

**Middle East - Suez story No  
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Middle East/Suez story - Nr. 16

(as put together by Dag Hammarskjöld  
and kept in his safe in his office, U.N. HQ)

2 Sept. - 25 Oct. 56

Dag Hammarskjöld's samt.

Middle East / Suez story - 16

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19 Sept. 56

Burns, E. L. M. (Gen., Chief of Staff, UNTSO)

- 1 letter from D.H.

19 September 1956

*Summation in conditions  
file.*

I thank you for your letter of 14 September which I have studied with great care. It was useful to have your evaluation of the situation.

I am in full agreement with you on most of the points raised. We have to live with the fact that, for the time being, all our problems will develop in the shadow of the Suez crisis and that we will find various stands twisted by considerations going beyond the problems of the region.

The Israeli raids last week lead me to believe that they are keen on using incidents occurring during the present enforced passivity of the Arab countries to the full, in order to demonstrate their strength by actions of "intimidation" - at the same time scoring such minor military advantages as the erasing of a few strong points on the Arab side of the border - but that, on the other hand, they are not likely to go to more overt acts of war than those we have just witnessed. Therefore, I agree with you that the maximum to be feared from their side might be an operation in the El Arish area, but scarcely an attempt to revise the Gaza situation. What seems to me so tragic is that with such a policy they will build up a complex in the Arab minds which is likely to lock all doors to constructive approaches for a considerable time; the Arabs will not forget the humiliation and what, in their view, now again has been revealed of Israeli thinking.

Major-General E.L.M. Burns  
Chief of Staff  
United Nations Truce Supervision Organization  
Jerusalem

I also agree with you that, whatever Eban may have said, it is most unlikely that Ben-Gurion will give up anything which to him has a bargaining value for the future, or protects his immediate freedom of action. The only pressure just now available is my threat - which is a very real one - that I will stop all further efforts in the region, unless I have reasonable guarantees for progress and a background of less contempt of the Security Council stand.

The present situation may change when the Suez question has been brought openly to the Security Council, which I guess may happen soon. I am watching carefully for the proper time for a presentation of the unavoidable report on recent developments. A factor, which must be known to Ben Gurion, is that his policy makes him lose ground with influential Jewish groups in the United States (this may be even more so when the 12 September report on observers' activities etc. is published.) What importance this may have as a pressure on him for a reconsideration of his policy, is difficult to say, but he has to watch out.

Whatever our anticipations, it is, of course, now our duty to keep the record straight and to see to it that the United Nations does not lose ground, legally or politically - and is not made ridiculous. This is difficult enough. It will not yield any immediate results, but will, at least, maintain our base line for future operations.

You are only too right in pointing out the complications which may well arise in case of an emergency: the whole question of neutrality of observers might come up in what is likely to be a most complicated form. However, in such a situation, we would have to grapple with even worse problems.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to manoeuvre these various questions, as for the present I cannot rely on either the Security Council or the big powers for explicit support. This, in fact, explains why, last week, I had to resort to a kind of diplomatic manoeuvring which really meant that I acted in a sense for the Security Council; the final paragraphs of the notes verbales of 14 September were intended to reserve the rights of the Security Council later to condemn, or in other forms to establish the responsibility, in spite of the fact that it now had to let certain developments pass in silence.

If incidents of the latest type were to be repeated, I am not clear on what form for a reaction would be most adequate. After an official protest, such as the one of the 14th, I think I have only one step left before requesting a Security Council discussion, and that is to address the President of the Security Council directly, "drawing attention" to the new incidents; under Charter procedures this means more than the circulation of a report, although it naturally is much less than a request for an urgent meeting. (In a sense it is surprising that it has so far been possible to vary the reactions so as to avoid flat repetitions which could not but have caused a weakening of our stand.)

The present situation is threatening, indeed. There is no possibility for us to change it radically by any of the means which we have at our disposal, but we can, at least, stick to our guns. Again, I repeat that I was most grateful for your letter which, as you will have seen from what I have written, reflects an evaluation rather similar to my own.