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Dag Hammarskjöld's secret

UAR - military movements

Oct./Nov 1959

Message for the President

If, as you know from past experience, I occasionally take the liberty, despite my realisation of the burdens you carry, to present a viewpoint or address an appeal directly to you, it is only because of the urgency of a particular situation and my desire to keep some aspect of UAR-UN relationships from getting disastrously off the rails. This message relates to such a situation and is sent in an earnest effort to avert the development of an altogether needless impasse between your officials and those of the UN.

The crux of the problem is a demand, issued through your authorities in Gaza to first Colonel Rikhye, the Acting Commander of UNEF (in the absence of General Burns), and now (upon his return) to the Commander of the Force, for the removal from the Gaza Strip of an officer in the Canadian contingent of UNEF, Major Jefferson, for the reason that he has become objectionable to UAR authorities for certain things which he has done, apparently in the performance of his duties. General Burns, incidentally, has agreed that some incorrect action was taken and has given written assurance that this will not again happen. This demand, having been presented in three letters of different dates from Brigadier General Hilmy, has in each instance taken the form of a virtual ultimatum to UNEF Headquarters, carrying a time limit deadline. A letter of 29 November declared Major Jefferson "persona non grata" and asked that he leave within seven days. On 5 December, a second letter stated that he must leave by 10 December. On 14 December, a third letter requested that the Major be out of the UAR and the Gaza Strip within forty-eight hours and warned that unless this was done the UAR authorities would

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take such action as might be considered by them to be appropriate for the execution of this decision.

As you may know, prior to Dr. Fawzi's departure from New York, I discussed this matter most seriously with him and hoped that the clarification and understanding resulting from our discussion would serve to dissipate the threat of a deadlock, through paving the way to a reasoned and satisfactory solution of a problem which, intrinsically, does not at all merit being blown up into major dimensions.

I feel sure that you will agree that the introduction of an ultimative element, in the form of a time limit demand, into a matter of this kind is not consistent with the long record of fruitful cooperation between the UAR and the UN and cannot but complicate the solution of a problem which might otherwise soon disappear.

I know, also, that you will understand the stand which we here have to take. Final decisions regarding the personnel of the Force must be under the sole authority of the Secretary General. A demand concerning UNEF personnel directed to UNEF Headquarters at Gaza is not acceptable, since the UNEF Command has no authority to act. When such a request, with reasons, is communicated through the UAR Mission to me at UN Headquarters, it will, of course, be given due consideration.

It follows that I go to the length of approaching you in this way on this subject, not because it is itself sufficiently grave, but only because

if mishandled it could lead to serious difficulties for UNEF and its future relations with the UAR. I ask your concern with this only to the end that the most recent demand for the removal of Major Jefferson within forty-eight hours be not pressed and that no new deadline for that purpose be set.

Communicating with you, Mr. President, I avail myself of the opportunity to send all my best wishes of the season and to express my satisfaction at the opportunity to call on you when I pass through Cairo on 21 January.

14 December 1959

The Secretary-General most seriously calls to the attention of the Government of the United Arab Republic the incident on 28 November 1959 in Sinai in which a member of UNEF, while in the performance of his duty, was shot to death by UAR troops.

The circumstances of this incident, as reported after investigation to UN Headquarters by UNEF Headquarters, are as follows:

- (a) A routine UNEF patrol of the Canadian contingent, consisting of one officer and three other ranks in two jeeps left St. John Camp (MR 0858 0413) at 0230Z on 28 November 1959 and proceeded southwest along Wadi Azariq to 0833 0422 and thence generally south to track and road junction 0830 0316, this being a patrol track in use daily by UNEF patrols.
- (b) At 0635 0340, the UNEF patrol ran into an ambush of automatic and small arms fire, in the course of which the lead jeep, carrying the officer and Trooper Alan Donald Hawthorne was knocked out, Trooper Hawthorne being shot in the abdomen.
- (c) The UNEF patrol did not fire beforehand or return the fire.
- (d) The UNEF patrol identified its attackers as "regular UAR troops", who withdrew southward after the firing. Soon thereafter a UAR military vehicle approached the scene of the incident and following a short halt there, withdrew.
- (e) The UNEF patrol returned to its camp to attend to the wounded soldier, who died while being taken from his camp to Rafah.

The investigation having established that the shooting incident on 28 November was initiated by the UAR troops and was without provocation on the part of UNEF, a protest about this action is registered with the Government of the UAR which must be held accountable for the death of Trooper Hawthorne.

