

# Middle East conflict - Jordan. Amman files: Middle East conflict - Jordan. ...

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Report of the Sec. Gen. concerning the role of U.N.  
in connexion with the airlift of British troops from Amman to  
Cyprus

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QUESTIONS CONSIDERED BY THE SECURITY COUNCIL  
AT ITS 838th MEETING ON 7 AUGUST 1958

Report of the Secretary-General

Note: Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 1237 (ES-III) of 21 August 1953, part 4, paragraph 2, and further to his report of 10 November 1953 (A/3986), the Secretary-General has the honour to submit, for information, a report concerning the role of the United Nations in connexion with the airlift of British troops from Amman to Cyprus.

Withdrawal by air of British troops from Jordan

1. At the request of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Nations undertook to consult and to obtain agreement with the other Governments directly concerned on arrangements for United Nations assistance in the transportation by air of the British troops in Jordan from Amman to Nicosia during the period 25-29 October 1958.
2. The Secretary-General designated Major General Odd Bull, who was granted leave of absence from his post as Executive Member of the United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon for the purpose, to organize the participation of United Nations personnel in the control arrangements for this movement by air. General Bull assembled the necessary staff by detaching from the UNCGIL air service men with the requisite training and experience to serve on the planning staff and to man the control posts required.
3. General Bull's mission was also assisted by the officials and technical personnel of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), the Israeli-Syrian Mixed Armistice Commission and UNOGIL for liaison, communication,

transportation and secretarial work. The UNTSO transport aircraft was put at General Bull's disposal for the period of planning and negotiation and also during the period of the withdrawal operation, thus affording him the necessary mobility for rapid negotiations in several widely separated places. General Bull and his staff, for the purposes of this operation, were directly responsible to the Secretary-General.

4. The operation involved eighty-six round trip missions (Nicosia-Amman) by transport aircraft from Nicosia, and single flights from Jordan to Nicosia by six fighter aircraft and three Valetta transport aircraft. The total load carried included 2,168 passengers, 117 vehicles of various types, together with eighty-five trailers and seventy-four airborne trolleys, twenty-five guns and 230,500 lbs. of freight. The aircraft involved flew over the territories of Jordan, the United Arab Republic (Syria) and Lebanon and the operation had, therefore, to be cleared and co-ordinated among the Governments and air forces in Amman, Damascus and Beirut and the Middle East Air Force Headquarters in Cyprus, who were executing the operation. The Government of Israel, due to the proximity of the flights to Israel territory, was kept informed through UNTSO in Jerusalem.

5. The principal problems involved were routing, the clearance of flight plans and the establishment of the necessary control and navigational systems and communications.

6. Planning work began on 14 October. The UNOGIL Chief Communications Officer was charged with organizing an exclusive communications net with coding facilities connecting all the control stations. A preliminary routing plan for the aircraft was obtained from British sources on 16 October and this was discussed by General Bull at the Middle East Air Force Headquarters in Cyprus on 17 October. The major problem was to find a route which was operationally and politically acceptable to all parties concerned.

7. The tentative British flight plan was the basis of discussions by General Bull in Amman on 19 October and in Damascus on 20 October. Changes in the British plan were suggested in these discussions in order to avoid flying over prohibited or sensitive areas. In particular, it was proposed to route aircraft over United Arab Republic territory by Chahba and Saassa, instead of over Banias.

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These proposed changes were communicated to the Middle East Air Force Headquarters and to United Nations Headquarters in New York. Middle East Air Force Headquarters pointed out that certain technical difficulties would be involved by the changes proposed, which would considerably increase flying time and take the course closer to Mount Hermon. For this course to be acceptable, a radio beacon at Chahba would be required.

8. A further meeting was held at Damascus on 22 October, at which other details of the flight plan were discussed, based on the Chahba-Saassa route, including the width of the flight corridor, the spacing and timing of aircraft, the filing of flight plans, test flights by two transport aircraft on 24 October and the installation of a radio beacon at Chahba manned by United Nations radio officers. Since the British flight plan had to be submitted in Damascus on 23 October if the operation were to be able to start on 25 October, these proposals were cabled to Middle East Air Force Headquarters on the afternoon of 22 October.

