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Lloyd, Selwyn (British Foreign Secy)

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Message from Mr. Selwyn Lloyd to the Secretary-General, United Nations.

Many thanks for the message which you so kindly sent me from Tehran, following up my discussion with you in London about the possibility of interposing international personnel between Israel and her Arab neighbours. I know that a personal examination by you of the problems involved would be most helpful.

You will now have seen the statement issued by the Prime Minister and the President on February 1, in which they expressed their full support for the efforts of General Burns to maintain peace on the borders, and said that they would favourably consider recommendations for any necessary enlargement of the Truce Supervision Organisation and improvement of its capabilities. We shall be glad to know your views on this point and I have asked our Delegation in New York to get in touch with you on your return.

I myself believe that considerable benefit could be obtained from the adoption of the suggestion which I made to you. I know that you would not put forward anything that is not reasonable, and I assure you of our full support.

February 21, 1956.

28 February 1956

I have received your message and in view of your forthcoming visit to the Middle East I hasten to reply although that forces me to be very brief.

You have received Burns's comments on the question of United Nations troops in the Gaza and El Auja areas. As you certainly have heard from Ambassador Stevens, I can accept what Burns says as far as it goes, and for that reason I am less sceptical about the technical possibilities than when we met, while on the other hand I remain politically most hesitant.

My considerations in this last respect are the following, which all of them, refer to an arrangement where the troops garrisoned in the Demilitarized Zones are not only observers but military units coming into action at an attempt to break through from either side:

(a) As the arrangement would change the legal nature of the Gaza and El Auja areas as defined in the Armistice Agreement, the parties would have a good legal case if they insisted that their consent to the arrangement is necessary. Apart from the legal considerations, it would for practical reasons obviously be impossible to act without acceptance from the parties. The consent

H.E. The Rt. Hon. Selwyn Lloyd  
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of the parties is not likely to be achieved without prolonged and difficult negotiations where both parties can seek protection behind the fact that also Security Council action would be necessary with a most uncertain outcome in the light of the possibility of a Soviet veto.

(b) The arrangement would require Security Council sanction as the Secretary-General cannot be considered as entitled to decide on the arrangement or to approve on behalf of the United Nations the arrangement if decided by the three guaranteeing powers. I have already mentioned the possibility of a Soviet veto which with a probable popular resistance in both Egypt and Israel, would not cost the Soviet Union anything but might even be welcome.

(c) If it comes to shooting, the United Nations will find itself directly involved as a party, with unforeseeable consequences as to its further actions. It is true that at all events it will have to take action against an aggressor but should such action be started by a kind of vanguard fight which cannot be followed up in such time as to make the resistance effective?

(d) In case a war breaks out, is it likely to start by ground operations? Would not the obvious Egyptian move be an attack from the air? Or would the Israelis be likely to attack in the Gaza or El Auja areas in view of the risk of immediate Egyptian retaliation from the air?

In view of these doubts it seems that the proposed arrangement would be inefficient in the case of the parties intending to go to war, and efficient only against such moves as the Israeli operations in El Auja. With this limited usefulness the question arises if there is any proportion between the complications and the gains. It should also be observed that for example in the Tiberias case the United Nations personnel could not have stopped the operation, and

that in the El Auja case the Israelis at a crucial stage locked up even the United Nations observers.

A general observation on the political aspects is that with the prevailing mentality in the area, moves tending to strengthen the influence on the spot of the Western powers or reflecting what may be interpreted as a patronizing attitude or as an intervention in local affairs, is likely to play into the hands of the Soviets, thus sharpening the cold war aspect of the situation.

When for the reasons given I advise against a garrisoning of United Nations troops in the two areas for the present, it is definitely only for the present and with a strong reserve as to what steps might prove necessary somewhat later if other attempts to stabilize the situation would fail. The alternative I have in mind is based on a combination of suggestions made by Nasser and Ben Gurion as follows:

Nasser put forward to me again the idea of a 500 metre strip on both sides of the demarcation line of which he is the author but which repeatedly has been discarded by the Israelis. In reply to my question whether this was a hard and fast proposal or an indication of the direction in which he felt that a solution could be found, he said that the latter interpretation was correct. I replied that if so, we were fully agreed as it has been the consistent line of the United Nations authorities that means should be found to separate the parties in the field.

Ben Gurion again brushed aside all ideas of a separation and restated his view that all that is required is a strict implementation of strict instructions to Egyptian patrols not to shoot unless attacked, i.e., instructions parallel to those allegedly given to Israeli patrols. I declared myself willing to instruct Burns to try and get parallel instructions, but indicated my feeling that

such a step might have to be combined with arrangements in the direction indicated by Nasser.

I feel that Burns's and my efforts to stiffen up instructions on both sides should be continued and intensified, but precluded and supported by a de facto withdrawal of patrols out of sight of each other. A paragraph in the annexed draft letter to Sharett from me explains my view. If efforts along this line were to fail, I would be prepared to consider more far-reaching United Nations steps.

A question entirely different from the one so far discussed is whether the number of observers should be increased. On that point I have an open mind and rely on suggestions from Burns who has my standing promise to provide him with the number of observers he at each stage may require.

These observations are concerned only with the border line situation. As concerns the general problems of frontier adjustments, territory concessions, refugees and the status of Jerusalem, it is my view that one should at present concentrate on the refugee issue which is most ripe for a constructive approach. On that issue one should make up one's mind as to the size of the symbolic repatriation, make it perfectly clear to the Arabs that this is the point to which they will have support for their claims and after that try and enforce the arrangement with the Israelis, probably with compensation in an Arab acceptance of the full Jordan Valley plan.

It should be made clear to the Israelis that action at Banat Yakoub cannot be tolerated and is most unwise as it would lock the door to the Jordan Valley arrangement for an immeasurable

time.

I will inform the Americans and the French about the observations put forward here. I am anxious to have as early as possible your comments after seeing the parties.