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This incident again draws attention to the threat to the effective functioning of UNRWA resulting from military movement and activities of UAR military units in or close to the immediate areas in which UNRWA must operate, both in the Gaza Strip and along the International Frontier. It will be recalled that this threat repeatedly has been discussed with the UAR authorities, most recently with the Foreign Minister of the UAR shortly before this particular incident.

Word has been received from UNRWA Headquarters of a meeting between UAR and UNRWA representatives at El Arish on 29 November in which agreement was reached, subject to confirmation by higher UAR authority, on a number of measures designed to lessen the risk of further incidents. Although this agreement, if - as is strongly to be hoped - it is confirmed, would go some way to reduce the risks involved in the present situation, the underlying and wider problem requires urgent and careful consideration in order to eliminate present threats to smooth and effective cooperation in the field.

30 November 1959

## By King Saud 'No Surprise'

By SALIM HABAKKI  
Of al-Hayat Staff

(The writer covered the conference of the Arab Foreign Ministers which was held in Casablanca last September. Here, he is writing on the development which led to King Saud's announcement Monday on the United Nations Emergency Force).

King Saud's announcement Monday to three American correspondents that he wants the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) withdrawn from the Aqaba Gulf and the restoration of the status quo before the 1956 Suez war came as no surprise to Arab circles here.

The status of the UNEF was raised at a secret session of the Arab League conference in Casablanca last September. But a decision to this effect was postponed, upon a request from Lebanese Premier Rashid Karami, then chairman of the session, until the forthcoming meeting of the League Council early next year.

Towards the closing of the Casablanca conference, Arab League Secretary General Abdul Khalek Hassouna asked the Arab delegates to express their views on a request from UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld to the effect that the Arab states should help in financing the UN forces in the Gaza Strip. Hassouna had proposed postponing any decision until the next meeting of the Arab League Council.

But Libya's Premier and Foreign Minister Abdul Majid Koobar objected and asked whether these forces were necessary from the Arab point of view. In case they are, he said, the Arab states can easily secure some 7,000 troops on the demarcation line separating Egypt and Israel. If not, he continued, the United Nations, which was responsible for the creation of Israel, should bear the costs of maintenance of the forces there.

At this point, Saudi Arabia's chief delegate to the conference, Prince Fahd, proposed the withdrawal of the UN forces. Jordan's Premier Hazzaa Majali seconded the motion saying that these forces are there for the protection of Israel.

Here, Ahmad Shukairi, Saudi Minister of State, submitted a three-point proposal on the subject. The proposal said:

1) The Saudi Arabian Kingdom insists on the withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Force from the Gulf of Aqaba. It cannot give in details the reasons for this move but it is sufficient to note that Israel, protected by the UNEF, would undertake to establish settlements in the Negev which may inhabit some five million Israelis.

2) Requests establishing a system in the Negev similar to that of Jerusalem i.e. to have an international character. (According to the Partition plan, Jerusalem is an international city).

3) Formation of an Arab Palestine army to protect the Aqaba Gulf.

Following the proposal, UAR Chief delegation, Farid Zeinuddin announced his government's readiness to abide with any unanimous decision taken by the Arab League.

Meanwhile, Premier Rashid Karami proposed postponement of any discussion on this issue until the forthcoming session of the League Council as he had to leave immediately for New York to head his country's delegation at the UN General Assembly.

Before approving Karami's proposal, Libyan Premier inserted an amendment which said the Arab League Council refuses the request of Hammarskjöld because the withdrawal of the UN forces will be subject to discussion shortly.

26 November 1959

1. In recent weeks, reports from UNEF Headquarters at Gaza have reflected certain new military movements and activities of UAR military units in the area which are of serious concern to the Commander and in his absence to the Acting Commander of UNEF - a concern which the Secretary-General of the United Nations must share. In general, the circumstances seem to be the following.
2. On the night of 21 October an Israel patrol evaded UNEF patrols and penetrated to the junction of the main road-Wadi Ghazze - the first time there has been any such penetration in the Gaza Strip since UNEF has been there. UAR local guards opened fire and the Israel patrol withdrew without reply. There were no casualties. Israel Defence Forces said the patrol had lost its way, and apologised. Following this incident, local UAR authorities instituted active patrolling with "auxiliary police" and personnel of the Palestine Battalion, on the stated grounds that the protection afforded by UNEF had proved to be inadequate.
3. On the night of 2 November a Swedish patrol was fired at by a patrol of the UAR inside the 500 meter zone. The fire was not returned and there were no casualties.
4. Since 3 November, the Acting Commander of UNEF has had numerous meetings with Brigadier Hilmy, Chief of UAR Liaison Staff, and officials of the local Gaza government who are responsible for public security, in an endeavour to eliminate the patrolling of the armed Palestinian elements during the hours of darkness in areas where further clashes with UNEF patrols might occur. These efforts - the latest of which was made on 25 November - have been unsuccessful. As the Commander of UNEF has observed, unless these patrolling activities of the "auxiliary police" and of the Palestine Battalion, for which there would seem to be no necessity, are soon brought to an end, there are likely to be other incidents of firing between them and UNEF troops, with probable casualties and resulting complications.