9. General Bull and his staff, together with the two control officers to be stationed at Nicosia, went to the Middle East Air Force Headquarters at Nicosia on 23 October to reconcile the proposals of the United Arab Republic with the requirements of the Middle East Air Force Headquarters, the principal difficulty being the position of the United Arab Republic in favour of formation flying, which presented serious problems for transport aircraft. Middle East Air Force Headquarters then worked out a revised plan, taking into account the United Arab Republic position. This plan was handed by General Bull to the United Arab Republic Air Force in Damascus on the afternoon of 23 October and was accepted in principle, with a few details, including the procedure to be applied in case of forced landings at Damascus airport, to be agreed upon later. The final reconciled plan was signed in Damascus at 1020 hours on 24 October, and by a Middle East Air Force representative in Beirut at 1300 hours on the same day. The control officers for Beirut and Amman were then briefed on the final plan and proceeded to take up their posts; the Damascus control officers and the Chahba beacon operators were already in position. Two trial runs were made on 24 October, according to plan.

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10. The route followed was a corridor ten nautical miles wide from Nicosia over Sidon (Lebanon), Saassa (USR), Chahba (UAR) to Amman. Not more than six loaded and six unloaded aircraft were to be over United Arab Republic territory simultaneously. The six fighters and three Valetta transports were to be flown out in addition to these flights. Aircraft would not be over United Arab Republic territory on any day before 0600 hours or after 1700 hours, local time. All transport aircraft would fly at altitudes between 11,500 and 14,500 feet. Any changes of more than fifteen minutes in times given in the flight plan were to be notified to Damascus, Beirut and the terminal point. United Nations control officers had lists of registration numbers of all participating aircraft and spare aircraft for identification purposes. Aircraft reported on entering and leaving the territory of the countries overflown and over the Chahba beacon. Signals for United Arab Republic fighters intercepting for control purposes had also been agreed upon.

11. The main responsibility of the United Nations Control officers was to see that the detailed flight plan was adhered to and to exercise their judgement in resolving any problems which might arise resulting from unforeseen delays or variations in the execution of the flight plan. Each control post reported to General Bull in Beirut at the end of each day's operations.

12. The withdrawal operation began on schedule on 25 October and proceeded on schedule until its termination on 29 October, when the last aircraft left United Arab Republic territory at 1514 hours. The original flight plan had listed a full complement of the possible daily missions, thus leaving a margin for cancellations due to weather or other causes. Since there were, in any event, no cancellations because of weather or unserviceability, it was possible to dispense with some of the missions scheduled in the original flight plan. There were very few deviations from the time schedule and no incidents.

13. The successful conclusion of this operation is a tribute to the ready co-operation and technical skill of all parties concerned and to the effective efforts of Major General Bull and his staff.

14. On completion of the mission a message of thanks was addressed to the Secretary-General by the Government of the United Kingdom (annexed).

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LETTER DATED 30 OCTOBER 1958 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO  
THE UNITED NATIONS, ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have been instructed by Selwyn Lloyd to pass to you the following message from him:

"News of the successful completion of the air-lift of British troops from Amman to Cyprus has just reached me.

"My colleagues and I are most grateful to you personally for having made this whole operation possible. I understand from our Chiefs of Staff and our Commanders-in-Chief in the Middle East that they have the greatest admiration for the way in which General Bull and his staff made the practical arrangements and thereby ensured the smooth running of what was a highly technical and complicated matter. I am conveying my thanks to General Bull direct and the Chief of the Defence Staff is doing likewise. I should also like to thank you personally for having made the services of this distinguished officer and his staff available for the task.

"You will know that our decision to use the route via Syria was not an easy one. We foresaw many awkwardnesses and difficulties. I hoped, however, that a practical demonstration of co-operation between the United Arab Republic and us under United Nations auspices would be of some help to you in your task of furthering the fulfilment of the Arab resolution. I now hope that the successful outcome of this operation may augur well for the future.

With warm regards."

(Signed) Pierson DIXON

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