir Pierson would meet once again today with the Secretary-General on this point.

Asked about the nature of the use of the British ships and crews in the Canal, beyond Port Said, he said that this would be tantamount to "subcontracting of British vessels and crews." He quoted the passage in the Secretary-General's report of 20 November: "As indicated above, he would, given the approval of the General Assembly to this proposal, intend to address himself to firms in countries outside the present conflict. In his contacts with the firms approached, he would try to clarify to what extent they, in turn, may need assistance from enterprises not directly approached by the United Nations."

When asked whether the Secretary-General and Mr. Lloyd had talked about employing British crews in the Canal clearance, he said Mr. Lloyd had offered "all resources which included ships and crews."

Asked about the possible length of time the Port Said clearance operations would take, he said he didn't know. He said the operation included the clearance of two channels in the harbor and one through El Kap.

Asked about the possible use by the United Nations of two German clearance vessels now under charter to the UK, he said that these two had accepted a U.N. contract and would be used in the clearance operations beyond Port Said and El Kap. He said these two vessels are already being employed now by the Anglo-French in Port Said.

The one thing under negotiation at the present time, between the UK and the Secretary-General, consisted of the use of six British heavy-lifting salvage units with crews.

Asked specifically when the assurance were received from Egypt, he said "they have been coming in in bits at various times, but that most of them had been passed on yesterday by the United Kingdom delegation to the British Government." Asked why the press was not informed by him yesterday, he said they involved "confidential business" and that it was up to the Government to say whether the assurances were satisfactory.

Asked if the Secretary-General intended to go to Cairo, he said the UK delegation had not been informed of such a plan.