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5. About the same time that the activity of armed personnel under UAR control in the Gaza Strip commenced, it appears that a considerable build-up of UAR armed forces within the area EL ARISH-ABU AWEIGILA also occurred, the numbers having been doubled or tripled. This adds to tension in the area, and increases the difficulties of UNEF in carrying out its task.

6. Should this situation be uncorrected, it will, before long, become impossible for UNEF to carry out its task, since the essential condition for doing so is that there be no armed forces of either side in its immediate area of operation.

11/20/59

To: The Secretary-General

This resumé of recent UAR military movements as reported in several cables in greater detail, has been prepared by Tommy at my suggestion. You might find it useful should you mention this matter to Mr. Fawzi. Ralph

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INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: The Secretary-General

Date: 20 November 1959

THROUGH:

FILE NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

FROM: Lieutenant-General E.L.M. Burns

S E C R E T

SUBJECT: Recent Build-Up of UAR Forces Adjacent to Operational Area and Related Incidents

1. On the night of 21 October an Israeli patrol evaded UNEF patrols and penetrated to the junction of the main road-Wadi Ghazze. UAR local guards opened fire and the Israeli patrol withdrew without reply. There were no casualties. Israeli Defence Forces said the patrol had lost its way, and apologized. Following on this incident, local UAR authorities instituted active patrolling with "auxiliary police" and men of the Palestine Battalion, alleging that protection afforded by UNEF was inadequate.
2. On the night of 2 November a Swedish patrol was fired at by one of these UAR patrols in the 500 meter zone. The fire was not returned and there were no casualties.
3. On the night of 3 November a group of 8 unarmed Brazilians walking along the main road near their headquarters were arrested by local police and only released on arrival at the police headquarters. Dr. Bunche has protested about this to Gohar.
4. On 16 November it was observed that the mixed brigade consisting of infantry, tanks and artillery which has been for some time at El Arish was redeployed in an area extending from a position east of the Yugoslav camp to along the road south of the airfield.
5. At the same time it was found that another mixed brigade including tanks was deployed in the area around Abu-Aweigila. Information from Hilmy had been that this brigade would be taking up defensive position farther to the west.
6. On 18 November information was received through Brazilian sources that the complete UAR Second Division had moved into the El Arish/ Abu Aweigila area (above 2 brigades forming part of this division). The Brazilians, fearing that UAR had offensive intentions, were concerned about safety of UNEF and their contingent.

10 October 1959

Dear Mahmoud,

My attention has been drawn to the pending decision in a case of law in Damascus which, although in the strict sense, obviously, being none of my business, causes me to raise the matter with you in a personal capacity.

According to information in Lebanese and Jordan newspapers, six young Jews from Damascus have been charged with attempting to cross over to Israel via Lebanon with the object of joining the Israel army. The youths were arrested in June. At the trial the prosecutor stated that they had made "confessions of guilt" in the course of investigation. At a recent hearing, 4 October 1959, the prosecutor demanded the death penalty. Judgment will be given on 21 October 1959.

I need not explain to you why death penalties in this case and in the present situation would cause me the greatest concern. I do not know any similar case on your side apart from the particular one several years ago in Cairo - I believe it was early 1955 - and I do not know of anyone on the Israel side. Such an extreme step now would be most detrimental to our efforts, quite apart from the humanitarian aspect.

However, I also remember the attitude of President Nasser and his liberal principles when it comes to extreme measures of this type. For example, I well recall his own comments and explanations of the executions in 1955, the sincerity of which impressed me strongly.

In these circumstances, you will understand that I felt free to draw your attention to my reaction to the news to which I have referred. You may find it appropriate to inform the President about my approach. I would, indeed, appreciate it highly if you would do so. I trust that, anyway, the President may not wish to go ahead, but that yet he may take interest in my reaction, as to the sincerity and friendly spirit of which he will certainly not have any doubt.

