

**Middle East conflict -  
Lebanon. Correspondence,  
statements, resolutions:  
Mi...**

*HS L 179:104*



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Dag Hammarskjöld's saml.

Beirut, corresp. 1958 - June 12  
July 11

- a) Sec. Gen. U.N. -  
- to David Blickenstaff (Beirut)
- b.) and D. Blickenstaff (UNOGIL, Beirut)  
- to Sec. Gen.



UNITED NATIONS OBSERVATION GROUP IN LEBANON

Hotel Riviera  
Beirut, Lebanon  
11 July 1958

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Mr. Hammarskjold:

In the light of the several cables which have been exchanged between you and this Mission on the question of the two Syrian prisoners, I felt that perhaps a few additional words of explanation might be a good thing for the purpose of bringing out one point, which I believe, may have been misunderstood by a couple of references in my cables to you suggesting that all the fault does not lie on the Lebanese side in this unfortunate matter.

The picture which emerges from the statements issued after the publication of the report and from the "planted" questions at Moukheiber's press conference, is clearly the one which you set out in your clear cable No. 204 of 10 July. There can be no doubt that the report on the two prisoners angered the Lebanese authorities and that all of their statements and actions since then are in the direction of building up a case for what I fear will be their refusal to turn over any more prisoners to us for interrogation. The first experience of this backfired for them and they obviously do not want to have that happen again.

In my cables UNOGIL 275 and 305, I suggested that the Lebanese objection to the paragraphs in the report were "justified" and that the Lebanese position was not meant to be obstructive. In saying this, I did not mean to claim that their present attitude on interrogation was either justified or not obstructive, but only that there was something to be said on their side of the argument as regards the manner in which this matter was dealt with in the report. I do not believe that this Mission is wholly without blame in what may have begun as a misunderstanding on both sides here. In the first place, the Liaison Committee never, at any time, suggested that there was any relation between the two cases brought to our attention by their letter of 18 June and the statements made by Malik in New York to you and to the press. I think it is quite possible that there

Mr. Dag Hammarskjold  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
NEW YORK, N.Y.

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was, in their minds, no necessary connection between the two. Before the 18th of June, oral references had been made on several occasions to prisoners who might be interrogated, and, as you know from my cable No. 47 of 18 June, this question was dealt with by the Group in general terms and it was agreed that interrogation should be a part of the <sup>Group's</sup> normal activity. On 18 June, I told Ghorra at the Foreign Office that the information regarding any prisoners, as well as any other information from Lebanese sources, should be communicated to us in writing and the first communication which was sent to us after that was a communication which, according to the Lebanese authorities themselves, was only "a preliminary report about the arrest of two Syrian subjects belonging to the Syrian armed forces". The report consisted of a notification by the Gendarmerie Headquarters dated 17 June, which set out in a short paragraph the confessions of the two prisoners. The communication went on to state that a further report will be submitted at a later stage. Following this, conversations were held between Colonel Brown and the Army Liaison Officer to arrange a time and place for the interrogation to take place and I cannot honestly say that there was any indication of reluctance or delay on the part of the Lebanese authorities to arrange for this interrogation. On 21 June, the promised detailed report arrived and this report corrected some of the information contained in the preliminary report of 18 June and it did not contain any of the allegations which the first report of the Committee refers to.

In all of this, I believe that the action of the Government's Liaison Committee with us seems straightforward and clear. If there was any misrepresentation in the matter, it was done by Malik in New York and not by the Liaison Committee here.

It is against this background that I suggested to you in my two cables that there was some substance to the Liaison Committee's unhappiness regarding the manner in which the case was dealt with in our report. In the first place, the date of the first of the communication was the result of my request that such information be transmitted to us in writing. There was nothing to indicate that this communication referred to any prisoners other than those to which reference had previously been made orally. In the second place, allegations about the prisoners were conditioned by their statement that the information was "preliminary" and the full report did not contain the allegations

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*The prisoners were arrested on 16 June.*



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attributed to the Lebanese authorities in the Group's first report. Thirdly, no proper procedures had been worked out in advance for conducting interrogation and the interrogation team had actually requested that further interrogation take place in order to clear up discrepancies, this request having subsequently been withdrawn by the interrogation team<sup>itself</sup>. Under these circumstances, I believe that the Group went too far in reporting conclusions which, though they may or may not be true, were hardly justified in the light of the incomplete procedures employed in the interrogation. In drafting the report, the first instinct of the Group was to present merely a summary of statements made and information recorded during the interrogation, without pronouncing any conclusions. This point raised some argument within the Group and it was only upon Dayal's insistence that conclusions were stated, and stated in a way that led to rather positive <sup>de</sup>productions from negative evidence.

I am passing on the above to you, not that it changes anything in the present position regarding future interrogations, but merely as a factor which, I feel, has helped contribute to the present attitude of Moukheiber and his Committee. In my mind, this, of course, does not excuse in any way the manner in which this affair is now being exploited, nor does it excuse the exaggerations of Malik in New York, which contributed no little to the unpleasantness of the situation in which we find ourselves.

In its meeting this morning, the Group decided to postpone sending you its comments on your clear cable No. 204, pending receipt of the Lebanese reply to our letter stating the conditions which would be required by the Group for future interrogations. Needless to say, the Group is firm in its objection to the present Lebanese intransigence and distortions. As stated in my last night's cable No. 313, we had expected to receive the Lebanese reply today and the fact that it has not arrived\* may be an indication that my words to Ghorra yesterday may have caused them to consider leaving the door slightly open for arriving at an agreement with the Group about how to proceed on prisoner cases in future. We entertained the Moukheiber Committee at lunch today and this matter did not arise at any time during our conversation. Since our sole interest in this business is to pursue all avenues of enquiry that may be useful in the job to be done here, I naturally hope that the Lebanese may decide in this direction. As things now stand however, I am not too optimistic about it.

