

The last desk file - from Dag Hammarskjöld's desk in his office, found afte...

HS L 179:176a



Dag Hammarskjöld's saml.

The last "desk-file" - 61

9 Aug.

D. H's Memorandum

SECRET

MEMORANDUM

Ambassador Stevenson came to see me this afternoon at 3 pm. He wanted to ask me if I were in a position to place observers in Tunisia and/or to make preparations for the sending of troops to the area. In support of this somewhat unexpected initiative he said that Rusk had failed completely in his talks with de Gaulle and had had the same experience as he, Stevenson, had had. He felt that Couve and the others in the administration had done what they could, but were powerless.

In this situation the U.S. feared very much that even the slightest incident might provoke a march of ^{an} uncontrollable army on Tunis, with all the very obvious consequences; this ~~must~~ must at all cost be forestalled. The introduction of observers and, in case of need, even troops, was one way. Another preliminary step might be to try and get across to Bourguiba the strongest possible warning against anything that may be used as excuse by the military people for adventure. Admiral Amman had got instructions to lie low and not to respond to any provocation which might come, but that, in itself, did not seem to provide sufficient guarantee.

I replied that I could get a warning through to Bourguiba and outlined the form ~~in~~ which I later used in a letter. That seemed to Stevenson to be alright.

On the other hand, I explained to him that only the Secco or the GA could take decisions on troops, and that I could not make any special preparation. Were a decision on the sending of troops to be taken, I would find myself in a very difficult position, and that the only immediate step I could then take would be to bring in a batallion at the most from Gaza or perhaps the Congo.

However, there were very few nationalities I could use, and our troops had only light arms as against French tanks. Therefore, I felt very hesitant concerning the possibilities to straighten things out by such a move and, at all events, I did not see how I could prepare it. It seemed to me that the logical conclusion from the US point of view was to put all weight back of the demand for the withdrawal of troops which they feared might act as he had said. It seemed to me that de Gaulle had truly acted as the "Zauberlehrling" in bringing these troops into Tunisia if he now had to note that he might not be their master.

As regards observers, I had no authority to send them short of either a mandate or, over the head of the Russians, at a joint request of Tunisia and France. But as we knew, the French would never consent to it.

Stevenson thought ~~it~~ ^{it} my duty, ^s in relation to peace and security, to send observers without any mandate and without invitation. I replied that all I could possibly do was to go myself as I had done, but that even my possibility to do so was controversial. Anyway, it represented the maximum conclusion as to my rights that I could draw from Article 99.

9 Aug. 61.