H.E. Dr. Mahmoud Fawzi,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of  
the United Arab Republic,  
Hotel Sheraton East,  
Park Avenue and 51st Street,  
New York, N.Y.

AIDE MEMOIRE

The State Security Tribunal in Damascus has before it at present the case of six young Jews from that city charged with attempting to cross over to Israel via the Lebanon with the object of joining the Israel army. The Tribunal is military in character and is presided over by an army colonel.

The youths were arrested in June. At the trial the prosecutor stated that they had made "confessions of guilt" in the course of the investigation.

At a hearing on 4 October 1959 the prosecutor demanded the death penalty. Judgement will be given on 21 October 1959.

The above is based on reports in the Lebanese and Jordan press.

9 October 1959

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WARNING

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL, NOV. 3-(REUTERS)-PRIME MINISTER DAVID BEN-GURION WARNED PRESIDENT GAMAL ABDEL NASSER OF THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC TODAY THAT ANY ATTEMPT TO STAGE AN UPRISING IN IRAQ WOULD COMPEL ISRAEL TO RESERVE "FREEDOM OF ACTION."

IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN HIS OWN DAILY DAVAR TODAY--ELECTION DAY IN ISRAEL--BEN-GURION SAID HE REGARDS THE 16-MONTH-OLD IRAQI REGIME OF ABDUL KARIM KASSEM AS A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ANXIOUS TO MAINTAIN IRAQ'S INDEPENDENCE.

BEN-GURION WAS ASKED IF ISRAEL WOULD STAND ASIDE IN THE EVENT OF A NASSERITE OR COMMUNIST COUP IN IRAQ.

HE REPLIED THAT IF NASSER ENGINEERED A COUP "IT WILL AFFECT US VERY MUCH AND WE SHALL HAVE TO RESERVE FREEDOM OF ACTION."

HE DID NOT DEFINE EXACTLY WHAT ACTION ISRAEL MIGHT TAKE. A COUP IN IRAQ WOULD AFFECT JORDAN, ISRAEL'S NEIGHBOR, AND "INEVITABLY AFFECT US," BEN-GURION SAID.

BEN-GURION SAID THE POSSIBILITY OF A COMMUNIST COUP IN IRAQ DOES NOT POSE "A REAL DANGER IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE."

ASKED ABOUT HIS ELECTORAL PLEDGE TO SEEK PEACE WITH ARAB NATIONS, BEN-GURION REPLIED:

"WE SHOULD ALWAYS BE READY FOR PEACE AND WE SHOULD INFORM THE ARAB WORLD OF THIS READINESS, BECAUSE THERE ARE FORCES IN THE ARAB WORLD WHOSE VOICES HAVE NOT YET BEEN HEARD, BUT WHICH ARE IMPORTANT. . . .

"IT IS POSSIBLE THESE FORCES WILL BECOME MORE INFLUENTIAL," HE ADDED.

BEN-GURION CLAIMED THERE IS "A GREAT DEAL OF UNREST" IN SYRIA BECAUSE OF ITS "SUBJUGATION" TO EGYPT IN THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC.

HE ADDED THAT "IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER SYRIA WILL BE ABLE TO CUT ITSELF FREE SINCE, LIKE EGYPT, IT IS RULED BY THE ARMY."

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Télégrammes : UNATIONS, GENEVE  
Téléphone : 33 10 00 33 20 00 33 40 00

Palais des Nations  
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REF. No. :  
(à rappeler dans la réponse)

October 23rd, 1959

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Mr. Hammarskjold,

After my last visit to the Middle East, where I examined with the Jordanian authorities the general situation of the region in relation to the United Mission in Amman, I feel that we should now envisage the starting of the actual fading-out stage of our activities there.

From the end of this month to the beginning of December the staff in Amman could be reduced to a minimum of five international staff members. This reduction could be even more drastic, but I feel that we should keep available, as long as the mission actually exists, at least two persons with excellent command of Arabic in case of any emergencies which might require an efficient monitoring service.

I propose that Mr. Shore continues to be in charge of the mission during my absence, as until now he has kept up contact with the local authorities in a satisfactory way.

It is not easy for me at this moment to pass an opinion on how long the mission in such reduced form should continue to exist. I think however, that I should be able to give a definite opinion on this matter after my next visit to Amman, some time in December.

I have asked Mr. Shore to submit a detailed plan on the first phase of the mission's liquidation to the Field Service Office at Headquarters.

Yours sincerely,

*P. P. Spinelli*  
P.P. Spinelli

Mr. Dag Hammarskjold,  
Secretary-General,  
United Nations Headquarters,  
New York.