\* ab 8:30 pm

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Plaza was much interested in your cable No. 211 giving "excerpts from a letter" of yours setting out your main understandings of certain essential points regarding this Mission. We discussed it briefly together and he seems to feel that if the main ~~fact~~ of the first report was to deflate the picture which till recently had been presented to the world about what this crisis really is, perhaps the second report should strike a careful balance between maintaining this picture and at the same time sounding a word of caution to those whose excessive jubilation at the first report may have been encouraged to the point of feeling that they could, with impunity, continue certain activities without the observers finding out about them. The results of our night patrols along the northern frontier, the restrictions placed upon observers' movements in the area between 6 and 9 July, bits of half-baked information received from other sources, all seem to indicate that something is going on in the area which is not quite Catholic. The Group intends tomorrow morning to try to fit all the pieces together and to evaluate their significance.

General Chehab told General Bull yesterday that he believed there was a build-up going on in that area which would be the prelude to a moderately heavy attack within the near future, probably before the fatal date of 24 July. We should have a clearer picture of all this after tomorrow morning when all the reports are in and evaluated. It seems quite clear that whatever may be taking place in that area is more or less under the direction of Hamade, who has recently been spending most of his time up in Homs, with frequent trips to Damascus. As you know, we have tried on many occasions to meet Hamade, till now without success. When Colonel Brown asked Saeb Salam day before yesterday about Hamade, he was told that Hamade could not be reached because he was absent from Lebanon.

I know that this whole situation on the northern frontier is of special interest to you and you will be immediately be informed of anything significant that we learn about it here. I am personally convinced <sup>that</sup> any visible evidence of the success of your efforts in the desired directions would have a good effect on many of the more moderate government supporters, whose efforts ought to be strengthened during the coming critical days, if a compromise solution to the problem of the Presidency is to be found before 24 July. No one here is willing to predict what might happen should 24 July get away from them without some kind of a solution to the Presidential problem being agreed upon.

Yours sincerely,  
David Blackwelder

12 June 1958

Dear David,

Warm thanks for your letter to Andy which I have just received with your covering note to me. I was most interested to read your analysis of the French situation. Indeed, the situation is full of possibilities which are only to a limited extent encouraging, and it all hangs on the character of one rather strange though interesting personality.

My reason to write to you is partly independent of your letter and related to the somewhat unexpected change in your life, worked by the Security Council decision as implemented by me. I am sorry to have intervened in your planning but I know, on the other hand, that your sense of responsibility is such that you did not hesitate to go to Beirut when, whatever the immediate inconveniences, we consider that to be the best solution for the time being.

I should, of course, send you a long and "well-considered" letter on your task as Chief Political Officer in this curious enterprise. However, I am not up to it simply because I do not know very well where we stand. You simply will have to find out for yourself. This much is certain: the picture, so eloquently painted in the Security Council, is only part of the story - and perhaps even that part is not painted with the very best sense of colour.

To me this seems to be the classical case of preventive diplomacy. I am afraid that some very unpleasant developments might have been started had not the Lebanese and the others been forced to accept a common sense approach really leaving the whole operation to us. The cold war "bat son plein", and some people with more sense of headlines than of hard facts may have toyed with ideas in the direction of the Eisenhower doctrine or a Special Session of the GA. All that is now, if it ever existed, killed, and that is no minor contribution.

Mr. David Blickenstaff  
c/o UNWRA  
Beirut

My own feeling about the operation UNOGIL is that its main impact will be in the psychological field. With some knowledge of the geography of Lebanon and some information of where and how the alleged traffic in arms is going on, I fail to see how we could make it an efficient field operation short of some kind of supra-UNEF arrangement, which of course goes miles beyond what anybody, so far, has in mind. I am rather keen to get from you as early as you can an appraisal of the situation, spelling out what you consider to be the background, the setting and the modus operandi of the Group, so that we can give it a somewhat more clear outline. In due time, of course, the distinguished members of the Observation Group proper will report on their ideas, but I think that it would do no harm if you and the Secretariat took some lead from the very first moment.

The Norwegian General who will be the top military man -provided that I do not switch him to Jerusalem and place von Horn in Beirut - is probably quite alright, but not very likely to have any clear ideas of how these UN operations are best run. His next in command has a very wide observers experience, but perhaps a somewhat vague idea about the political aspects. Were von Horn to be temporarily moved to Beirut you would meet a top personality.

From the two chief political representatives (I have a "yes" only from Galo Plaza, ex-president of Ecuador) you are entitled to quite valuable assistance, although their nationalities are such that your own judgment may well deviate from what are their reactions. Even the best "latinos" are "latinos" and in this special case I think I should warn you that the man may have a very high idea of himself and remembers very well his ex-state of Chief of State.

The other one, High-Commissioner Dayal (whom, of course, you know from the UN), would, if I get him, be of very great help, but you certainly remember that he is quite Indian and that his relations with Delhi were not so simple. This may introduce a complicating element.

However, I am sure that you will get a good grip on the situation. In many respects your burden will be eased by Shastri, whom I believe you know from Headquarters. His father was not for nothing professor of philosophy, but do not let his analytical and meditative inclinations overshadow his common sense and practical usefulness.

The sum of all this is just simply a "good luck" to you on this special mission. I hope that it will not be a very long one under any circumstances; at all events we will have to think over what time you could spend on it. This is also an expression of very great confidence in your ability to get over the complications and difficulties which, undoubtedly, you will have to face from the very beginning.

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